

SIS4¹

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's make a start. We welcome this morning [SIS4].

As I do at every session, I'm going to repeat, this session is being held in private because we recognise much of the evidence on the areas we want to cover will be sensitive within the categories set out in the Inquiry's Protocol on Sensitive Information -- for example, on grounds of international relations or national security. In particular, we want to use this session to explore issues covered by classified documents.

We will apply the Protocol between the Inquiry and HMG regarding Documents and Other Written and 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 the Inquiry Report or, where appropriate, at an earlier stage.

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 Secretary's letter to you.

We recognise that witnesses are giving evidence based on their recollection of events. We of course cross-check what we hear against the papers to which we have access.

I remind every witness on every occasion that they will later be asked to sign a transcript of their evidence to the effect that the evidence given is truthful, fair and accurate. For security reasons, we will not be releasing copies of this

¹ This witness' name has been redacted to protect his/her anonymity. This officer will be referred to as SIS4 throughout the Inquiry's documentation.

[REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: [REDACTED] ?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

described in some detail the division of labour between them and, where there was an overlap, how that was managed.

[REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: [REDACTED]

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SIS4: [REDACTED]

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THE CHAIRMAN: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. One could go on, but I think I'll turn to Roderic Lyne at this point.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I would just like to unpack the sequence of events and documentation between 30 November 2001 and 14 December. You have the same documents in your pack as we have in ours.

This was fairly shortly after 9/11. As we have heard from other witnesses, and we don't really need to go through this again today, while 9/11 had not changed the nature of Iraq, or the Iraqi threat per se, it had very much changed American perceptions of the world, including American perceptions of the Iraqi threat. That was the background.

On 30 November you had a meeting in Downing Street with Sir David Manning, at which you discussed a paper. The paper was then sent to him by the Chief, or the Chief's office, on 3 December.

We haven't got a record of that meeting. I don't know if you are aware that there was any record of that meeting.

Can you recall to us what led to that meeting, who instigated it, what the purpose of it was, broadly speaking what you discussed at it, having refreshed your memory of the document that was sent afterwards?

SIS4: Well, I have rather a different memory of this. You are looking at ...

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm looking at C's private secretary's letter of 3 December 2001 to Sir David Manning which says --

SIS4: I didn't go to Number 10 very much. I knew David Manning

and saw a certain amount of him. It wasn't a big enough event for it to be lodged firmly in my mind, but what I do remember very clearly, about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, was getting a telephone call from Number 10, David Manning wants to speak to you, and David coming on the line and saying, look, this Iraq stuff is it building up apace. Can you just do me a quick paper, a sort of Anglican 39 articles or whatever it's called, just bullet points, of key issues that we need to bear in mind to keep our balance and our perspective in considering Iraq as a rapidly expanding threat.

So he wanted a sort of sedative paper, and he wanted it by 6 o'clock. So I had to cancel everything else I was doing and knock that up in about an hour. It was sent off. The quickest communications between us and Number 10 would have been the Chief's driver. So yes, it would have gone through the Chief. But I don't remember it coming from a meeting. I remember it coming from a phone call.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I have misunderstood it in that case. It wasn't a meeting. It was a phone call. Because all we have is a letter from C's private secretary:

"I attach three papers produced by [SIS4]. The first is that paper you discussed with him last Friday."

I assumed that you discussed it with him at a meeting, but it was actually this phone call, asking for a paper, and then by 3 December there were actually three papers. So let's just take the first one, the one that David, you tell us, had commissioned from you on the phone at 4 o'clock on 30 November.

SIS4: Could I just say that I would think that attachment 1 is what I knocked up in the afternoon. That would have gone over directly because he wanted it that evening.

Then we probably produced one or two bits we had prepared

earlier, like a cook, and sent those over afterwards as an afterthought.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's helpful. Let's just take attachment 1 then, the first one. This begins:

"What can be done about Iraq? If the US heads for direct action, have we ideas which could divert them to an alternative course?"

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

SIS4: I think what I was trying to bring out for David was the hazards, the experience to date with Iraq, something about the nature of Iraq as a country and as a Ba'athist state. [REDACTED]

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

I wanted to arm David with background reminders that this is not going to be simple or straightforward, and it doesn't have to pan out well. I don't think I had in my mind particular wheezes, schemes or policy programmes which could be followed up, simply to argue for caution, circumspection and awareness of what a heavy matter Iraq could prove to be because it had been in the past.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That, I think, from my reading of the papers, is a very accurate description. It is a list of hazards and warnings, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

So it essentially reads -- and your description of it that you have just given confirms this -- as not a paper arguing for direct action, but

warnings against.

Presumably you were responding to the request that David Manning had made to you on the phone, that he wanted some explanation that he could then reflect in his conversations with the White House about the difficulties of doing what he sensed they were inclining to do. Would that be --

SIS4: My understanding was that he wanted arguments and points to give to the Prime Minister, which the Prime Minister could bear in mind in his discussions with the Americans.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Could we then move forward to the other bits of the package? On 3 December, three papers are sent by the Chief's office to Number 10. One of them is this first one we have just discussed. The second one, we will come back to in a minute, is called "Iraq further thoughts", attachment 2, and the third one is called "US attacks on Iraq, the risks and costs".

Now, the third one is essentially a compressed version of the first one. It points in the same direction. But attachment 2, which I would like you now to focus on, points in a different direction. It begins as follows:

"At our meeting on 30 November we discussed how we could combine an objective of regime change in Baghdad with the need to protect important regional interests which would be a grave risk if a bombing campaign against Iraq were launched in the short term."

Where did this objective of regime change in Baghdad come from? How did this come into the conversation? Why were you writing the second paper, looking at the pros of regime change as opposed to the cons?

SIS4: I think it came out of the ground like a mist following the change of temperature on 9/11.

I think it became clear to all of us that nothing short of decisive intervention in Iraq was going to satisfy the Americans. That can't be sourced to a particular telegram, conversation, that I can recall. [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I want to come back to that --

SIS4: What that meant, what "doing Iraq" would mean, wasn't clear. I mentioned here a bombing campaign. That would be back reference to Desert Fox, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. That was a pretty decisive intervention and it did quite a lot of good. Between that as a model for action, as a programme, and invasion and regime change, either by local Iraqis with coalition air support or US air support, or with foreign coalition forces, that hadn't been sorted through. It wasn't that clear.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But just trying to make sure we correctly understand this package of papers, the first paper you send over on the Friday evening is a list of hazard lights about direct action. By 3 December this is accompanied by a separate paper which is about how you do regime change.

What caused the second paper to be written? Did you get a signal from Number 10 that the first paper hadn't actually been what they really wanted, could they have another paper pointing in a different direction? It's not explained here. I'm just trying to understand it.

SIS4: I don't have a diary with me, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if 1/2 December weren't a Saturday and a Sunday.

I don't think -- I have no memory of getting new tasking: "forget all that, SIS4, it's now regime change, start writing again". And remember that I would have been writing these papers like this very, very privately for David Manning. We weren't a policy department. David would have been asking me, because he knew that I was responsible for the Middle East. I knew my way round it. I speak Arabic. And he knew that I would probably get it done on time.

It certainly wouldn't have been part of a co-ordinated interdepartmental policy consideration, and I don't doubt that if the Foreign Office got hold of this, they would have been frightfully cross.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Well, they did get hold of it because the Chief's office --

SIS4: Did they copy it?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- sent separately two of the three papers to the Foreign Office. It missed out the third, but it did send your second paper and your third paper.

SIS4: It was Jack Straw.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But it didn't send the first, slightly curiously. It went to Jack Straw's private office, and was copied to Alan Goulty(?), Director Middle East, your opposite number in the Foreign Office at the time. So you were not going behind their backs. You were very proper there.

SIS4: I can't answer the heart of your question, what changed to move us on to a slightly different category of paperwork.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: There was a reference to a meeting. You said a phone call.

SIS4: If there's yet another reference to the 30 November

meeting, there must have been a meeting. It wouldn't be making it up. But the genesis of the first paper, which was a sort of brainstorm on the problems of work against Iraq, I definitely remember was done at great speed as a result of a pretty late afternoon phone call from Manning.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So --

THE CHAIRMAN: There wasn't a discussion with David Manning after he got your first paper?

SIS4: Not that I remember.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When it says "we discussed", who would that "we" have been:

"At our meeting on 30 November, we discussed ..."

SIS4: Yes. There could have been other people there, but I don't remember that.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is important in terms of whether this is you as a foreign policy -- very knowledgeable in the region of foreign policy, responding to a request from David Manning as someone he trusts, or something which involves a number of people at SIS.

SIS4: SIS officers always refer to themselves in the first person plural. Only the Chief is allowed to use "I", and so there's that ambiguity to factor into this as well. But I suspect that this would have been a small roundtable meeting with David Manning and he looked at some of these problems.

THE CHAIRMAN: Rod.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I would just like to look a little bit at the substance of paper 2.

What did you see as the attractions of removing Saddam Hussein? What was the case that you were making here for

regime change?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] So Iraq was part of my consciousness.

I remember saying to somebody at that time that the lack of our response to the re-emergence of Iraq as a serious regional power was like having tea with some very proper people in the drawing room and noticing that there was a python getting out of a box in one corner.

I was very alarmed at the way that Iraq was eroding the sanctions regime and evading it. It had been successful in seeing us off with propaganda since the end of the First Gulf War, Desert Storm. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

The vitality and power of Iraq, apart from Iran in the Arab world the only serious country apart from Egypt, the only country with depth, human resources, enough water, with a good bureaucratic tradition; that power and vitality of Iraq were, in my view, a real threat to the stability of the region.

I want to say something very quickly about WMD. So many people think of WMD as being rather like tanks and missiles and aeroplanes, things that you could look at. In my own mind, I always thought of WMD as being contained really in the brains of the experts who understood them and who were able to produce them, sometimes at very short notice. Nuclear would be slightly different under that heading, but we had dealt with the Iraqi nuclear threat.

Iraq's potential, its capability in the WMD field, was very dramatic. Our understanding [REDACTED] was that Iraq cracked the Iran/Iraq War with a sarin attack, and 45,000 Iranians died on the Fao peninsular. The Iranians got themselves into a muddle sending their artillery and mortar to Hallabja, and the Iraqis pifpaffed that army. It was very, very striking.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But this --

SIS4: So the idea of putting an end to this problem, was not something that I would advocate, but I could see the force of the desire to do it, to be decisive.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: This paper doesn't say very much about WMD. It doesn't express it in the way that you have just expressed it, does it?

SIS4: No, but I was working with people who were also working on the job at the time. This was all common ground.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But your main arguments in this paper are about regime change, rather than dealing with the threat of WMD. The key idea, I quote, is that:

"It is possible to speak openly about support for regime change in Iraq."

Policy statement:

"We want regime change in Baghdad."

WMD is not really the principal argument put forward in this paper. Paragraph number 3 really summaries the argument. It's headed "Why move?"

So would it be fair to say in this paper you are putting a much broader case for regime change in Iraq than dealing with an imminent or growing threat of WMD?

SIS4: Yes, clearly from the text. What I'm unable to tell you,

because I simply don't remember, was whether I was trying to survey all the arguments that could be out there [REDACTED] or producing, as an initiative, arguments to HMG. I think it's much more likely, knowing myself, to have been the former rather than the latter.

You asked me what I thought about the prospect of regime change, and I answered that in the position that I sat in, [REDACTED] and knowing quite a lot about WMD and how they work, I was quite motivated by that argument as well in myself as a person. But I think this attachment 2 is broader than that.

The point about it being possible to talk about regime change, I can remember, was a remark about managing the paradox of working hard for regime change, communicating in secret, and being able to communicate to the world and to the Iraqi population, in the hopes maybe of precipitating local Iraqi help, without compromising that core and secret effort. So I was just making the point that it was possible to develop international support, Iraqi support, inure people to the idea that this might be coming down the line; to do all that without compromising any operational work being done on the ground to achieve that end.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Could we now move on to the way that the Foreign Office reacted to these papers, which, as I say, two of which, including the regime change paper, were copied.

There was a response from the Foreign Secretary's private secretary, dated 5 December. It's a short letter of three sentences. I don't know if you have got it there.

SIS4: Yes. Simon being nice about it.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: More than being nice. Does this constitute support from the Foreign Secretary for what you have put forward

here?

SIS4: No.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: No?

SIS4: I don't want to leave the impression in your minds that at this point there was an autonomous UK based drive towards regime change, because I have no memory of that. I have a vivid memory of people being very concerned that all this stuff may be about to happen, and what do we think about it. What do we think of the arguments? What are the pluses? What are the minuses? What are the dangers? Rather than this being a pencil we were sharpening for HMG use. But clearly we would need to be in a position to discuss it with the Americans. They were likely to bring it to us. I think there's a distinction there.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Right. What one should note is that the Foreign Secretary's office have commented in a very complimentary way on the papers. The Foreign Secretary thought the two papers very perceptive and hopes the Prime Minister reads them. The Foreign Secretary, having looked at them, did not take the opportunity to register any other view, any concerns, any worries about anything that you had suggested in one or other paper. That's all we have. So he's in the picture. As you say, he hasn't explicitly taken a policy stance, but nor has he contradicted anything.

SIS4: That's what the text says.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes. Does that accord with your memory? You don't recall any resistance from the Foreign Office, from your opposite number?

SIS4: Not in late 2001. The Foreign Office position, well into 2002, was "there's not going to be a war because there had been no second resolution, and the international community won't

stand for it".

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's later. We didn't get the first resolution until late 2002. So we are probably a year ahead.

SIS4: They took a very formal and structured view of the possibilities of war with Iraq.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Who did?

SIS4: The Foreign Office.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Foreign Office did. I think we will come back to that. My colleagues will. I just want to now move forward to the final bit of the period I'm covering.

As you say, these are essentially briefing papers for Number 10, requested by them, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]
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SIS4: [REDACTED]
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SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]
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SIS4: [REDACTED]
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SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

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

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: [REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]
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SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]
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SIS4: [REDACTED]
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SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

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SIS4: [REDACTED]

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SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

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SIS4: [REDACTED]

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SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

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SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Finally, and then I will pass the baton on. One point of detail from this record of your conversations.

The second last paragraph, talking about -- you touched on the kind of regime that might follow Saddam, and you said it would be important not to parachute a regime in from the external opposition. They would be regarded as US stooges. Then you said:

"The new government would need to be broadly based but predominantly Sunni."

How did you think that a change of regime could end up still with a predominantly Sunni regime in a country with a majority or largest ethnic grouping being Shi'ite? Having toppled the Sunnis, how were the Sunnis going to succeed the Sunnis?

SIS4: Well, the people being toppled were Ba'athists, who were culturally Sunni, genealogically Sunni, but being a Ba'athist wasn't co-extensive with being Sunni. There were a lot of Sunnis in Iraq who would have liked Iraq to be run differently.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I don't think at this time it occurred to me that it was plausible to transfer an adversarial, party political, representational political system to Iraq.

I was reading only a couple of weeks ago an account of very early Mesopotamian civilisation, and the writer said "civilisation is a matter of diffusion, but of ideas rather than

models". I liked that. I thought it was a wonderful way of summing it up because it was what I already believed. The idea that Iraqi Shias could be fitted out with Republican, Democrat, Lib Dem identities, organisations and run the difficult place which is Iraq, a place which has never had stable political geography, wouldn't have occurred to me in 2001. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED] ?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

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SIS4: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I have just a few short questions on December notes that were sent to David Manning. You have explained to us that he gave you two hours to put it together, but they are tremendously well thought out and structured notes, and I was wondering what discussions had you had within SIS on these issues in the weeks preceding that, and had there been a debate in your discussions with regard to the nature of regime change?

SIS4: It's for others to tell you about my style of leadership

and how I handled them. But I certainly had an open door, and tried to be as collegiate and collective in my style as I could be because these were powerful lessons taught me from my years with the Arabs who are very effective leaders of men.

So there were endless conversations. There were late night conversations. There were going out to lunch conversations. I regarded my team leaders as friends.

[REDACTED]

I think SIS officers are quite good at distinguishing between what they would like to have happen and what is likely to happen.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Yours was a very proactive document, in many ways. It was suggesting a way forward.

SIS4: That doesn't mean to say we are not operationally minded.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: One of the things in your new route map which you list, which seems to us important, you state that the Government Law Officers are going to have to provide assurances of legality, and you say there has been a serious problem here. What problems had there already been with regard to legality of these concepts?

SIS4: Where? What are you looking at?

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In the new route map. Actually the first

bullet point. It's your first visit. (Pause)

SIS4: Do you know, I can't honestly tell you what particular thought was in my mind there. I'm not aware of any discussions of the legality of doing the Iraq thing. So I don't think this is a lead indicator of what later became of course a very central part of the drama. But I do remember, and vividly from my WMD time, that there was a notably shifting climate affecting foreign policy and our work, Government relations with private people, in the category of legality.

We had, I think, a decisive difficulty after the war in Iraq because we couldn't round up all these scientists and find out what they had been doing, for legal reasons. We had just fought a war. We had lost all these men. Tens of thousand of Iraqis had been killed, and suddenly we were on Maidenhead rules.

Legality was becoming a very, very interesting part of our difficulty. I remember [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Cabinet Secretary [being asked much earlier] [REDACTED] what were the main worries at the front of his mind [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and he said firstly the difficulty of the politicisation of the judiciary, because this is affecting -- it gets into so many aspects of Government work, policy, the way we live. This would have been -- I can't remember the exact trigger, the detonator for that thought, that high in that list at the top, but generally speaking, this was a considerable point of concern, not because we aimed to do something we knew was illegal, though of course, by definition, all SIS activity was illegal, but because we didn't want to put our feet in the wrong place or get snagged.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: One other point. In your route map, under the heading of "Military planning", of course this regime change was essentially to be an Iraqi regime change which would be helped essentially by covert and some air action. But you state rather intriguingly:

"Consideration of international participation in this task force."

What did you have in mind? [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

But I think that sentence, that bullet point, doesn't reflect an antecedent, clearly worked out idea of the task force and how this was actually going to be done, but simply a remembering that if there was going to be a task force, if this was going to be done militarily and was going to be done on any scale, we should consider, we should remember that an international dimension could be helpful politically, not least to the Americans.

The Americans -- I have said there was a great deal of sympathy for the Americans, certainly in Government circles, after 9/11. I think that many people in Europe, and in this country, were also troubled by that. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: If I could move on, finally for me, to April 2002. We have been focusing on Iraq, but there was a very interesting meeting between C and the Prime Minister at Chequers, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Was the threat from Libya at that time of greater concern, and what advice --

SIS4: What was the date of that conversation?

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: 4 April 2002.

SIS4: [REDACTED]

³ Sir Martin referred to evidence that suggested that the Prime Minister had, at that point, realised that the WMD threat from Libya was more serious than from Iraq and that it would not be sensible to lead the argument on Saddam and the WMD issue.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's pursue that.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can you just take us through [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Libya?

SIS4: Libya?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes. The reason for this -- we don't want to take a lot of time on it, but one of the explanations for the breakthrough that was eventually made at the end of 2003 was the invasion of Iraq, the final trigger for Libya. Yet the discussions with Libya had been going on for some time before that, and we have things like the revelation from the AQ Khan network and so on.

So I would be interested first to get your view as to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

the impact of the actual invasion on the Libyans.

SIS4: ⁴ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

⁴ The Butler report outlined intelligence efforts relating to Libya. The witness described it in more detail.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED] ?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I'm just wondering, just finally, what your view is of the impact of the AQ Khan revelations in persuading the Libyans that, as you said, you had said that the game is up, that you do know what's going on.

SIS4: Which revelations are you thinking of?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The AQ Khan links with Libya.

SIS4: At what point did you think that those links were revealed?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I'm dredging up my memory now.

SIS4: Are you thinking of that boat that was intercepted with stuff come from Malaysia?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I'm not as specific as that. My recollection is that AQ Khan was dealing with Libya, and the Libyans knew that we knew that they were dealing with Libya.

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Our coverage of the AQ Khan network, our first objective was to take down the AQ Khan operation. That led us on to the Libyan stuff.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes.

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: Usha, you would like to ask some questions on the intelligence --

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Yes, indeed. I want to move on to the question of intelligence base on Iraq WMD.

How strong did you judge the intelligence base to be on Iraq's WMD at the end of 2001/beginning of 2002, in comparison to other countries such as Libya, Iran and North Korea?

SIS4: I think, in order to be clear, hoping to be understood clearly on this point, it's important to say that there is a distinction between the broad impression of a country's WMD capability and the specific operational success in penetrating its secrets.

We knew a lot about Iraq because of UNSCOM after the 1991 war. We knew about the 45,000 people being killed, and Hallabja. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We knew an awful lot about it being a threat in the sense of having people who knew how to do it. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: In your judgment --

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So Iraq was a well-known foe, but our intelligence base was small, and our conviction was that the items of WMD, if we are talking about pots of liquid and rockets and centrifuges, were very, very small. The phrase I used to use with people in the Service was "back of a petrol lorry - it would all go in there."

Iraq as a WMD danger to the world, because of the success they had had, and their gearing this up to a military scale of application, was enormous in my view, given the nature of the regime.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So this was an assessment based on previous knowledge and UNSCOM reports, rather than this was a difficult target in terms of getting into Iraq?

SIS4: I'm saying that there are two distinct things bearing down on one.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Right.

SIS4: The intelligence -- the hard intelligence base we were running in 2002 when I took over, when I came back to the WMD world, was small. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] That didn't mean to say it was an area we didn't know very much about, because of all the background, the relations with the IAEA and UNSCOM. Big narrative.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you think we might stop for a break?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you want to do that now?

THE CHAIRMAN: To give a little bit more time to [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. We might need to spend five or ten minutes on that.
We will break for five minutes.

(A short break)

THE CHAIRMAN: We would like to resume on the theme of
sons-in-law.

SIS4: Sons-in-law?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIS4: Hussein Kamal?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Yes, exactly. Tell us about that,
please.

SIS4: [REDACTED]?

THE CHAIRMAN: [REDACTED]

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIS4: ⁵ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

⁵ The witness described his view of the significance of Hussein Kamil's defection and revelations.

[REDACTED]

The Iraqi reaction to Hussein Kamil's defection was to try and destabilise him and his evidence by revealing stuff to UNSCOM.

THE CHAIRMAN: They started it, I think.

SIS4: I would probably think so, the chicken shed incident, whatever it was called, where UNSCOM were led round to the point, and got it [the material], and it was terribly embarrassing.

[REDACTED]

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: [REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] ?

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

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] ?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's move on. I'll ask Sir Lawrence to pick up the different topic.

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

[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He is cited now as having said that there were no BW, that they had been destroyed in the early 1990s. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]?

SIS4: My memory was that he was dismissive of the whole WMD project in Iraq. They hadn't been very good at it. They had been greatly messed about by UNSCOM. There wasn't really very much left. Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But you'd nonetheless believed yourself that WMD activity was still pretty active?

SIS4: The evidence from UNSCOM was that the Iraqis were messing them about. The Iraqis were not co-operating with UNSCOM in the way that ultimately the Libyans did. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Iraqis were always trying to minimise what they had to give away, or to explain away what was discovered.

So the chicken farm incident wasn't a surprise in itself either. It wasn't surprising Hussein would say there was nothing there, not surprising that the Iraqis would try and blow

him up by producing a whole lot of stuff, which had not been disclosed, which should have been disclosed to UNSCOM.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But basically you discounted that particular observation [REDACTED]?

SIS4: In the same way as I myself, just as SIS4, discount so many anecdotal comments from Iraqi scientists that they weren't doing anything. They wouldn't say, "Yes, I was." Knowing how legalistic we are, what would they do next? Would they ever get a visa?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We need to discuss the dossier. Can you just take us through when you were first aware of the possibility of the dossier on Iraqi WMD in 2002?

SIS4: February/March.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So this is the first version?

SIS4: Before the good weather. It was a four-country project. We strongly disliked the idea, as we would do. All our training, all our culture, bias, would be against such a thing, and we were very relieved when we thought we had seen it off. That was the impression we got.

In my preparation for coming here today, I had a day in Head Office and was able to see some of the paperwork, and was astonished to see how much Whitehall activity there was through the year to September, which would give, for instance, a historian with access to the paper, the impression this was quite a continuous narrative from about February to September.

My clear memory was that we thought we had seen it off by April. There was quite a hot discussion, and then, as far as SIS were concerned or understood, it went away.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When did you see it coming back again?

SIS4: I took my summer holiday [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I got back to London in
early September, 3, 4, 5 September, and it was up and running
like a racehorse. It had just come back into play, and we felt
there wasn't very much we could do about it.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: ⁶ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

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

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

⁶ Sir Lawrence referred to evidence that showed that a senior Foreign Office official had believed that the publication of the dossier would be a mistake and that concerns had been raised within SIS at the time about the use of intelligence in this way and the implications for SIS.

[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So, [REDACTED] were you seeking to tone the whole thing down?

SIS4: I would have been.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But you weren't very successful.

SIS4: Absolutely not.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So how much were you involved in the actual drafting therefore?

SIS4: Not at all. I think I was shown drafts towards the end so everyone could say that I had seen them.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What was your view of what you saw?

SIS4: To be honest, I don't know that I reflected very deeply on it. To be honest, I don't think that I saw very clearly at that time what a difficult communication problem, exam question,

the dossier would pose for us. And I was certainly very relieved when the dossier came out: it wasn't greatly noticed.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] But it was later that things started to build up.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were you aware of the way in which the 45 minutes item had been included?

SIS4: I don't think that was a question brought to me.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But there clearly was pressure on SIS to provide good quality information.

SIS4: There had been throughout, yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And there was, as far as we can see, an attempt by SIS to respond. But you weren't part of that.

SIS4: I would have been aware that [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] teams were wrestling with all this, having a very difficult time.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were you involved in any of the liaison issues [REDACTED] on yellowcake or [REDACTED] mobile trailers?

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

⁷ Sir Lawrence referred to evidence that indicated that SIS had been concerned about the development of a dossier based on the JIC's assessments.

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

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

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

SIS4: And as you know, I think, from the Butler Report, in that complicated story⁸ there were two lines of narrative. There was one that was to do with intelligence peddling, fraud, diddly-dum, and there was the [REDACTED] line, which was, in my view [REDACTED] sound. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

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

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

SIS4: I can't remember the timing of the second story which caused such a fuss. I did not think that it was a very significant item because it said no more than that the Iraqis had sought, not that they had received, yellowcake. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

⁸ ie the yellowcake issue

[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Did you have much contact with Alastair Campbell through this period or generally?

SIS4: I never met him. I saw him across the Cabinet room table on the morning after 9/11 and I didn't know who he was. I had to ask.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Again, your reaction to all of this seems to have been a bit distaste for the process and happy to let other people get on with it. Is that a fair assessment?

SIS4: I don't know if it was as subjective as distaste, as much as a conviction that the problems of WMD and terrorism were bringing the Service close to the surface of policy where we were not well represented, well trained, nor had locus or authority.

I was brought up in a Service that kept well clear of policy issues, in the Cold War and Middle East and stuff in general, and had a very high opinion through my career of the Foreign Office people who handled the ministerial end of it all. It seemed to me that we were coming up to that interface at some speed, because of the nature of the problems and, I would also add as a personal comment, because of the failure of other departments to get up to speed on this sort of thing. We were rather being lumbered, and I felt we were getting into a situation which was awkward for us.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think that leads rather neatly --

THE CHAIRMAN: It does. Just as we leave this particular point, the dialogue between the Cabinet Office, which is really a drafting team, and the assessment staff --

SIS4: The dossier?

THE CHAIRMAN: The dossier, yes. It's going across from the assessment staff team to [the SIS] team on counter proliferation essentially, but it's not going up and down the SIS hierarchy.

SIS4: Well, it may have done, but I don't recall that as being a significant thing in my memory. I don't recall it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

SIS4: And the problems to do with the dossier were at a level where I would not have been very comfortable arguing about the proper expression of a [SIS] report.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just to finish then, is it possible to say that there was a controlling mind somewhere inside SIS about the SIS contribution to the dossier, but that it was [REDACTED] not at board level?

SIS4: Well, I wouldn't want to appear to be pushing down that responsibility. We were all pretty much of a mind about the dossier. By the time that came back into the picture, as I said, the racehorse was running and we didn't feel that there was an opportunity, an occasion, when we could throw ourselves in front of it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you. Rod, over to you, I think.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I want to go into a sort of broader range of generic questions.

We have heard from others about the pressure, and I suppose

⁹ Sir Lawrence referred to evidence that indicated that others had been pleased with the level of co-operation in SIS.

this is self-evident, that SIS found itself under in the build up towards the military action on Iraq to produce more information. As you said earlier, you were starting from quite a lot of past narrative, but a small intelligence base in that sense inside Iraq at the time.

In response to that pressure, what were you and your colleagues able to do, and in particular, what did you do to try to get more information on WMD?

SIS4: If we had had clear options, we wouldn't have felt the pressure so much. We would have been able to gear it through to our operational activity.

I think we felt the pressure because there weren't obvious lines to follow up which were going to be fruitful. So we had to be intense about looking at every opportunity. There was no signposted way in to Iraqi WMD.

¹⁰ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The emerging problem was the determination to find intelligence which would steer UNMOVIC, as it had become, on to a find which could be used at the UN, and which could move us all from deuce to game in the conflict with Saddam and the diplomatic conflict with Saddam.

¹⁰ The witness outlined, with reference to specific issues, the challenge, later identified by the ISG, of collecting intelligence when even those at the top of the regime had believed there was WMD. He outlined the main challenges for the intelligence community which was to find intelligence to support UNMOVIC. The witness described the need to find a 'silver bullet'

That was a different order of intelligence problem, given the focus and the heat developing on that.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So that was --

SIS4: We were looking for what became known as a silver bullet.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes. The search for the silver bullet became an increasingly high priority, a subject of enormous interest obviously at the highest political level, from early autumn 2002, rising to a sort of crescendo --

SIS4: As the game in New York developed.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- in the first quarter of 2003. As you say, it's not that easy just to whistle up additional sources.¹¹

[REDACTED]

SIS4: Sure, all of the above, and every case officer on the Service would have been reflecting, "Is there anything I can do to help?"

[REDACTED]

So it may be time to touch on the [new source on trial in September 2002] which looked like being a possible silver bullet in, I think, September.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I want to go through that story in detail. I don't know if -- I think we probably have got time. Perhaps

¹¹ Sir Roderic went on to ask about the specific steps the Service could take to secure additional material on WMD.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

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

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

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Right. So what I would like to ask about at

situation the lead was pursued because it might provide a 'silver bullet'

this stage is the handling of this report. Firstly, the caveats on it. It says:

"A new source on trial with direct access."

[REDACTED]

Do you think, given that this was a new and untried source, that this should have been more heavily caveated than that?

SIS4: Other than saying a new source on trial, what sort of caveat are you thinking of, within the usual conventions of the source description?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sometimes, from recollection, you have warnings about the reliability of a source, slightly more heavily underlined than that. This isn't very heavily underlined. But you think that's adequate? I'm asking you your professional view.

SIS4: ¹³ [REDACTED]

¹³ The witness outlined the normal conventions relating to caveating intelligence reports and set out his understanding of what had happened in this case.

[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: What happens is that on 10 September, and we have a note of the phone call, the Chief of SIS rings up the Chairman of the JIC and describes this as the edge of a significant intelligence breakthrough, new report on BCW. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He says:

"On balance C believes he can't risk putting the new material in."

I assume that means C thinks you can't put this material into the dossier that is being prepared at the time. But he goes on to talk about it as a big breakthrough. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So firstly, he's clearly very confident about it, and secondly, he's clearly rather excited about it. This is a single report from a new source.

Then on --

SIS4: Could I just say at that point --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes, please.

SIS4: -- that a single report from this new source doesn't come

out of the sky like a snowflake. It had a story behind it, and we knew our officers involved in it, our own [requirements] officers who were technical experts, and I will say something about them a little bit later.

If they thought it was important, it probably was very important. These people had spent their entire lives just doing chemical or biological weaponry and science, and who knew the Iraqi story intimately. If they said we know about this chap, we know about the account of his past, if he's possibly in touch with us and going to send us stuff, that's a very major development. It's a major development at a time when we are being circled by people calling for a silver bullet, and knowing that the time was running out in New York.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: This is the heart of the question.

SIS4: So the Chief would have been within his remit simply to say, we may be on to something here. It may be good.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: You are under this intense pressure to produce a silver bullet, and this comes into your hands. Did that pressure mean that the due diligence was not done thoroughly enough? You talked about careful and urgent follow up. Shouldn't careful and urgent follow up have preceded communicating this bit straight through to the highest levels?

SIS4: In what sense do you think there hadn't been careful and due diligence in a clearly necessarily opaque situation? We could hardly ring [the new source on trial] up and say, "Is this right?"

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The implication here -- indeed more than that. We have had evidence that pretty well as soon as the report came in, it was being communicated -- and it's a raw piece of intelligence, it's not a fully assessed piece of

intelligence -- straight through to the Prime Minister. Now, that's a reflection of the pressure that you talked about for a silver bullet.

SIS4: I think it's a reflection of the Prime Minister probably already knowing about the possibility, and therefore wanting to see the product. Ministers always like to see intelligence product, as well as the JIC-digested, assessed, version.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: There's nothing to suggest that he knew about the possibility -- this was the first news, it would appear from the files, of the possibility -- that the major product was going to be the [possible additional material], because then you have got --

SIS4: I can't --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- a trail of papers showing the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary having conversations with the Chief about where is this [additional material] and what is holding it up.

SIS4: Wasn't there -- I don't recall -- you tell me if --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: It's in the papers we both have.

SIS4: -- an indication to the Foreign Secretary that something might be happening before the [SIS] report was put out. Was the [SIS report] the first indication to these senior people that progress was being made? Or had there been prior conversations?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: This is a question I would like to ask you. What I have here in the evidence that we both have is that, apart from that phone call, which clearly makes it sound very new, indeed it's described as a new report on BCW, on 12 September -- so that conversation was the 10th, the report came out on the 11th. On 12 September, C and [another SIS

officer] briefed the Prime Minister on [the new source on trial]

SIS4: So he was briefed after the report went out.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So the report has gone out, and in pretty short order the Chief is across in Number 10, discussing this single bit of intelligence. So that's giving this single bit of intelligence very high importance. You would agree that that's pretty unusual. It's not unprecedented but it's unusual. It means you --

SIS4: I think it's --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: You think this is very important.

SIS4: It's a vivid expression of those days we were living.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes.

SIS4: The Prime Minister was interested in a silver bullet. If there was a gleam of a silver bullet anywhere, he would want to know about it, and he would want to see the product. That was not hazarding a guess in those days. Clear answers.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: If you had been the Chief, would you have taken a slightly more cautious line, knowing how much excitement this was going to cause, this promise of a silver bullet, at a high political level? He didn't have to tell the Prime Minister straight away. He could have waited to check it out a bit more thoroughly before doing so.

SIS4: As my mind reflects on the very difficult question you have just asked me, let me take the second point.

I don't think there should be abroad in the Committee an idea that there are any mechanisms for validating, checking incoming intelligence which weren't taken within the constraints of that time.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] this was potentially a very, very serious breakthrough. It would have changed so much for Greenstock in New York, and so on and so forth.

So this wasn't something that we neglected. There wasn't anything we could do, other than patiently and securely, without damaging the goose with its egg, edge the casework forward to see if it turned out to be as good as first described.

I'm not sure in those circumstances that it would have been right (1) to deny people the intelligence, or (2) not to offer an update for which we knew people were desperate.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: In that desperation, do you recall or think that your normal handling processes for validation, through your requirements officers and the rest of it -- and I'm not an expert on that -- were shortcircuited by the Chief reaching down into the machine, getting hold of the promise of the silver bullet, and rushing it across the road and across the Atlantic?

SIS4: I don't like the idea of him reaching down into the machine. Material of this kind would have been copied to him. He wouldn't have had to stand a [Requirements] officer up

¹⁴ The witness described the constraints and limitations of the validation process.

against the wall and say, "Empty your pockets".

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was the due diligence done?

SIS4: There isn't a schedule of due diligence available for potential secret agents.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you have procedures that you use to validate.

SIS4: ¹⁵ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you think that in this case, those things that you could do were done, or that the time pressures --

SIS4: What I divine to be the direction of questioning is the issue of whether the Chief detonated a psychotropic line of thinking and excitement in the Prime Minister by giving him what in quieter days might be thought rather precipitate briefing on casework which turned out not to be real.

I don't think it's for me to offer a judgment on that.

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

¹⁵ The witness provided further details on the validation process.

[REDACTED] He did not act, in my view, unprofessionally.

This wasn't a matter of great debate, or gossip, "guess what he's done now", in the Office. That would not be a fair account.

He felt, as Chief -- and don't forget, we don't have a private office in Head Office. We don't have a local minister living with us. The Chief has to take all these political decisions on his own shoulders, bearing in mind his own relationship with the Prime Minister and his ability, man to man, to deal with him. Heavy responsibilities.

He judged that Blair needed to know, and he told him. I don't think that he did a wrong thing. The style may be questioned, but I don't think he was wrong to do what he did.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now --

SIS4: Of course, it makes a wonderful story in retrospect when the bits which weren't clear to us at the time are tabled. But the motivation, the analysis and motivation at the time, ante the denouement, stands.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Those points are all well taken. When he told the Prime Minister, with [another SIS officer] and this of course was an extremely sensitive bit of information at this time, those present at the meeting are recorded as being Jonathan Powell, Sir David Manning and Alastair Campbell.

Are you surprised that Alastair Campbell should be present, given this couldn't be used in the dossier or in the public arena?

SIS4: I'm not surprised at all.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Should he have been present?

SIS4: Post 1997, the culture, disciplines, attitudes of HMG went through phases of profound change. It wouldn't have happened before, closer to the Cold War. But SIS doesn't always have it in its hand to discipline HMG, not at the level of Number 10 anyway, or control its social activities. They have somebody in the room. I think it's difficult for the Chief to say, "Can I have a private word, Prime Minister. I can't do it in front of Campbell". Difficult, given that he knows Campbell has already seen so much stuff. The water is already over the dam.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And used some of it in ways that didn't attract great approval in your service, but that's a separate issue.

When the Chief briefed the Foreign Secretary on this, orally, he discussed it on 27 September, and we have again his office's account of that. The Foreign Secretary asked several questions about [the new source on trial] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

SIS4: ¹⁶ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

¹⁶ Sir Roderic outlined the specific questions that the Foreign Secretary had asked about the new source on trial. The witness outlined the level of confidence that SIS had had in the source at this point and the reasons for those views. Sir Roderic then asked further questions about some details in the intelligence report and the extent to which there was collateral for them from other sources. The witness set out the steps which were open to SIS in these circumstances to validate the intelligence but explained that he was unsighted on the exact steps taken in this case.

[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So the report eventually is withdrawn in early July 2003. Do you know why the Prime Minister, when he gave evidence to Lord Hutton on 28 August 2003, was under the impression that the process of validation of the [t] intelligence was still continuing?

SIS4: When was the --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Early July 2003 was when the report was withdrawn.

SIS4: I think that was one of life's ghastlinesses. I don't think the withdrawal notice was sent to the Prime Minister.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I may be wrong in early July, because I have two different bits of information, one of which says 29 July that it was withdrawn.

SIS4: Whatever. I don't think the withdrawal notice was sent to Number 10 because withdrawal notices are not major new intelligence. They are not the sort of thing ministers get up early to read. What they do affect, importantly, is the integrity of the record.

I imagine that the [requirements] officer issuing the withdrawal report took them and thought, "They won't be

interested in this". How wrong he was, and what a skid-up within just a few days, when the Prime Minister said at a public inquiry something which was probably not the case. It's very embarrassing.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: A cock-up rather than conspiracy, one can say?

SIS4: Always.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can I just get back into the area we were in of a more generic kind? This has illustrated, I think, a lot of very important points, but just to try to draw some conclusions, not only from [the new source on trial in September 2002], but from all of this pressure, and make sure that I have correctly understood your explanations.

¹⁹ [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

¹⁹ Sir Roderic asked about the extent to which SIS had been obliged to rely on sources who were not WMD experts and the implications of that position. The witness confirmed SIS did not generally have agents with first-hand, inside knowledge of Iraq' nuclear, chemical, biological or ballistic missile programmes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, a still wider question. You spoke earlier, when discussing the dossier, about intelligence being used for domestic political use in the UK. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

How did you feel that this was manifesting itself?

SIS4: Because the Service and a great amount of the Service's interest and operations were getting close to the surface.

Who was there in Government that was chasing down Iraqi WMD, and who understood the subject? What were the policy people doing to develop a conceptualisation of policy approach to these problems on the basis of the intelligence? What operationalisation, in policy terms, was coming out of intelligence on terror, crime and WMD?

I have to say, very little. Very little indeed. The impression we got was that all this would be left to the agencies, as a sort of law enforcement activity.

This moved us in to closer contact with ministers who were facing extremely difficult political decisions, and I could see the threat to the peace of mind and independence of our officers which they needed, to go off and do this difficult work in foreign places. If we became a Whitehall-centred outfit, we would no longer be extrovert and good in the field. Politicisation in that sense.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were you worried about crossing a line? The classic position, as indeed has been expressed to us by other witnesses, and no surprise here, is that, and I quote:

"The principle that intelligence is on one side of the line and policy making is on the other."

Now, earlier, when talking about the stuff in late 2001, you said SIS could produce something very quickly when required by Number 10. You were a quick response organisation. Other people have said the same.

SIS4: With me sitting down and writing a note, not producing a case or a silver bullet.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Do you think that SIS got too close to the policy making, too involved in Number 10?

SIS4: I think there's a high volume of urban myth to that effect abroad in the world, and many people are convinced of that.

I think that we may not have been as wise as we would like to have been in retrospect, collectively. I don't think, in the circumstances of those days - completely different from my memory of top level consideration of intelligence in the Cold War - that we got too close to the sun. The Icarus metaphor is used time and again. It has limited applicability because Tony Blair was not the sun and Dearlove was not a child with wax wings. They were consenting adults, wrestling with

unprecedented policy riddles.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I suppose this therefore brings me to the next question, which is looking at it from the other end of the telescope. The world had changed hugely by this time. International terrorism, WMD, the speed of global communications, meant that we were operating in a totally different environment from the Cold War.

Is it actually realistic, looking back at the lessons of this episode, to think that you can now, particularly when dealing with crisis and possible conflict, maintain that traditional distinction between intelligence provision on one side and policy making on the other? Isn't it necessary to have the intelligence Chief at the table, providing his opinion, and maybe -- indeed, certainly -- helping in the execution of the policy?

SIS4: I wouldn't welcome that development. I can only speak for myself [REDACTED]

Because of the importance of keeping our very few staff [REDACTED] [REDACTED] who have got to cover the world) and you can't have officers doing policy work --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]?

SIS4: Yes. We don't have the luxury to have them tethered out in Whitehall. Not in my view.

I think that it's natural that senior people would gravitate towards us for a word of advice, comfort, correction, particularly when there was no one else to talk to.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, on that point --

SIS4: And this is something which individuals manage in a very individual way. I would have done it differently. I believe in a Chief who stays south of the river and is not so easy to get

hold of. That's my daydream. But that's a [SIS4] daydream. Real life, with green phones and Brents, is different.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Maybe doesn't go with the Prime Minister's foreign affairs adviser on a joint mission to Washington, but goes separately?

SIS4: Sorry, say that again.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Maybe a Chief who doesn't accompany the Prime Minister's foreign affairs adviser on missions to Washington, to see Condi Rice, as well as George Tenet, but, as it were, stays separate? You nod on that point.

Can I just ask, I think, one final question here? You have said in the --

SIS4: He had no option, by the way. He had no choice. But I wouldn't have any choice either. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were you partly having to fill a gap that had been left because the Foreign Office was not able to fulfil the functions assigned to it, or to fulfil them in sufficiently timely and effective manner?

SIS4: I think our conversations got pretty frank.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: We are in private.

SIS4: ²⁰ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Foreign Office Iraq unit, I think, came into being in about October 2002.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Iraq Planning Unit came into being in the middle of February 2003.

SIS4: So I think it is fair to say [REDACTED] that there was an absence. Why wasn't Dearlove a voice among many? Why wasn't there a polyphony? I remember Blair saying to me once, after the war, "The problem about this job, [SIS4], is there's no shortage of bad advice". There seems to have been a shortage of advice altogether, of a speculative, deliberative kind, which you would have expected, for instance, in discussing those annual nuclear exercises we used to have years ago, where the importance of collective, deliberated, balanced advice had to be taken into -- had to be part of it. It was a different world ten years later.

²⁰ The witness referred to other evidence that the Foreign Office was saying in February 2003 that there was not going to be a war.

So the Chief had to be close to Number 10 because he was called to Number 10, because only he had the staff available really, maybe, to lay out some of the inner realities of this stuff to him. Obviously immediate good access to the intelligence. Only he had the operational levers to try and advance the UK position in this race at the UN.

If there wasn't much other debate and advice out there, I don't think that's something that he should be answerable for.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have come to the end of the session. Much ground covered, and usefully. Thank you very much for that.

I think we will almost certainly want to ask for a further short session to plough and then hoe and perhaps even sow some of the untilled ground. So I won't ask you for your broad or final reflections today, because that can wait, unless there is anything that, in the next minute, you absolutely are bursting to say before we finish.

SIS4: Time for lunch, if we will meet again. If we won't, then there are one or two things I would like to say.

THE CHAIRMAN: The transcript of this session will be available, though only in this building, at your convenience. With that, I'll close.

(The hearing adjourned)