

1 (3.15 pm)

2 SIR DAVID OMAND

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Welcome back everyone, and those who have
4 joined us. Because we are probably going on until about
5 5 o'clock, if not a bit after, we will have a break in
6 the middle of this at some point.

7 Can I start by welcoming Sir David Omand? You held,
8 Sir David, the post of Security and Intelligence
9 Co-ordinator in the Cabinet Office from June 2003 until
10 your retirement in April 2005?

11 I think I should, for the record, say that the
12 nature of Sir David's responsibilities mean that some
13 aspects that the Inquiry may need to address would have
14 to be covered in a private hearing, but we shall cover
15 as much ground as we can in this public hearing this
16 afternoon.

17 Now, we recognise, and I say this every time,
18 witnesses are giving evidence based on their
19 recollection of events, and we, of course, cross-check
20 what we hear against the papers to which we have access.

21 I remind every witness that he will later be asked
22 to sign a transcript of his evidence to the effect that
23 the evidence given is truthful, fair and accurate.

24 Just to begin, Sir David, the role to which you were
25 appointed in June 2002 was a new one. Could you

1 describe it?

2 SIR DAVID OMAND: Thank you, Chairman. Yes, I was appointed
3 in summer 2002 as a Permanent Secretary in the
4 Cabinet Office overseeing the Civil Contingencies
5 Committee on the understanding that, in September, on
6 the retirement of Sir Richard Wilson, I would then take
7 over from him responsibility as Accounting Officer for
8 the Single Intelligence Account, chairmanship of the
9 Permanent Secretary's Intelligence Committee and
10 chairmanship of the Official Committee on Security,
11 which had rather fallen into disuse because of other
12 pressures on the Cabinet Secretary's time.

13 I retired, as you say, in 2005. I should say that
14 I'm now visiting professor at the War Studies Department
15 at King's College, London.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I should say I'm also a professor.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Interests declared.

18 SIR DAVID OMAND: Just to go on and make a further point
19 about my responsibilities -- the new role I was carrying out -- in
20 the Cabinet Office I reported to the Cabinet Secretary and,
21 unlike Sir David Manning, I did not have another role
22 inside Downing Street as an adviser to the
23 Prime Minister.

24 I was, if you like, a senior secretariat member of
25 the Cabinet Office. I was secretary of the

1 Prime Minister's committee on international terrorism,
2 the secretary of the rather active two Home Secretary
3 chaired committees on counter-terrorism and resilience, and
4 chaired a number of official Cabinet subcommittees.

5 As the Butler Report, I think, commented, I didn't
6 attend Cabinet. I wasn't a secretary of Cabinet. If I had
7 insisted on that, which would have been a rather
8 interesting thing to do, of course, if I had insisted on
9 that, I would, as it were, have displaced somebody else
10 who actually would have had rather more interest in the
11 majority of Cabinet business.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Can you say a little about the
13 dual role that you exercised with respect to the
14 Chairman of the JIC? You were a member of the JIC, as
15 I understand it, right from the beginning, and you were,
16 in effect, the line manager for the Chairman of the JIC
17 but not, as it were, interpolated between him and the
18 Prime Minister.

19 SIR DAVID OMAND: That was a condition of my appointment and
20 was indeed explicitly stated in the press release when
21 I was appointed.

22 Again, the Butler Committee Report picked up on this
23 point. I think paragraph 607 of that report commented
24 that, as a result of my appointment, the
25 Cabinet Secretary is no longer so directly involved in

1 the chain through which intelligence reaches the
2 Prime Minister.

3 I think, Chairman, in a remark you made in your
4 session with David Manning, you commented that my
5 appointment had taken the Cabinet Secretary out of the
6 loop. It wouldn't be correct to assume that any
7 Cabinet Secretary has been in the loop in the provision
8 of advice on assessed intelligence. That has always
9 been a duty that has fallen on the Chairman, -- at least since
10 the Second World War, the Chairman of the Joint
11 Intelligence Committee.

12 So a condition of my appointment was that I would
13 not interpose my judgment on the content of the
14 intelligence --

15 THE CHAIRMAN: But the arrangements for intelligence
16 assessment -- correction, the co-ordination of oversight
17 of the agencies, was the responsibility directly of the
18 Cabinet Secretary until your own appointment, when you
19 took that on?

20 SIR DAVID OMAND: He was the chair of the
21 Permanent Secretary's Committee on Intelligence, but
22 there was also a Co-ordinator, and that duty, when I took
23 over, was actually being exercised by the Chairman of
24 the Joint Intelligence Committee.

25 I think the easiest way to describe what I was

1 trying to do, was appointed to do in that respect, is to
2 talk about the health of the intelligence community. My
3 job was to make sure that it was in good health, argue
4 for its resources and negotiate those with the Treasury,
5 ensure that the Agencies were working together, try and generate
6 some efficiencies and be on the lookout, as I did with
7 the creation of the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre for
8 new ways in which the community could be made more
9 effective.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. As a matter of interest, how did this
11 piece of evolution within the whole Cabinet Office
12 central machinery fit with other aspects of that
13 evolution?

14 SIR DAVID OMAND: Where would I start? If we look at the
15 Cabinet Office and Number 10 together and we look across
16 all of government activity, you would see a rather
17 confused picture. I recall describing it at
18 a Cabinet Office management conference once as like looking
19 at a distant view of a range of mountains with
20 individual snow-covered peaks on top of which were
21 demi-gods hurling thunderbolts down on the plains below.

22 It was almost impossible to put it all in two
23 dimensions on a management organisation chart. It was
24 very confused, there were dotted lines, and there had
25 been a mushrooming of units inside Number 10, and some

1 in the Cabinet Office: delivery units, policy units,
2 strategy units, public service reform units,
3 deregulation units, and so on.

4 A point worth making perhaps is that the arrangement
5 had always been that Downing Street and the
6 Cabinet Office are funded from the same vote.

7 I inherited an overspend and there wasn't enough money to
8 pay for all of these units, as they had been set up, and
9 the Treasury kept us -- I expect
10 deliberately -- on a very tight leash in order to
11 restrain the growth of Downing Street.

12 So it was quite hard to, for example, produce modern
13 IT for the Cabinet Office. It was quite hard to staff
14 it up at the level I would have wanted.

15 Downing Street had gone their own way on information
16 technology, very sensibly, and had afforded themselves
17 some state-of-the-art technology. At the
18 Cabinet Office, we were struggling to buy the licence
19 for the latest version of Microsoft Office.

20 We did, however, recognise -- and I think
21 Andrew Turnbull referred to this -- where there were
22 some priorities. We did find money for OD Secretariat,
23 to expand them at the time of Iraq. We did find money
24 to enable the Joint Intelligence Committee's assessment
25 staff to work at full tilt as the crisis -- the run-up

1 to the campaign -- developed.

2 But it was a bit of a struggle and not necessarily
3 ideal. It was also the case that the Overseas and
4 Defence Secretariat, who were hard pressed on Iraq, were
5 also valiantly providing me the sole support I had to
6 work on counter-terrorism strategy. I have nothing but
7 praise for them, they did a fantastic job, but it was
8 a stretch.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: A paper analysis might suggest, looking at
10 your own role and that of the Cabinet Secretary, that
11 you have the Cabinet Secretary responsible to the
12 Prime Minister and the Cabinet for co-ordinating policy
13 advice on anything of significance, sufficient
14 significance. But you, for your part, had security and
15 intelligence very much in your sights, but are not
16 attending Cabinet, and are not, are you, particularly
17 attending ministerial meetings on broad policy unless
18 there is a very dominant intelligence component. Is
19 that right?

20 SIR DAVID OMAND: With the exception of counter-terrorism
21 where I was the secretary of the relevant committees.
22 I didn't attend ministerial meetings on Iraq, with
23 the exception that, when the fire-fighters' strike began
24 to loom, there were separate meetings the Prime Minister
25 held with the Secretary of State for Defence and the

1 Chief of Defence Staff and myself and the team working
2 on civil contingencies.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, because of the interaction in terms of
4 demands for military assistance.

5 SIR DAVID OMAND: Precisely.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Given the primacy of intelligence in
7 justifying the whole Iraq strategy, however you choose
8 to frame the objective: regime change, disarmament,
9 whatever, in which order you put them, intelligence is
10 the fundamental basis for the case made.

11 Do you think that there was sufficient involvement
12 from intelligence professionalism, in which I include
13 yourself, in the advice that goes to Ministers
14 throughout the period up to your appointment and since?
15 I know you have John Scarlett attending most, if not
16 all, significant ministerial meetings. Was that enough?

17 SIR DAVID OMAND: I would first just gently qualify the
18 point about the sole basis, in that there was Saddam's
19 past behaviour and there was later on his obstructionism
20 of the United Nations and inspection. So that's just
21 a mild qualification.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Though, once the inspectors are out of Iraq
23 from 1998, there is no internal sources evidence.

24 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes. In terms of advice on intelligence,
25 the Prime Minister as I understand it, at his meetings

1 on Iraq, always had the Chairman of the Joint
2 Intelligence Committee present, and, for most of them,
3 also the chief of the Secret Intelligence Service.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: That does bring me to the question which did
5 come up before the Butler Committee years ago, which is
6 the degree to which Ministers are sufficiently or well
7 prepared, as well as experienced, in understanding
8 intelligence assessments, the very nature of
9 intelligence, its limitations, as well as its potential.

10 Would you like to offer an observation on that?

11 SIR DAVID OMAND: When Ministers come new into government,
12 then this is an area they have to learn about. They
13 would normally not have had previous experience and one
14 of the things that the heads of agencies -- I have done
15 it myself as a previous head of an intelligence
16 agency -- is to go round them and make sure they do
17 understand, to invite them to visit the headquarters of
18 the agencies and so on.

19 By the time we are in 2002, it is a government that
20 I think has been through a number of crises and they
21 have got a reasonable feel for it. But there is perhaps
22 a tension, which is innate between, if you like, the
23 political or policy-making approach, which is to shape
24 the world to match your demands, and the analysts' or
25 academic approach, which is to try and, as it were,

1 impose structure on the facts to assemble them and to
2 draw hypotheses from them. The policy-maker does tend
3 to say, "That's all very well, but just try harder".

4 So this is, you know, well documented in the
5 literature on both sides of the Atlantic. It is always
6 going to be there. I think it was present in this
7 circumstance as well.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: It was quite striking -- and I'm not quoting
9 him direct, so I don't think I'm misrepresenting him.
10 But when we took evidence from Geoff Hoon yesterday, he
11 did say at one point -- and he was a very experienced
12 minister by then, in terms of the use and access to
13 intelligence -- he could imagine it being certain in
14 effect, whereas, on the one view, at any rate, every
15 intelligence assessment has elements of uncertainty or
16 indeed misjudgment in it, because it is a judgment, it
17 is not a statement of a fact or a set of facts. Is that
18 right?

19 SIR DAVID OMAND: That must be right. That's the classic
20 statement of the position, but I think just to go back
21 on the point I was making a moment ago about the
22 difference between, if you like, the policy world and
23 the analytical world, I think I have lost count of the
24 number of occasions on which I have seen governments of
25 all persuasions receive carefully calibrated, measured,

1 "On the one hand ... on the other", advice from
2 officials, and then gone the next day to the House of
3 Commons and stated with complete certainty that the
4 option they have chosen is, of course, fully backed by
5 the facts and is the one that should be supported.

6 We have an adversarial political system. A minister
7 who goes to the House and says, "I think, on balance,
8 I have probably got the right policy, but there is
9 a possibility the evidence might not support my case",
10 that politician is not going to survive very long, and
11 I think this is just innate, it is in the system, and we
12 mustn't be too precious about ministers' wish to, as it
13 were, make their case.

14 The big mistake we made -- and I confess my own part
15 in this, as the Butler Committee pointed out -- was the
16 way we actually combined the analysis with making of the case by
17 government, a perfectly legitimate thing for them to do.
18 They were indeed perfectly convinced with the
19 presentation of the summary of what the JIC had found.

20 We didn't spot the potential problems that would get
21 us into. I certainly wouldn't recommend doing it that way again.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: We will come on to that a bit later, if we
23 may. I was only going to observe that the sin of
24 overstatement or overcertainty, whatever the political
25 pressures, doesn't get its absolution by being repeated.

1 There is clearly a lasting problem. You are telling us,
2 I think, it is innate, it is perhaps insoluble, but it
3 is there and needs to be recognised at the very least.

4 SIR DAVID OMAND: I think that really is the lesson: that
5 you have to be aware that it is there, and, insofar as
6 it is within the art of the politically possible, that
7 should be taken into account.

8 But just to give you an example, which I checked up
9 on before coming before you, in the Joint Intelligence
10 Committee and more broadly across Europe and the other side
11 of the Atlantic, we did all believe that Saddam was
12 hiding illegitimate programmes. For example,
13 Dr Brian Jones in a now rather famous internal minute
14 within the defence intelligence staff, correctly pointed
15 out that you can't say from intelligence that you know
16 something. That's not a sensible thing to say.

17 But in that very minute in which he said that, he also said:
18 "Whilst we are more than ever convinced that Iraq
19 has continued to produce BW agent ..."

20 We shouldn't describe it in exactly that way, he
21 said but "Whilst we are more than ever convinced" is
22 exactly the kind of thing we were all saying to each
23 other. We were wrong.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: The Butler Committee reports contained some
25 analysis of the group think phenomenon, that it is all

1 too easy.

2 Can I come to specifics, Sir David about Iraq, and
3 one thing which this Committee is increasingly
4 interested in is the quality of the information
5 available to government before -- throughout 2002 and
6 into the March 2003 period, about the state of affairs
7 in Iraq and the prospects for the eventuality of an
8 invasion and the toppling of a regime and the state of
9 Iraq thereafter and the challenge that would pose.

10 Now, John Scarlett in evidence to this Committee,
11 told us that the JIC produced two assessments in early
12 2003, one on the north and one on the south in terms of
13 the impact of military action.

14 That's about a month before the action actually
15 starts. There isn't a sense that the JIC -- you may say
16 we must ask John Scarlett about this -- over the longer
17 run had, as it were, an evolving assessment of the
18 likely state of Iraq following a regime change brought
19 about by military action. Similarly, of course, the
20 open source material -- it is hard to find, but just on
21 the intelligence assessment, was this too little too
22 late or was this not a subject for intelligence
23 assessment?

24 SIR DAVID OMAND: My own view is that it would be a subject
25 for intelligence assessment. I'm not one who belongs to

1 the school that says that intelligence assessment should
2 only concern itself with secret intelligence and its
3 interpretation. I think it has to be put in a context,
4 and open source information is a valid part of the
5 assessment. The assessment staff in the Cabinet Office
6 does routinely have a great deal of open source
7 information available, everything from BBC monitoring to
8 academic publications and so on.

9 I rather shared the view of the Butler Committee
10 that, with hindsight, we probably didn't know as much as
11 we could conceivably have known if more effort had been
12 available to put into talking to academics, visitors,
13 people who had been to Iraq etc. I have heard it from
14 a number of academics that the infrastructure of Iraq
15 was in a worse state than probably the intelligence
16 community was assessing it to be, and that's perhaps the
17 sort of area where we could have perhaps done a bit
18 more.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. One witness -- and indeed I think it
20 was Geoff Hoon himself -- said Iraq was probably the
21 most photographed, in terms of overhead imagery, country
22 in the world.

23 SIR DAVID OMAND: That doesn't tell you whether the pipeline
24 is connected to anything.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: That was the question. Just going back very

1 briefly to the two assessments on the post-invasion
2 perspective state of Iraq, it is a question whether they
3 found an audience, frankly. It is hard to know from the
4 way JIC assessments are circulated and submitted, what
5 the take is, actually.

6 Do you happen to have any recollection of whether
7 they caused a ripple or a stir or were they just part of
8 the flow?

9 SIR DAVID OMAND: I have no direct information on that at
10 all. I suspect they were part of the flow. I have no
11 reason to believe, though, that those assessments were
12 not carefully read and John Scarlett has told me at the
13 time, and has told me since, that he would be
14 asked questions about the latest set of assessments when
15 he attended meetings with the Prime Minister.

16 So I have no belief that they were being pushed to
17 one side. I think they probably were being read and the
18 same would be true in relation to the other things we
19 were saying in assessments about terrorism, for example.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Your responsibilities, as
21 intelligence and security coordinator would include an
22 overview of the priorities the JIC were tasked with,
23 though, not, as it were, total control over them,
24 I think, and I would like to turn just briefly to the
25 post-invasion period and the deployment of our

1 intelligence assets over that period.

2 There were some surprising events which took us by
3 surprise. Again, the same question as before: is that
4 a matter for secret intelligence? Once you are in the
5 place and you have got lots and lots of soldiers and
6 others on the ground, is that secret intelligence
7 material, you know, a fertile ground for it or are
8 things like the beginnings of an insurgency things to be
9 looked for more openly, quite frankly?

10 SIR DAVID OMAND: I think it is quite helpful to go back to
11 the classic tactical operational and strategic
12 distinction. There would be tactical assessment going
13 on on the ground and --

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Essentially military?

15 SIR DAVID OMAND: Without getting into classified defence territory,
16 the national agencies would be
17 providing support by their own staff directly in theatre
18 and there are well practised arrangements for doing
19 that.

20 You would have operational level assessment going
21 on, including, at the Permanent Joint Headquarters, on how
22 the campaign is actually going and discussions with the
23 United States over that, and then you would have
24 a strategic assessment in relation to the ministerial
25 objectives: where are we getting to?

1 Certainly in the JIC we looked at questions like,
2 were we facing an insurgency and what was the Al-Qaeda in
3 Iraq phenomenon. All of those were subject to strategic
4 assessment.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. That focus on Iraq from our -- the
6 entirety of our intelligence strategic assets, continued
7 through your time?

8 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: I'll stop there and ask Sir Lawrence to pick
10 up the questions.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We have already had some references
12 to the September dossier, but I would like just to ask
13 you some more questions about it.

14 Now, your role in this is as an ordinary member of
15 the JIC, rather than particularly in your Cabinet Office
16 role? Is that fair?

17 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes. One addition I would make, wearing
18 my security hat, I felt it my responsibility make sure
19 the arrangements were such that the dossier did not
20 inadvertently give away information which would be
21 useful to a potential enemy, and there is a long history
22 of ministers inadvertently compromising intelligence
23 sources from 1844 and the Mazzini affair, Baldwin in
24 1927, Ted Rowlands in the Falklands. I did not want
25 this dossier to be that kind of document. That's one of

1 the reasons why, with John Scarlett, we were determined
2 that Alastair Campbell shouldn't write it, nor a press
3 officer in the Foreign Office.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So how did the actual process of
5 writing appear to you? How were you involved? Were you
6 looking through it particularly for unwarranted
7 disclosures or were you looking at it in terms of the
8 actual content as well?

9 SIR DAVID OMAND: Both, which is what I would do with
10 a Joint Intelligence Committee paper, which would be
11 circulated in advance, and members of the committee
12 would read it. If they thought there were points they
13 wanted to fire in in advance of a meeting, they would do
14 so. So I didn't see it in any different a light really
15 than an ordinary JIC assessment when it came to process;
16 in other words, two members of the assessment staff were
17 detailed to write it essentially, supervised by the
18 Chief of the Assessments Staff, superintended by the
19 Chairman of the JIC, who took a personal interest in the
20 actual drafting of it. Once I knew that he was doing
21 that, I, frankly, after about the first circulation,
22 said, "Well, that's fine, it is clearly being handled in
23 the right way".

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But there were a number of drafts.
25 Did the JIC meet and discuss individual drafts or was it

1 all done --

2 SIR DAVID OMAND: No, we had one discussion. You would have to check
3 this against the records, but we did have one JIC
4 meeting at which it was actually tabled, and then we had
5 a second JIC meeting at which we discussed where it had
6 got to, and we recognised it was almost
7 in final form, but I don't recall we actually discussed
8 the text at that second meeting.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So it was only in the first meeting
10 you discussed the text?

11 SIR DAVID OMAND: That's my memory.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is a long document. So how was
13 this done? Were individuals picking up particular
14 things that fall within their normal area of concern?
15 Was it about the overall impression being conveyed?

16 SIR DAVID OMAND: It is worth stepping back a pace. On the
17 Joint Intelligence Committee you have got three groups
18 of people. You have got the intelligence experts or the
19 chiefs of the agencies, you have got the Chairman of the
20 JIC and the Chief of the Assessments Staff, very much
21 engaged in the production of the paper, and then you
22 have got senior policy-makers from the major departments
23 concerned in Whitehall, and the comments you get depend
24 on which group they are coming from.

25 So the agencies would be looking very, very

1 carefully at every word to see: (a) is nothing being
2 revealed that shouldn't be revealed, (b) do we have
3 other information we could add in? Is our intelligence
4 being used properly? Is it being misunderstood? That's
5 their role on the JIC. The assessments staff are
6 keeping the score and trying to keep it consistent with
7 previous JIC assessments and pointing out to the
8 committee if it is not consistent, and the
9 policy-makers (I have been a policy-maker on the Joint
10 Intelligence Committee as well as on the intelligence
11 side) are rather like publishers'
12 readers and they would be saying, "I don't see the
13 justification for this statement", or, "This doesn't
14 seem to be consistent with the earlier parts of it," or
15 even, "This is far too weak, can't we say something
16 stronger?"

17 That's the kind of debate you normally would get in
18 a meeting of the JIC.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In a meeting that you had, were
20 people from what has been described as the
21 presentational team present, people who were on the
22 press side or communications side?

23 SIR DAVID OMAND: No, they certainly don't get into the JIC.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Because there are references, as you
25 know, in the drafting process to these -- to

1 John Scarlett saying that they were included.

2 SIR DAVID OMAND: Their views were sought perfectly
3 properly. Why shouldn't they be? This is a public
4 document being presented to Parliament by the
5 Prime Minister.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But the meetings you were at, it was
7 the normal JIC crowd?

8 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes, yes. There were -- I think you have
9 already discussed this -- two meetings in Number 10, at
10 which the Chief of the Assessments Staff and/or the
11 Chairman of the JIC attended, which were chaired by
12 Alastair Campbell on presentation, not on the substance
13 of the dossier. That struck me as perfectly proper.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: These were before --

15 SIR DAVID OMAND: Indeed, there had been such a meeting
16 in April when an earlier version of the dossier was
17 being looked at.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's interesting. But the
19 meetings you are describing now, that was before the
20 actual production rather than afterwards?

21 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In this meeting, did you get sight
23 of the foreword as well as the --

24 SIR DAVID OMAND: No, that was circulated separately and
25 I have had to refresh my memory and I discover I did see

1 it. It was circulated by the Chairman of the JIC to JIC
2 members pretty late in the day. He got it, I think,
3 from Alastair Campbell and he flashed it round the JIC.
4 I discovered that I actually took my copy and
5 highlighted bits that needed polishing, sent it back.
6 Some of those got incorporated and some didn't. But my
7 memory -- and as I say, I had to refresh my memory -- is that
8 I didn't pay that much attention to this bit of it --

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Now --

11 SIR DAVID OMAND: -- which was a mistake.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The phrase "beyond doubt" has now
13 been repeated often in these sessions. So are you
14 saying that no alarm bells were rung --

15 SIR DAVID OMAND: I totally failed to spot the potential
16 problem that would arise through the disjunction between
17 the statement of case being directly associated with the text
18 of the dossier. We were commenting on this as
19 a document the Prime Minister was going to produce under
20 his own name, and he was convinced. So his saying so
21 was not really very exceptional.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: It is quite an intricate little statement in
23 the foreword. It says:

24 "He is convinced that the assessment shows ..."

25 So he bundles together his own inner conviction with

1 what the assessment is alleged -- or in his belief that
2 it demonstrates --

3 SIR DAVID OMAND: If we all had had more time and we had
4 thought about it more, perhaps we would have been
5 suggesting different things, but there are we are.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You mentioned your eagerness to make
7 sure this was the property of the JIC in its production
8 and you have also mentioned before the relationship
9 between the sort of analytical world and the policy
10 world and perhaps with Alastair Campbell the sort of the
11 media part -- the presentational part of that policy
12 world.

13 Did you, as you looked at the drafting, notice
14 a process of tightening going on, so that statements
15 were getting stronger than they might otherwise have
16 been in a normal JIC assessment?

17 SIR DAVID OMAND: No, I didn't, and I think by then I knew
18 John Scarlett well enough, and he knew me well enough,
19 that, if he had felt under pressure, he would have put
20 his head round my office door and said, "Can you help me fend
21 these people off?" But he didn't, because it did appear
22 that he was making his own judgments based on the JIC
23 and the advice of the Chief of the Assessments Staff as
24 to what should go in and what shouldn't.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to continue on these, again,

1 sort of favoured topics these days, the 45 minutes, were
2 you aware of the background to that going into the
3 assessment? Did you take much notice of that as
4 a feature of the presentation?

5 SIR DAVID OMAND: Not as a feature of presentation. It was
6 a piece of intelligence that was circulated quite late
7 in the day, as you know, round the JIC and found its way
8 into the JIC's own assessment at quite a late stage.

9 I think it is worth again stepping back slightly and
10 just recalling that the idea of producing a detailed
11 intelligence assessment for public consumption was not
12 hugely welcomed by the intelligence community, certainly
13 not by me, partly on precedential grounds, although it
14 had sort of been done once before, but there is
15 a natural queasiness on the part of anyone who has
16 worked in the intelligence business at putting anything
17 into the public domain, and one of the problems we
18 foresaw, and, indeed, to some extent did occur, was that
19 the agencies were quite happy for generalised statements
20 to be made, but were not very happy about any of the
21 detail of the reporting being used. So the risk was we
22 would end up with a document which was simply a series
23 of assertions.

24 The JIC does that in key judgments but then there
25 are three pages of quite detailed material in a normal

1 JIC paper to explain why those judgments have been
2 reached.

3 So there was some email traffic around, as it were,
4 pleading with the agencies, one email in particular that
5 Lord Hutton highlighted, pleading with the agencies,
6 "Has anybody got anything more they can put in the
7 dossier?"

8 I wouldn't interpret that as meaning people saying
9 there isn't enough intelligence in substance, but this
10 isn't going to look very convincing if we are not
11 allowed to show more of it. That's my personal
12 expression -- explanation of why, as it were, people
13 fell on the 45 minutes. At least that was something the
14 Secret Service would allow to be used.

15 With hindsight, one can see that adding a bit of
16 local colour like that is asking for trouble. But we
17 didn't really spot that at the time.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: I think Usha would like to come in.

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. I think you said earlier
20 that this is something which shouldn't be done again.

21 SIR DAVID OMAND: In that form.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: In that form. I mean the sense one
23 gets is that there was a push -- and I think
24 Alastair Campbell said about presentation, getting this
25 information out to make the case, say what a threat

1 Saddam Hussein posed -- and an attempt was made to
2 produce something, but given the fact that there is
3 a kind of, what you'd say, an innate tension, which is
4 in terms of caveats the way it has stated what the
5 policy-makers want, did anybody actually question at the
6 outset the wisdom of doing this?

7 I know you have been very candid to say mistakes
8 were made, but what -- did somebody have responsibility
9 to stand back and say, in its total form, "Is this the
10 right kind of document to go out?" I mean,
11 John Scarlett said that he had the ownership of it, but
12 do you think there was a merging of the ownership with
13 the presentation issues, and, as the Hutton Report said,
14 there was a kind of a subconsciousness which may have
15 entered into people's minds in the way that everybody
16 got carried away with the flow, the way maybe the
17 effects were being used to fit the policy?

18 SIR DAVID OMAND: Lord Hutton's remark was masterly, since,
19 by definition, if it is a subconscious influence, you
20 are not conscious of it. You can't do anything about
21 it. So I'm not sure that observation actually takes us
22 anywhere, but more substantively, there
23 had already been, and you have, I think, taken evidence
24 to this effect, plans for having some form of public
25 dossier. So it wasn't a brand new idea. It was also,

1 I think, presented to the JIC as an instruction. We
2 weren't asked, would we like to produce this, we were
3 told we will produce this.

4 Now, in my position, I could have phoned up
5 Downing Street and I could have asked to see the
6 Prime Minister and said, "This is a terrible idea. Why
7 do you want to do this?" I didn't do that because
8 I didn't think it was such a terrible idea at the time.
9 I still think producing a statement, a measured
10 statement of what was known about Saddam and his past
11 behaviour and what intelligence appeared to indicate he
12 was currently up to, was a necessary part of proper
13 government. How else could the government explain what
14 on earth it was doing investing so much energy with the
15 United Nations, explain what was happening, and explain its
16 relationship with the United States on this issue, if it
17 couldn't have that kind of public explanation?

18 The problem -- I think the Butler Committee got this
19 absolutely spot on - was to identify that, although the
20 dossier itself was -- I'll come back to one exception --
21 a faithful reflection of the intelligence assessments,
22 the context in which it was presented was as 'making
23 a case', and that wasn't how the document was written.

24 I come back to the problem of associating
25 it with a perfectly proper Prime Ministerial statement

1 which appeared in the foreword. If we had suggested to
2 the Prime Minister -- it didn't occur to us, but if we
3 had said, "You should issue your own statement. The
4 document, the declassified statement of Saddam's
5 behaviour and our analysis will be issued as a separate
6 free-standing document by the Cabinet Office placed in
7 the library of the House of Commons and so on", that
8 might have eased some of the tension that subsequently
9 was produced.

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you are suggesting --

11 SIR DAVID OMAND: Just to conclude, the one area where, with
12 hindsight, we all wished we had done more is in
13 chapter 1 of the dossier which was designed to be an
14 explanation of the basis of the intelligence and did
15 include a statement about the nature of intelligence.

16 With hindsight, we should have made that stronger
17 and I think we accept entirely what the Butler Committee
18 said about that.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Since we are in the publishing business,
20 chapter 1 of the Butler Report, I recall on the nature,
21 use and limitations of intelligence has become, I think,
22 a classic text and bears repetition or re-reading.

23 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Lawrence?

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In a way, by taking ownership of

1 a text that was going to be used in the public domain,
2 the JIC was putting itself in a very different role to
3 the one that it would normally be put in, and,
4 therefore, I take what you say about: if something is
5 being subconscious, how do you know?

6 But there is possibly a point in which you are
7 thinking, "Well, this is designed for a different
8 audience to the one we are used to, we have to be
9 a little stronger and a little clearer and a little less
10 uncertain and unsure, because, otherwise, what sort of
11 impression will that make?" You are presenting the
12 JIC's as well as the government's case.

13 SIR DAVID OMAND: I agree with that, and that, of course, is
14 essentially the justification for people like
15 Alastair Campbell having a say in assuring the legibility
16 of the document.

17 No, I think we knew at the time that by taking
18 ownership within the JIC, we were taking something new on,
19 and the faults subsequently that were uncovered
20 therefore came to rebound on the JIC.

21 I also had in mind a vague memory, which somebody,
22 I'm sure, can check, of the strictures of
23 Mr Justice Scott in the Arms for Iraq Inquiry, where he
24 said intelligence judgments must not be precised by
25 policy officials. If you are going to put intelligence

1 into the public domain, you do have to make sure that it
2 has been cleared.

3 Now, the question, of course, would then be,
4 supposing the JIC had simply cleared the document but it
5 had then been presented as a government White Paper, I'm
6 quite sure that the first questions from the journalists
7 would have been, "How do they know this? Has the
8 intelligence community seen this? Has the Joint
9 Intelligence Committee," which is a publicly
10 acknowledged body, "seen it?" and you couldn't refuse to
11 answer, if you are a government, in those circumstances,
12 or somebody would at any rate brief, "Yes, of course,
13 this has got the backing of the JIC". So in one sense
14 better to be honest about it.

15 Just to make another point, I said we mustn't do
16 this again in quite this way, but, of course, every time
17 there is a serious terrorist incident or serious
18 intelligence on a potential terrorist incident, the
19 government has to introduce new restrictions -- we heard
20 more this afternoon about those -- and somehow produce
21 a justification.

22 So this problem about how safely you can put
23 intelligence-derived information into the public domain
24 to reassure and inform the public about why government
25 is taking the action it is, doesn't go away with Iraq,

1 it is with us today.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Jonathan Powell, I think it was,
3 suggested that it might have been simplest just to
4 release the JIC assessments as they were and people
5 could read them for what they were.

6 Now, you would have obviously had some concerns
7 about that in some of the detail, but even with redacted
8 sections, which we can all do, that would have been
9 a possibility?

10 SIR DAVID OMAND: I think that would probably have caused me
11 to form up on the Prime Minister and say, "I really
12 don't think this is a very good precedent to set", and
13 when you read the assessments, of course they chain
14 backwards to previous assessments. Once you have
15 started down that road it would be very
16 difficult to stop, I think.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But it might be better, just
18 thinking of how this is done, because, as you say, this
19 is a problem that all governments are going to face, to
20 find a way where something with more of a feel of the
21 raw assessment, how it goes to ministers, is provided,
22 rather than something which, by its nature, has the
23 feeling of a document that's in a way for a marketing
24 purpose.

25 SIR DAVID OMAND: I accept that entirely. I think my

1 interpretation of that would be, though, that when it
2 comes to actually drafting a document, rather than
3 releasing the actual text presented to ministers in the
4 classified assessment, the drafting would have to be
5 probably a bit longer, go into more detail about where
6 intelligence comes from and the necessary caveats
7 associated with it, recognising the lay nature of the
8 readership, whereas with the JIC papers they are going to
9 people who are used to reading them.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Could I just ask you, Sir David, on this, do
11 you, from your very great experience, see a difference
12 between incident-based intelligence about a threat,
13 a prospective threat, on the one hand, and strategic
14 intelligence assessments designed to support
15 policy-making over quite a broad range of -- or range
16 and over time?

17 SIR DAVID OMAND: Certainly, you can make that distinction
18 and I referred earlier to the tactical and operational
19 and strategic levels, but even in the counter-terrorist
20 field, looking at some of the potential low probability
21 but high impact risks that might come about through
22 unconventional means of attack, you would need
23 a strategic assessment, but you would still have to try
24 and somehow explain to the public why a great deal of
25 money, for example, was being spent on certain kinds of

1 precautionary measures. I'm not sure it entirely gets
2 you out of the problem.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I have one more question on this and
4 perhaps one quick one on the February dossier.

5 If you look at all the material that was released
6 around Hutton, it is evident that those on the
7 presentational side, shall we say, did want to see more
8 hard intelligence justifying it.

9 Now, without giving any secret, if the material upon
10 which all of this had been based had been put more into
11 the public domain, do you think people would have been
12 more or less impressed? How actually strong was the
13 evidential base upon which so much of this was based?

14 SIR DAVID OMAND: I think there are two parts to that
15 question. One is, would it have been a more exciting
16 and more persuasive dossier if there had been more
17 colour in it on BW and CW drawn directly from intelligence
18 reporting? The answer is, yes, it would. But if the totality of
19 that intelligence base had been revealed, which no
20 reasonable government would ever do, particularly facing
21 potential conflict with an adversary, but if it had
22 been, then I think the answer would have been, is that
23 it?

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That was the point I was looking
25 for. The word "thin" has also occurred in connection

1 with the actual intelligence base --

2 SIR DAVID OMAND: I think again "thin" can be interpreted in
3 two ways: "thin" meaning the sort of thinness of the
4 base. That was certainly true. "Thin" meaning the
5 depth of an individual report, no. I think it is
6 important to remember -- it comes back to the point that
7 you were asking about earlier about whether there was
8 any hardening up -- that within the classified JIC assessments
9 there was a hardening up, and this is described in the
10 Butler Inquiry report, because of the arrival
11 in September of what looked to be some quite convincing
12 intelligence. It certainly convinced me. Of the four
13 lines of reporting, I think at least three were
14 subsequently withdrawn. We might come on to that when
15 we talk about the Butler implementation.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think that this is quite an
17 important topic that we will want to come back to before
18 we finish, but just before I think we probably will need
19 to take a break, did you have any involvement in
20 the February dossier, the so-called dodgy one?

21 SIR DAVID OMAND: None whatever. I recall marching into
22 Alastair Campbell's office to ask what on earth was
23 going on and he was gracious enough to minute and
24 apologise. It was just one of those mistakes that
25 happened. I regarded that as vindicating on the

1 approach we had taken on the first dossier.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you had no awareness of it?

3 SIR DAVID OMAND: No. It came out of the blue.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were you aware of bits of

5 intelligence that went into it?

6 SIR DAVID OMAND: Not specifically, no.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We'll leave it at that.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: We will take a break of ten minutes or so and

9 then return until 5 o'clock.

10 (4.05 pm)

11 (Short break)

12 (4.17 pm)

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's resume on a different theme. Lawrence?

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Your main responsibilities were

15 security and terrorism and there are three issues that

16 I would like to discuss with you in those areas.

17 The first relates to the rationale for the war, that

18 was evident in the United States, but less so in the

19 United Kingdom, which is that there was direct linkage

20 between Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda. How was this

21 assessed in the UK, first question?

22 SIR DAVID OMAND: That was assessed on several occasions,

23 including in the JIC. We did not support the conclusion

24 of some in the US community, who saw a link between

25 Saddam, his security apparatus and AQ. This was

1 discussed intensively, agency to agency, and in the end,
2 I think the Central Intelligence Agency and our own
3 intelligence staff came to the same view but that it wasn't
4 universally shared in Washington.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you have discussions with
6 Americans on this issue? Or was this just a view that
7 was developed in London?

8 SIR DAVID OMAND: This was discussed by the experts
9 intensively. It is the sort of issue I raised on my
10 visits to Washington with members of the intelligence
11 community. As I say, there was a clear difference
12 within Washington between the CIA and its own analysts
13 and those inside the Pentagon.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: I notice you didn't use the words "within the
15 American intelligence community".

16 SIR DAVID OMAND: No.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: No, the CIA.

18 SIR DAVID OMAND: This is all a matter of public record, the
19 Inspector General of the Pentagon has published quite
20 a detailed analysis of what happened inside the
21 Pentagon, which I commend to the Committee.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: After the war, when you had access
23 to materials from the Iraqi Government, was there
24 anything in there that led you to change your view about
25 the relationship?

1 SIR DAVID OMAND: I'm not aware of any, no.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay. The second area is on the
3 opportunities that a war might provide Al-Qaeda and
4 other terrorist groups. Again, I would be interested in
5 what assessments were made before the war on potential
6 impact on Al-Qaeda, first, generally, and then more
7 specifically whether this would give them opportunities
8 within Iraq.

9 SIR DAVID OMAND: To start at the beginning, the
10 Security Service assessed as early as March 2002 what
11 might be the threat from terrorism from Saddam's own
12 intelligence apparatus in the event of an intervention
13 in Iraq, and that was judged to be limited and
14 containable.

15 I don't think I need to go any further in open
16 session, but steps were taken to ensure that could be
17 neutralised were war to ensue. At the same time, the
18 same assessment concluded that --

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When was this again?

20 SIR DAVID OMAND: March 2002.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So this is a year before?

22 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes, clearly in the
23 United States there was a lot of talk about action. We
24 are not necessarily talking about the United Kingdom
25 becoming involved, but action would increase the

1 probability of western, including UK, interests becoming
2 a higher priority target for international terrorists.

3 It is important, perhaps, just to register for the
4 record two points here. First of all, that the AQ
5 threat to the United Kingdom long preceded the Iraq
6 affair. It was in Birmingham in 2000 that the first
7 AQ-related bomb plot was disrupted, long before 9/11
8 even, and, secondly, that the level of threat was high
9 and was going to remain high regardless of Iraq, and
10 those are points of context, I think, that are
11 important.

12 That said, in August 2002, the JIC judged that the
13 build-up of forces in the Gulf, in the region, prior to
14 an attack on Iraq, would increase public hostility to
15 the west and western interests. By 10 October the JIC
16 is warning that AQ and other Islamist extremists may
17 initiate attacks in response to coalition military
18 action. We pointed out that AQ would use an attack on
19 Iraq as justification for terrorist -- in inverted
20 commas, "justification", for terrorist attacks on western
21 or Israeli targets. We pointed out that AQ was already
22 in their propaganda portraying US-led operations as
23 being a war on Islam and that, indeed, this view was
24 attracting widespread support across the Muslim
25 community.

1 Coalition attacks would, we said, radicalise
2 increasing numbers. On 16 October 2002, we reaffirmed that
3 the United Kingdom was a priority target for AQ. On
4 13 December 2002, we warned that US-led action could
5 draw large numbers to the Islamist extremist ideology
6 over the following five years, and again, on
7 10 February, that the threat from AQ would increase at
8 the onset of any attack on Iraq and that we should all
9 be prepared for a higher threat level to be announced
10 and for more terrorist activity in the event of war.

11 I think you have these assessments. I won't quote
12 all of them because I'm not entirely sure how much is
13 already released into the public domain.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's very interesting and
15 consistent. Can we just sort of unpack this a little
16 bit, not necessarily going into the intelligence detail
17 but the implications of what you are saying.

18 First, in terms of the risk within Iraq itself, how
19 much was being said there about, having started with the
20 assumption that British intelligence had, that Al-Qaeda
21 was not a particular issue in Iraq, was there an
22 understanding of the possibility that it might become an
23 issue within Iraq?

24 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes. Again, I would recommend reading the
25 whole of these assessments, just to get the context, but

1 on 19 February 2003, we specifically assessed the
2 situation in the south, since by then it was clear
3 that's where our forces would be, and we pointed to
4 unpredictability, high risk of revenge killings,
5 settling of scores, tribal attacks, and we went on
6 in March to warn that AQ might have, in fact,
7 established sleeper cells in Iraq to be activated after
8 the coalition operation.

9 There is a little more detail, but I won't --

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Again, we come to the question of
11 what meaning we should attach to probabilities and
12 "mays" and "coulds" and so on. How strong were these as
13 assessments?

14 SIR DAVID OMAND: If I take them overall, first in the
15 relation to the United Kingdom, they were strong, they
16 were understood by the government, the government was
17 already extremely concerned at the high level of
18 terrorist threat. I was encouraged in every way to get
19 on with the business of trying to get counter-terrorism
20 better organised, resilience built up, protective
21 measures taken. Funds were provided. So the government was
22 on the case. There is no doubt whatever about that.

23 In terms of Iraq --

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Seeing as how you have raised that,
25 maybe we could just stay with that for a moment. There

1 is a quote, I think from a Guardian interview with
2 Lady Manningham-Buller, where she said, after seeing
3 what had happened with 9/11:

4 "It never occurred to me they would go into Iraq."

5 Then she said:

6 "Why now?"

7 This is now March 2003:

8 "As explicitly I could, I said something like 'The
9 threat to us would increase because of Iraq'."

10 So there is a sort of question of the strength of
11 the warning that was going out on this question of the
12 risk of terrorism within the UK, resulting from the war.

13 SIR DAVID OMAND: Well, I read out quite a long list of
14 quotes from the JIC. I don't think there is any doubt
15 that that was the conclusion. There was no dissent from
16 any quarter that that was the conclusion.

17 It was balanced in ministerial minds, I'm quite
18 sure -- as I say, I wasn't in the Iraq meetings -- by
19 the overwhelming wish to achieve the objective in
20 respect of Saddam, bearing in mind that the threat was
21 already high. Had I been asked, "Well, exactly how
22 much more is it possible to do to improve the protection
23 of the UK?" you know, we were already working pretty
24 much flat out. The Security Service was being expanded
25 at the maximum rate which was safe. The funds were

1 available to do that. The protective security measures
2 were being enhanced.

3 So it was certainly being taken extremely seriously.
4 What wasn't necessarily being said was, "you know
5 this is an overwhelming argument why you should not
6 proceed", and you can ask
7 the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair -- I think I know exactly what
8 he would say, which is, "Yes, that was a risk which we
9 took on the chin". We knew it was going to be an
10 additional risk, but it didn't outweigh the policy
11 objective in his mind. I'm sure that's what he would
12 say.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We will have a chance to ask him,
14 but just in terms of the assessment you are making,
15 which is an important issue, you are saying there was
16 already a high level of threat --

17 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- from AQ? This doesn't create the
19 danger?

20 SIR DAVID OMAND: No, it does not create the danger. It
21 enhanced the radicalisation propaganda, but you should bear
22 in mind, as you have already discussed with a number of
23 witnesses, the aftermath and the impact on
24 radicalisation and propaganda of the killings that took
25 place in the operations which then had to take place in

1 response, Fallujah, for example, Abu Ghraib, and all of
2 that, which played directly into the radical extremist
3 propaganda, but that wasn't known at the time.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Of course, but in terms of making
5 this assessment -- and this is relevant, obviously to
6 the wider impact on Al-Qaeda's operations in Iraq, the
7 rest of the world -- this was done still on the
8 assumption of a moderately benign environment post-war,
9 although you have indicated you were already worried
10 about some --

11 SIR DAVID OMAND: AQ rather than --

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes.

13 SIR DAVID OMAND: -- the Fallujah ...

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: As the evidence came in of the
15 difficulties that we were facing, did this lead to
16 further revisions of your estimates in terms of the
17 effect on the United Kingdom?

18 SIR DAVID OMAND: Are you talking about after --

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We are talking about sort of
20 2003/2004, indeed 2005.

21 SIR DAVID OMAND: I remember in October 2004 we were again
22 looking at this in the JIC. You have the paper. We
23 were, for example, looking at what had been identified
24 as up to 50 individuals from the United Kingdom who had
25 attempted to get to Iraq to join the Jihadist faction

1 and we pointed out that this was encouraging expansion
2 of and cooperation between different Jihadist elements.
3 So, yes, we were keeping an eye on this.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So just to complete this part of the
5 discussion, you saw the deterioration of the security
6 position within Iraq and revelations such as Abu Ghraib
7 as having a direct impact that you could measure on the
8 level of Jihadist activity in the UK?

9 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes. "Measure" I would put in slight
10 inverted commas. We would assess, I would think, rather
11 than measure.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You could see consequences --

13 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- you could see real activity.

15 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes, and perhaps the best measurement
16 would be looking at Jihadist websites of the period and
17 the extent to which footage from Iraq was appearing on
18 British screens and on websites which were being accessed by
19 British Jihadists. So I don't think there would be any
20 contention about that.

21 In response, as I have said, the government machine
22 was working flat out to try and improve our
23 counter-terrorist intelligence and our ability to
24 respond.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just going back to the broader

1 question, this was advertised as part of a war on
2 terror, yet there is an implication in the assessments
3 that you have been giving that one of the potential
4 consequences could be an upsurge of global terrorist
5 activity. Is that fair?

6 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes, but I think you would need to try and
7 balance timelines, you know, of long-term threat against
8 short-term consequences which have to be managed, and
9 I think the view from the British Government would have
10 been those consequences have to be managed pretty much
11 anyway because of the high level of threat. The
12 long-term benefits of a new regime in Iraq would, they
13 say, be worth this effort. I know you will be
14 separating out carefully in your minds the US decision
15 to intervene in Iraq according to the longstanding US policy,
16 which I think is what I suspect Lady Manningham-Buller
17 was actually referring to with "Why now?", and the set of
18 consequences which led to the British Government
19 associating itself in the way that it did with that
20 American intention. These really do have to be
21 disentangled.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to finally take this up,
23 I think -- as I recall -- actually, Al-Qaeda didn't do
24 very much around the time of the actual war, so it was
25 more a question of the long-term consequences, notably

1 within Iraq itself, but also more widely. It wasn't an
2 immediate response, it was giving another arm, another
3 theatre, if you like, for Al-Qaeda in which to operate.
4 Is that fair?

5 SIR DAVID OMAND: I'm not sure I'm really the best person to
6 give you a complete answer to that. I suspect that
7 experts within the Security Service might well say that they
8 were in the 2003 and 2004 period, picking up really very
9 worrying signs of, not just radicalisation, but of
10 groups who were preparing to engage in violence, and
11 there were a number of plots around that period.

12 So I wouldn't push the point you are making too far.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to conclude, the point you were
14 making before about distinguishing the American and the
15 British routes. Let's see if I understand what you were
16 saying.

17 The Americans had a push that did see -- did present
18 Saddam as a target because of the war on terror, while
19 the UK argument was more because of weapons of mass
20 destruction and the need to stay close to the
21 United States. Is that the point you were making?

22 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes, the UK argument would be more in
23 terms of what a state like that, with a leadership like
24 that, a succession to Saddam in the shape of his sons,
25 would do, if, in five years' time, or whenever sanctions

1 had finally faded away, they would have rebuilt and have
2 much stronger WMD programmes.

3 That kind of threat needs the sort of distinction
4 which I think William Ehrman made between a clear and
5 present danger and an immediate danger. If your car
6 breaks down on a level crossing and there is a train
7 a mile away heading towards you, you have a clear and
8 present danger but it is not yet immediate, and that's
9 the kind of distinction I think we need to bear in mind.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think it was very marked at the
11 time, but it is not one which is immediately obvious to
12 a person not versed in the fine distinctions of the
13 intelligence word.

14 SIR DAVID OMAND: We didn't use the "war on terror" slogan
15 and, indeed, our own counter-terrorism policy, which was
16 endorsed by the Cabinet, was very different in its
17 strategic objective.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think there are some broader
19 questions which I'm sure my colleagues would like to get
20 into, and so I'll stop at that point, and perhaps we
21 can -- there are some of these broader questions I would
22 also like to come into later.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Sir Lawrence.

24 I have one of my own today, which is this: in your
25 time as Intelligence Co-ordinator, one of the things that

1 you did was to bring to birth and into being the JTAC,
2 the Joint Terrorism Assessment Centre, UK-focused,
3 tactical, immediate. One of the things the
4 Butler Committee, looking at the Iraq intelligence,
5 identified, was the limitations of the assessments staff
6 and, indeed, the defence intelligence staff, in terms of
7 scale, as well as their interaction, and there was
8 a recommendation that they should be integrated more and
9 indeed grow somewhat.

10 You spoke at the beginning about the resource
11 constraints that exist, or did exist, so what I would
12 like to jump across to is: did the Iraq experience, and
13 specifically the lack of really good assessment of what
14 a post-invasion Iraq might be like -- does it suggest
15 the need for, somewhere in government, an all-source
16 research intelligence-based capability? Do we have one?
17 To the extent that we do, is it underscaled in DIS or
18 the assessments staff or the Foreign Office, and, if we
19 were to have one, where would we put it?

20 SIR DAVID OMAND: A number of observations, if I may. First,
21 just to say that the creation of JTAC was a joint
22 affair, and particularly Eliza Manningham-Buller was
23 really co-author of the whole initiative, and
24 I give her full credit for that.

25 Their remit goes wider than the UK. It is covering UK

1 interests as well. So they are indeed helping the
2 Foreign Office produce the right kind of guidance for
3 travellers overseas and businesses overseas in terms of
4 the threat.

5 JTAC emerged out of a tour
6 I did when I first arrived, since I said I wanted to
7 meet all the different groups around Whitehall and the
8 agencies who were working on terrorism. There were
9 quite a few groups of different kinds and shapes, some
10 military, some civilian, some in the intelligence
11 community, some in the Foreign Office, and, in a sense,
12 I asked them, "Is this the right arrangement? How would you
13 want to be arranged?"

14 Most of them said, "Well, actually, we need critical
15 mass, and what is more, we need to have access to each
16 other's information systems instantly so we can be sure, if
17 a threat warning comes in, for example, relating to an
18 embassy overseas, that all potential information
19 relating to that threat has been accessed and assessed
20 so that a suitable warning can be given".

21 So that was the start or genesis of bringing everyone
22 together and it made the most of rather small groups of
23 people dotted around.

24 As part of the Butler implementation work, we then said in
25 discussion of the results of a separate study, "Should we do this in

1 other areas; for example, proliferation?" The problem was
2 one of scale. If we took everyone who was working on
3 proliferation out of their parent departments, such as
4 the Foreign Office, and put them together, the scale
5 really was very small and it would not, we thought, have
6 worked. It would have led to lines of communication
7 back into departments which were too long.

8 So we went for a different and rather more ambitious
9 model, which was a virtual centre, and connected them up
10 so that you would have designated people working on the
11 subject in electronic communication with each other,
12 meeting each other regularly, having seminars, and
13 I think experience shows that also is a good model.

14 You asked, though, a more difficult question as
15 well, which is: should we, at a national level, try and
16 create a national analysis capability across the board? If you
17 look at the Australians, they have a very large central
18 assessments staff and very little capacity within
19 individual departments and agencies. So they have
20 centralised it and there are several hundred people
21 doing assessments.

22 It suits their way of working. It does have some
23 disadvantages in terms of the danger of group think if
24 you have one group of people only working on something.
25 We concluded on the Butler implementation group that we

1 didn't really want to go down that road and we would
2 prefer to have the JIC model where you have quite
3 a small, but very talented, group of staff, who are
4 pulling together subject by subject, all the experts
5 across Whitehall and reading all the open source material
6 and then they draft the papers, but they are not
7 themselves deep experts.

8 The deep experts in a lot of the areas you are
9 concerned with in your Inquiry are still in the defence
10 field and associated with DSTL and the defence laboratories,
11 Porton for BW and CW WMD with Aldermaston for nuclear. So the
12 Defence Intelligence Staff really still does have a national
13 role as well as a defence role. It is a national
14 jewel in our crown. It really has to be protected.
15 Even as we speak, you know, there is the pressure on defence
16 expenditure that you have heard about from Mr Hoon yesterday.
17 It really must be protected.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I think I'll turn to
19 Baroness Prashar rather than take up more time. Usha?

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Sir David, I have one specific and
21 one general question. My specific question goes back to
22 what you said earlier. You said Sir David Manning had
23 a dual role, advising the Prime Minister and head of the
24 Defence Unit, but you didn't.

25 Do you think, given that your role was a new one, it

1 would have helped if you had had a dual role?

2 SIR DAVID OMAND: You heard the advantages of the
3 double-hatting arrangement explained to you by
4 John Sawers in one of your early sessions. I thought
5 about asking the Prime Minister whether I, too, could
6 have a little cubbyhole in Downing Street and be known
7 as a Prime Ministerial adviser. Would this give me more
8 clout around Whitehall? I could send out letters on
9 Number 10 notepaper. Perhaps people would pay more
10 attention.

11 I concluded, on balance, the arrangement had more
12 disadvantages than advantages. So I didn't pursue that.
13 I'm sure the Prime Minister would have agreed, if I had
14 asked.

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Retrospectively, what do you think?

16 SIR DAVID OMAND: I think there is a helpful external
17 perception of objectivity and support for the collective
18 process amongst departments, if you are on the
19 Cabinet Office side of the green baize door rather than
20 in Number 10.

21 I hesitate to say this, but I think it does, over
22 a period of time, tend to disenfranchise the
23 Cabinet Secretary. It is a very subtle psychodynamic
24 effect. The Prime Minister, any Prime Minister -- I'm
25 not making this specifically about any one

1 Prime Minister, is going to have
2 a trusted group of inner confidants and advisers, and if
3 in one of those inner groups dealing with, for example,
4 foreign and defence affairs, the adviser is simultaneously the
5 deputy to the Cabinet Secretary and head of the
6 secretariat, then over a period of time it is likely
7 that there will be an implicit assumption that the
8 Cabinet Secretary's interests are being represented
9 already, so you don't really need to invite the
10 Cabinet Secretary to the meeting. You don't really need
11 to go out of your way to seek the Cabinet Secretary's
12 advice.

13 It is a very subtle effect, and, as I say, I don't
14 make too much of the point, but I concluded that, on my
15 territory of counter-terrorism, actually I was better off
16 in the Cabinet Office.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You said it had a subtle impact, but
18 do you think that did have some impact on the way the
19 decision-making on the Iraq war took place? Did that
20 have an impact?

21 SIR DAVID OMAND: I think the Cabinet Secretary was not as
22 present as previous Cabinet Secretaries, going back into
23 history such as John Hunt or Burke Trend, would have been.
24 Of course, one of the reasons for that is that the
25 Prime Minister had given the Cabinet Secretary a very

1 different agenda and that was part of the process by
2 which the Cabinet Secretary -- the new Cabinet Secretary
3 was chosen, it was explicitly on that basis.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Sorry, do you think if the
5 Cabinet Secretary had wished to make a fuss on that,
6 he could have done?

7 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes. But it would have been at the direct
8 expense of not being able to devote the time to sorting
9 out reform and delivery across the government's
10 agenda. In a sense, one of the lessons from that is
11 that you can't enter into a run-up to a major
12 conflict and then manage a major conflict and continue with
13 business as usual. There was a certain sense that
14 government was trying to do everything as well as manage
15 this very major military operation -- I don't think that's possible.
16 Going back to my own experience as Principal Private
17 Secretary to the Defence Secretary during the Falklands,
18 although it was a much shorter affair (it was all over in, as it
19 were, weeks or certainly months) but for that period,
20 that dominated the work of that group of ministers.
21 They delegated everything else. That didn't happen,
22 I think, on Iraq.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I think that comes to my second more
24 general question, because in your career you have
25 prepared and managed conflicts. Do you have any

1 observations to offer on Iraq?

2 SIR DAVID OMAND: Well, my first observation is it is very
3 easy to draw up lessons learned, it is really very hard
4 in the hurly burly of events to actually apply them. So
5 before I say anything more, let me make that absolutely
6 clear, otherwise it will look as if this is just
7 pontification.

8 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You could identify them, but not
9 learn them?

10 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes. Let me mention four, if I have got
11 the time. The first is the importance in successful
12 statecraft of imposing a process and a decision-making
13 grid that connects you to your objectives. It is rather
14 like trying to swim across a fast-moving river. If you
15 judge where you are by the swirl of water around you,
16 you are suddenly going to discover you are going over
17 the rapids. You have to impose some sort of grid that
18 connects you to the point on the bank you are trying to
19 reach so that you can then readjust your direction and
20 know when the last point is reached when safely you can turn back.
21 If you don't have that, then the pace of events will
22 simply carry you along.

23 We didn't in the JIC step back in January at the
24 time of the --

25 THE CHAIRMAN: January 2003?

1 SIR DAVID OMAND: 2003, at the time of the first report,
2 the interim report, of the inspectors and say, "Let's look
3 again at all our intelligence and all of our inferences
4 against what has been found on the ground". It wasn't
5 asked for, it wouldn't have been welcome. If we had
6 done it on our own initiative, there wasn't a grid,
7 a process of decision-making into which it would
8 naturally have fitted with a meeting at which that
9 kind of stocktake would be looked at.

10 Instead, what we did was we put our effort into
11 examining the situation in Iraq itself and what any
12 invading force would be likely to meet in terms of
13 opposition, which was good, useful work, and, you know,
14 I think it bears the -- it was mostly borne out, these
15 were good assessments.

16 But I think we did that because we assumed an
17 invasion was inevitable. It was going to happen anyway.
18 So let's be as useful as we can by analysing the
19 situation on the ground and helping the
20 Ministry of Defence.

21 So that's what I mean by that first point about
22 having and imposing, even if it is a bit artificial, some
23 kind of grid.

24 The second point that strikes me is that greater
25 care is needed in threatening the use of military force

1 to back up diplomatic measures. It is quite an easy
2 thing to say that tyrant X will not move unless there is
3 the threat of force behind the measures. I'm sure that is
4 correct, but military deployments generate a huge
5 momentum of their own and they are subject to their own
6 railway timetables.

7 I can remember explaining this to the
8 Cabinet Secretary at the time, using the concept of
9 Zugzwang in chess, where you force your opponent into
10 a position where they have to move and every move they
11 can make will worsen their position. That's Zugzwang. The
12 diplomats thought that was what had been done with UNSCR 1441.
13 It was a brilliant piece of diplomacy to achieve that,
14 but instead of putting Saddam in that position of
15 Zugzwang, we turned out to be in that position ourselves because
16 we were forced to look for and get the inspectors to
17 look for the smoking gun in double quick time before the
18 window for invasion closed and that window was
19 conditioned by the American political timetable.

20 So, as it were, the biter was bit. As I say, it is
21 very easy, I think, to threaten force. Once you have
22 started the military machine, different considerations come into
23 play.

24 At the risk of going on, I'll give you two others.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, do, briefly perhaps, but ...

1 SIR DAVID OMAND: Yes. Third would be the importance of
2 identifying and managing residual risk, not just
3 encouraging the redoubling of will to achieve whatever
4 the chosen objective is. Persuading the US to go for
5 the inspection route was undoubtedly the best option to
6 go for in the circumstances, but what if the inspectors
7 then drew a blank? What if the aftermath turns out to
8 be different from our assumptions? What if we ended up
9 as the occupying power? The sort of "What ifs?" are the
10 residual risks which need managing. Even though some of
11 them might be quite low probability, nonetheless they need
12 managing in addition to busting every gut to actually
13 achieve objective number 1.

14 The final lesson, which I think we have already touched
15 on, is that all concerned really need to understand, perhaps
16 be trained in understanding, the psychodynamics of small
17 groups. What happens when small groups of people come
18 under intense pressure and overwork? One consequence
19 well-known in the literature is that you can
20 fall into a self-referential mindset where, when new
21 evidence arrives, you interpret it in the light of the
22 hypothesis you have chosen.

23 So when the inspectors started to report that they
24 weren't finding what we all thought was going to be
25 found, the response, for example, in SIS, was simply to

1 turn up the volume control to say, "That just proves how
2 devious and duplicitous Saddam Hussein is, and how
3 incompetent the inspectors are", and you can think
4 yourself into that sort of mindset really very quickly.

5 So again, that was one of the things, when we came
6 to the Butler implementation group, we really wanted to
7 look at. It is how analysts should get trained in trying to
8 avoid some of these well-known pitfalls.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Roderic, I know you have got one
10 or two.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can I just go through picking up the
12 points you have made very quickly?

13 The second of your lessons, care in threatening the
14 use of force, do you think that Kosovo, Sierra Leone,
15 the early success in Afghanistan, all of which have been
16 quoted to us as justifying the policies that led to the
17 decision on Iraq, proving the success of that way of
18 thinking, actually were false analogies or accurate
19 ones?

20 SIR DAVID OMAND: They are all so very different that
21 I think there is a risk of bundling them together and
22 drawing false analogies. I'm not saying that diplomacy
23 should not be backed up from time to time with the
24 threat of force. There are lots of historical examples
25 where it is only when finally the tyrant comes to realise

1 that the consequences might be severe that they will
2 change their policies.

3 My point is more that those making the threat really
4 have to think through that, once you have pressed the
5 button in the Ministry of Defence, you are setting in
6 motion a machine that has its own momentum, its own
7 timelines and it is very difficult then to impose
8 political or diplomatic considerations, as you have seen
9 that with the discussion you had yesterday over the
10 ordering of equipment and mobilisation of forces and so
11 on.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

13 Secondly, you said that in March 2002 the
14 Security Service had made an assessment about the threat
15 Saddam would use terrorism against the United Kingdom.
16 Who had tasked them to do that at that stage? Did this
17 imply that somebody as early as that was anticipating
18 that we were going to be in the war with him and were
19 already getting on with preparatory work?

20 SIR DAVID OMAND: I would need to check the papers, but my
21 memory is this was probably done by the Security Service
22 themselves, looking at, not necessarily UK direct
23 involvement, there was no assumption at that point that
24 we would be involved, but just sensing that this is the
25 sort of thing they ought to keep an eye on.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Finally, you talked about the distinction
2 between policy-making and formulating intelligence. Do
3 you think that the frequent involvement of the JIC
4 Chairman, John Scarlett, and of the head of the SIS,
5 Sir Richard Dearlove, in meetings on Iraq to discuss
6 policy with the Prime Minister -- Alastair Campbell
7 identified them as part of the circle of close
8 advisers -- risked breaching the distinction between
9 provision of intelligence and formulation of policy?
10 Did they get too involved in the making and selling of
11 the policy?

12 SIR DAVID OMAND: I wasn't privy to those discussions as
13 you know, but answering your question in perhaps a more
14 abstract way, I would hope that the Chair of the Joint
15 Intelligence Committee would always be present at that
16 kind of discussion, just as I would hope the Chief of
17 Defence Staff would always be present, and, if it was
18 domestic, the Director General of the Security Service.

19 I think the position of the Chief of SIS is slightly
20 different. SIS were very much in the inner council.
21 They had proved their worth to the Prime Minister in
22 a number of really very, very valuable pieces of work,
23 not just delivering intelligence, but, of course,
24 conducting back channel diplomacy, and that, I'm sure
25 would have weighed heavily on the Prime Minister's

1 calculation that, "These are people I should be
2 listening to". But of course, the golden rule, which on
3 the occasions in talking about domestic CT affairs when
4 I was there John Scarlett always stuck to, was that he would
5 deliver the views of the Joint Intelligence Committee,
6 he would never venture a view on the policy even if asked do you
7 think we are doing the right thing? And that's the
8 distinction I think you need to bear in mind, not that
9 presence at the meeting itself is the problem. But, you know,
10 it is quite tempting to comment if you are a confidant of the
11 Prime Minister -- and you can go back to Churchill and
12 his intelligence advisers, I'm sure, to find this in
13 the role of the then Chief of the SIS in Churchill's
14 inner council. It is quite tempting to go over that
15 line and start expressing an opinion on the policy
16 itself. I wasn't there to know if that happened. That's not the
17 point - I'm making a more general point.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: I think we have come about to the end of the
19 session. Lawrence, anything you would like to --

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just one final, because there were
21 very interesting points you were making at the end
22 there. A number of them relate to the fact that during
23 the course of January, February and into March of 2003
24 the inspectors were there. It is quite an important
25 observation that, never mind in January, even in

1 late February, there was no formal stocktaking of why,
2 given that we had provided intelligence to the
3 inspectors, there had been no smoking gun. There had
4 been, as we heard, some material --

5 SIR DAVID OMAND: One mustn't forget missile --

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The missile issue was always the one
7 where the intelligence was so much better.

8 Was there no pressure? Weren't people around you in
9 the JIC puzzling at this, thinking, "Isn't it
10 a surprise?" or was it just simply always put down to
11 the cleverness of Saddam Hussein and his people in
12 hiding things?

13 SIR DAVID OMAND: Well, I think there was this psychological
14 state of being unwilling to admit that actually it
15 wasn't going to turn out the way that had been
16 predicted. I think that is a psychological state that
17 people can get into and I think there were certainly
18 people in the intelligence community, and there are still
19 some, who believe that something will turn up in Syria,
20 and I'm certainly not going to break my own rules and
21 say categorically that that won't happen. We could all
22 still be surprised. But there was a sense in which,
23 because of past successes -- very, very considerable
24 successes supporting this government, that SIS overpromised and
25 underdelivered, and when it became clear that the

1 intelligence was very hard to find, and it was a very hard
2 target, they really were having to bust a gut to generate
3 intelligence.

4 I think the Butler Committee really uncovered that
5 the trade craft at that point wasn't as good as it
6 should have been for validation, wasn't as good as it
7 should have been, and I think that's one of the significant
8 background reasons why people were very unwilling to
9 actually conclude: no, I think we may have
10 miscalculated, or misassessed this.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But even when, in the
12 United Nations, the inspectors were reporting the
13 limited find on the nuclear side, saying, "There is
14 nothing there", there wasn't a request at any point to
15 say, "Why are they saying these things?" Does this
16 reflect on the inspectors as well as on the cleverness
17 of Saddam Hussein?

18 SIR DAVID OMAND: I'm not aware of a formal request on JIC
19 to do that. I'm quite sure there would have been
20 discussions between the Foreign Secretary and his
21 officials on that and --

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We will get a chance to ask.

23 SIR DAVID OMAND: You can ask him that.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Sir David, you have in effect

1 offered us final reflections already in answering
2 Baroness Prashar, but do you have something else to say
3 before we finish?

4 SIR DAVID OMAND: No, I just wanted to cite one sentence
5 from George Tenet, who was the US Director of Central
6 Intelligence, whom I saw regularly on visits to
7 Washington. In his memoirs he said:

8 "Before the war, we didn't understand that he was
9 bluffing and he didn't understand that we were not."

10 That explains quite a lot.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, thank you. Our thanks to our witness,
12 David Omand, and thanks to all of you in the hearing
13 room who have been here and listening. We shall resume
14 the hearing tomorrow afternoon at 2.00 pm when
15 Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary during this period,
16 will be coming.

17 With that, I'll close the session.

18 (5.05 pm)

19 (The Inquiry adjourned until 2 pm the following day)

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