Monday, 30 November 2009

(2.00 pm)

THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon everyone. Good afternoon, Sir David.

The objectives of this session, following from sessions with Sir Christopher Meyer and Sir Jeremy Greenstock last week, I will continue to build our understanding of the run-up to military action and the immediate post-conflict period.

We are going to continue with a broadly chronological approach, but picking up themes as they come out. What we are not going to do today is to seek to cover issues of the legal base for military action. We are going to be looking at this early in the New Year.

Now, I would like to recall, as I have done on previous witness sessions, that the Inquiry has access to many thousands of government papers, including the most highly classified for the period we are considering. We are developing the picture of policy issues and debates and the decision-making processes. These evidence sessions are an important element in informing the Inquiry's thinking and complementing documentary evidence.

It is important that witnesses are open and frank in
their evidence, while respecting national security, and
I am reminding every witness that they will later be
asked to sign a transcript of their evidence to the
effect that the evidence they have given is truthful,
fair and accurate.

Without more ado, I would like to invite our
witness, Sir David Manning, to describe his role during
the period in question, and then we can get down to the
questions.

SIR DAVID MANNING

SIR DAVID MANNING: Thank you, Chairman. During the period
that we are going to discuss this afternoon, I was the
foreign policy adviser to Prime Minister Blair.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you very much indeed.

Sir David, as you said, you were the foreign affairs
adviser to the PM. It would be very helpful you could
tell us by way of background what were the foreign
policy priorities, both for the UK and the USA, in the
years 2001 to 2003 -- 2002.

SIR DAVID MANNING: There were an number of issues,
Lady Prashar, that arose over this period, one of them
very obviously is the one we are going to discuss in the
Inquiry, how to manage Iraq, but the period that I was
advising the Prime Minister was very much the period in
the aftermath of 9/11, and I hope there may be an
opportunity in a minute to say a little bit about how
that conditioned the agenda.

This meant, inevitably, that the whole question of
Afghanistan, international terrorism, the whole question
of weapons of mass destruction, these were very high on
the list of priorities that the Prime Minister and the
British Government were dealing with, but they were not
the only issues, and I think it is important, although
this is an Inquiry about Iraq, to recall that there were
other priorities that the British Government was trying
to deal with on a day-by-day basis in the foreign policy
and security area.

Certainly, throughout the period that we are going
to discuss this afternoon, the issue of a possible
confrontation between India and Pakistan loomed
extremely large. That was particularly the case in the
immediate aftermath of 9/11 until the following summer
and there were real fears internationally that this
confrontation might, in extremis, lead to some sort of
nuclear exchange between the two countries.

There were constant worries and concerns about what
was going on between Israel and the Palestinians, and
indeed -- and we may get on to this -- at the time of
the Prime Minister's visit to Crawford in April 2002,
one of the major preoccupations of that visit was what
to do, if possible, to damp down the confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians.

I could go on. There were a number of issues. Certainly, if one was talking to American interlocutors, they were very concerned about what was going on in North Korea and there were also in this period an opportunity, I think, certainly an opportunity that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary wished to try and exploit, of building a new sort of partnership with Russia.

The Russian response to the Afghanistan crisis was notably cooperative and there was a real feeling that we might be able to forge some new international partnership that was much more inclusive than it had been before.

Again, if we go into the list of what were we trying to do during this period apart from focus on Iraq, there was an enormous effort in the early part of 2002 to find a new relationship between Russia and NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and to try a promote a new Council in which Russia would have an equal voice.

So the agenda throughout this period is complicated and wide-ranging. Iraq is a constant theme, but it would be wrong of me to suggest to you that, sitting where I sat, Iraq was always the top priority, and
certainly, in the first half of 2002, we were at least as pre-occupied in London with the crisis between India and Pakistan and the very serious situation in the confrontation between Israel and Palestinian as we were about Iraq.

That's not to devalue the importance of Iraq, but it would be wrong to pretend to you that I sat in my seat for two years and thought nothing except about Iraq.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Against that background, when did it become apparent that the US's attention was turning to Iraq and that regime change would be actively pursued by that administration?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think this is a question that is probably best answered by me by not pointing to a single moment, because American attitudes evolved during the period we are discussing and the British response had to take account of this evolution.

If I may, I would like to take a minute or two to take you through a timetable of key moments, as I saw them, from my position in Number 10, which I hope will do something to illustrate how this evolution took place.

I must begin, I think, with 9/11. I have already touched on it and I know other witnesses in front of the Inquiry have referred to it, but I do think it is an
absolutely critical moment in this story. It has been
described by others as a Pearl Harbour moment for the
American administration, and, indeed, for the American
people, and I think it was a profoundly shocking event
which caused the Bush administration to redefine the
threats to the United States, redefine the security
context in which the United States had to make policy,
and also redefine itself.

I think, until then, these issues, like Iraq, had
been allowed, if you like, to continue pretty much as
they had been inherited. They had looked at the
questions -- and I know you have heard this from
previous witnesses -- about what to do about the UN
regime dealing with Iraq, but no real decisions had been
taken and there was no enormous sense of urgency, anyway
none that I could detect.

All that changes after 9/11. There is a sense that
it is no longer acceptable to allow threats to
materialise. You have got to go out and deal with them.

I think that the Bush administration felt, perhaps,
that it had been caught napping, that they had been
on -- it had been on their watch, as they would describe
it, that the homeland had been hit and this must not be
allowed to happen again. I think this was a very
profound, if you like, emotional reaction as well as
a conscious decision.

I think there is also another dimension to this that affects the way in which the administration think about these issues and that is that, in a sense, I think 9/11 was quite personal for some of the key players. The President went to the site of the Twin Towers very soon after the event. I happened to be in New York over that period and I can vouch for the horrific landscape that he would have found.

The Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, was in the Pentagon when the Pentagon was hit by one of the aeroplanes and, indeed, took part in the rescue activity. Those working in the White House on 9/11 were evacuated, warned that they believed it was possible that aircraft were being directed to hit the White House.

So I think there was a very real sense in which the top players in the American administration felt that they had been touched by this event personally.

I think it was Sir Christopher Meyer who also raised -- and I think quite rightly -- the issue of the anthrax scare. I know from conversations that I had with Dr Rice after 9/11 that they were not only worried about a repeat of an atrocity like 9/11, and they were constantly on the alert for this, but they were puzzled
and deeply disturbed by the appearance of the anthrax that seemed to have been targeted against key members of the administration.

I think there was therefore a sense of real and present danger, as the Americans would see it, and that this was acute, not only as a result of 9/11 itself, but of a feeling that other threats were out there and that they had to be not only contained, but confronted and dealt with.

I have given you that background because I think it is important in understanding how American minds moved after 9/11 and this has a profound effect, I think, not only on the Iraq issue, but on the whole way in which the administration then look at security, and they moved subsequently, in 2002, as I'm sure you know, to talk about pre-emption in a way that is entirely new.

Coming to some of the key moments, if I may, in trying to explain to you how this evolution took place, as far as I am aware, the first time that the President mentioned Iraq to the Prime Minister after 9/11 was on 14 September in a telephone call and he said, if I recall, that he thought there might be evidence that there was some connection between Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda.

The Prime Minister's response to this was that the
evidence would have to be very compelling indeed to justify taking any action against Iraq. He also cautioned the President in a letter, in October, against widening the war.

The Prime Minister's view at this stage was that it was essential to remain focused on Afghanistan, he wanted an ultimatum to the Taliban to hand over Al-Qaeda leadership. If this failed, he wanted action taken to replace the Taliban, to undertake regime change so that this menace was removed, and he was concerned that we should stay focused, the United States should stay focused, and that Afghanistan was the object of this, nothing else.

He was, I think -- at the same time, I remember him saying how important it was to confront the trade in weapons of mass destruction, but certainly, during this immediate period, which was very difficult and very complicated, Afghanistan was the priority.

Now, we were aware in Number 10 that, of course, there was a debate going on the United States that was wider than this. Sir Christopher Meyer in the embassy was reporting the debate that was going on in Washington and more widely, and I recall there was an open letter from several key senators in December, warning the administration that they had better do something serious
about the programmes of weapons of mass destruction that
were being developed in Iraq.

So there were considerable pressures in the
United States that were building up, but, as far as the
priorities in London were concerned, they were very much
Afghanistan and how to deal with the war there.

I think the next event that I am conscious was
important in this story for me was when I went to
Washington in January on 22 January --
BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That was 2002?
SIR DAVID MANNING: This is 2002 now. I went with
Sir Richard Dearlove, who was then the Chief of the
Secret Intelligence Service, and we went to discuss
a number of issues, but, of course, Iraq was among them.

As I say, we went in the knowledge that Iraq had
been the subject of considerable debate in Washington,
both inside and outside the administration, and I recall
saying to Dr Rice in our conversations that if there was
a review policy going on in the United States, it would
certainly, we thought, have to include the whole
question of how to incorporate inspections into any
revised policy to do with Iraq.

This visit was followed up by various telephone
calls, one, in particular, I recall in the middle
of February, on 14 February, when Dr Rice confirmed to
me that the administration was indeed looking at options, but said there was absolutely no plan at this stage. It was an effort to redefine policy.

The next key moment, as far as I was concerned, was when I went to the United States in March to Washington, when I was in effect undertaking a reconnaissance visit for the Prime Minister's visit to Texas, to the ranch at Crawford, President Bush's ranch at Crawford, the following month.

By this stage, we were very conscious that Iraq would figure on this agenda. We knew, as I have said, that there was a policy review underway, and I went across to talk to Dr Rice, to prepare for this visit, in a sense to take soundings, to find out what it was the Americans would want to put on the agenda and also to see where they might have got to in reviewing the Iraq policy, but also to reflect to them the preoccupations that the Prime Minister had, the priorities he would have for this visit, and also his own thinking, how his own mind was turning on Iraq and on a lot of other issues.

I did say to Dr Rice at this meeting, at this reconnaissance meeting, that if the United States was thinking about reviewing its policy and it wanted coalition support, if it wanted the participation of its
allies in a new policy, then it would need to address
allies' concerns, very much obviously including our own,
and I think it is just worth recalling the coalition
idea had been powerful after Afghanistan, that the
Americans had worked with a coalition and, therefore,
there was a lot to be said for encouraging them to work
with the coalition on this new issue.

I said to Dr Rice that if they were going to
construct a coalition, there were a number of issues
that they must think through, as far as we were
concerned. One was: what role did they envisage for the
UN inspectors? What were they going to do by way of
explaining the threat that Saddam posed?

It was very important, if we were going to ramp up
the pressure on Iraq, to explain what the nature of the
threat was, so that the public was aware of that. They
would need, if the peaceful route failed, a convincing
plan about how you got rid of Saddam Hussein if it came
to that issue of regime change, and they would certainly
need a convincing blueprint about what a post-Saddam
Iraq should look like.

I also said that the Middle East peace process,
which I have alluded to already, which was in a very
dangerous state at this time, that the Israel/Palestine
issue was critical; it was not an optional extra.
I suggested that we weren't anywhere near, at this stage, having answers to these problems, and Dr Rice agreed. I said that, naturally, the next stage in this would be for the President and for the Prime Minister to discuss this when the Prime Minister went to Crawford.

That indeed took place, the Prime Minister went to Crawford from 5 April to 6 April, I believe, and I know that a great deal has been written about this meeting and there has been a great deal of speculation about this meeting, so, if you will permit me, I would like to just set the scene a little so that you understand the context in which Crawford took place.

The President had invited the Prime Minister to his ranch so that the discussions on the whole range of international issues could be in a fairly informal setting and the Prime Minister stayed with the President in the main house. There was a small guest house in the grounds. Jonathan Powell, who was the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, stayed there, as I did, and other members of the team stayed outside the compound, which is relatively small.

It was a visit that has become dominated by speculation about Iraq but, as I said earlier, there were a lot of other issues and I will go on to describe what happened on Saturday morning, when Iraq was
actually a very minor part of this debate.

The first evening, the President and the
Prime Minister dined on their own, and when we had
a more formal meeting on Saturday morning, which I think
was the 6th, it was in the President’s study at the
ranch. There were, as I recall -- and I may be wrong
about this -- three a side. I think it was the
President, his Chief of Staff, Andy Card, and Dr Rice
and on our side, as I recall, it was the Prime Minister,
his Chief of Staff, Jonathan Powell, and myself.

We convened about half past nine, after breakfast,
and began with the President giving a brief account of
the discussion that he and the Prime Minister had had on
their own the previous evening over dinner.

He said that they had discussed Iraq over dinner.
He told us that there was no war plan for Iraq, but he
had set up a small cell in Central Command in Florida
and he had asked Central Command to do some planning and
to think through the various options. When they had
done that, he would examine these options.

The Prime Minister added that he had been saying to
the President it was important to go back to the
United Nations and to present going back to the
United Nations as an opportunity for Saddam to
cooperate.
I had a follow-up conversation with the Prime Minister afterwards, who told me he had had another opportunity to speak to the President about Iraq and that, on that occasion, he had again pressed for a multilateral approach. The President had told the Prime Minister that he accepted that Saddam Hussein might allow the inspectors in to do their work and, if so, that would mean adjusting the approach. The Prime Minister commented to me that he concluded from this that the President probably did want to build a coalition and that this had led him to dismiss pressure from some on the American right.

If I may, I would just like to repeat that Crawford is about many other things as well as Iraq, and the rest of that morning, the Saturday morning, was spent wrestling with the Middle East peace process. This is a moment when the Israeli defence forces are occupying parts of the West Bank, when there is a serious concern about what is going to happen to Yasser Arafat, and there was a lot of concern that Secretary of State Colin Powell should go to the region and go to the region with a plan about how to try and engineer some sort of de-escalation and get the peace process going again. That is what Saturday morning was about and it included a telephone conversation, which
I was invited to take part in, between Dr Rice at the ranch, Colin Powell in Washington, who was accompanied by Dr Rice's deputy, as I recall, Stephen Hadley, and General Zinni, who had been trying to bring some kind of order to the Middle East, and a number of other people, and the whole effort on Saturday morning was focused on the Middle East peace process, it was not focused on Iraq.

In the weeks after the Crawford period, it is clear that the American policy review is taking place and that it may well be, by the time we get into July, that we are reaching a point when the Americans may have decided they are going to come to decisions about this.

The next of these way points, if I may put it like that, that I want to refer to, is a visit that I then made to see Dr Rice at the end of July -- so this is the end of July 2002 -- when I went to talk to her about Iraq and, indeed, about other issues, but predominantly on this occasion about Iraq.

I arrived in time to have a pre-meeting with the Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, in the State Department before seeing Dr Rice, and when I touched upon Iraq, I said to him that I didn't know where American thinking had reached at this point, but if there was going to be some kind of choice for regime
change by the American administration, there were
a number of questions that certainly we in London would
need answered and I thought the international community
would need answered.

Among them was: why now? What would happen if
Saddam Hussein were to use weapons of mass destruction
during a military campaign? What would follow military
action? What role in all of this would the
United States see the United Nations playing, and what
was the United States planning to do about the
Middle East peace process?

I said that I didn't think we had answers to those
questions and Richard Armitage said that he thought they
needed a lot more work and, in his phrase, "It was
better to be right than to hurry".

Later that day, I had dinner with Dr Rice on my own
and I told her that the only way that the United Kingdom
could take part in any change policy vis a vis Iraq was
if we went through the United Nations. I made it clear
to her that we absolutely understood that the
United States could act unilaterally if it wanted to,
and no doubt it could win a war in Iraq if it wanted to,
but that, as far as we were concerned, the only way in
which the United Kingdom would participate in any policy
dealing with Iraq was if we went through the
United Nations.

I said that we would have to address not only the United Nations, but what happened to the Middle East peace process, the sorts of questions I had asked Richard Armitage -- what would happen if there were a chemical warfare environment and if there were to be military action -- and that we would certainly need to be very clear about the consequences of action in terms of what happened afterwards.

I had also taken with me a note from the Prime Minister to the President, which was about Iraq, and the note made it clear, as I had done, that Britain could only take part in any policy if it was part of a coalition that went through the United Nations.

In addition, the Prime Minister made it clear that the Middle East peace process was absolutely critical, as far as he was concerned, and so was the effort that I have already touched upon that was necessary to explain why Iraq was an issue and why we felt we had to tackle it.

The following morning, I was expecting to have a session with Dr Rice in her office and perhaps with one with or two members of her team, but, to my surprise, I was asked if I would go and see the President with her instead. The President was in the
1 Oval Office. I think we had half an hour or 40 minutes
2 with him, the two of us. He had clearly read and
3 studied the Prime Minister's note, because he referred
4 to it, and he had been briefed by Dr Rice about the
5 conversation that I had had with her the evening before,
6 which he asked me to go over again, which I did, and
7 I repeated that it was impossible for the United Kingdom
8 to take part in action against Iraq unless it were
9 through the United Nations. This was our preference,
10 but it was also the political reality.
11 We had no doubt that the United States could take
12 action against Iraq if it wished to do so, but if it
13 wished to do so with us, and if it wished to do so in an
14 international coalition, it would have to go back to the
15 United Nations.
16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I just interrupt you there
17 because I would just like to ask a couple of questions?
18 SIR DAVID MANNING: Of course.
19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Because you said that you talked
20 about issues with the role of the UN inspectors and, if
21 there was a possibility of a regime change, what would
22 happen afterwards. When we took evidence from
23 Sir Peter Ricketts, he said that, in terms of policy
24 review, there wasn't much difference between the UK and
25 the USA, but the USA were not very keen on inspections.
Did you get any flavour of that, because in a way going through the UN route meant you would have to get inspectors in?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, we were aware that inspections were not necessarily a popular idea. It, of course, depends, Lady Prashar, whom you talked to. We may come on to this later, but no government is monolithic and clearly some Americans were much more hostile to the idea of UN involvement than others.

Perhaps I might just digress for a moment. I, in a very broad way -- it is very schematic and it is in a very imperfect way -- thought there were roughly three groups we were trying to deal with in the United States.

One was the regime changers, who just wished to get rid of Saddam Hussein, and they certainly included what are known as the neo-cons, but they were not exclusively neo-cons. There were people beyond the neo-con fraternity who thought this was the right thing to do, and most of them looked upon the UN as an impediment and an obstacle to this.

Many on the American right had a very low opinion of the United Nations and I think it would be fair to say that the view among many who were opposed to UN involvement was that the UN had had lots of chances since 1991 to sort this out and had failed and the last
thing that we needed to do was go back there and try
again.

So this was one group that I think was regime
echange-focused and saw the UN as unhelpful to that.

There was a second group that were much more
multilateralist in their approach, and I would
particularly single out Colin Powell in the
State Department. I don't think they felt they had
illusions about how well the United Nations worked, but
I think they felt it was important to work
multilaterally, and they wanted to work multilaterally.

As I say, in a rather schematic way I think these
two groups spent a lot of time competing for the
attention of the third group, which I would loosely
describe as the White House and the National
Security Council. They wanted to try and persuade the
President of the wisdom of their own approach, and so,
depending on -- coming back to your question -- which
American you are talking to, there are Americans who
certainly do not want to see the inspectors reintroduced
into Iraq and there are Americans who very much want to.

We know now, though I wasn't aware of it immediately
after the event -- and I will come back, if I may in
a moment to the meeting I had in Washington -- the
following week, I think it was 5 August, Colin Powell,
the Secretary of State, and Dr Rice met the President and talked all these issues through.

So I don't want to give you the impression that we in the UK and others in the international community were the only people advocating going back to the UN, but those in Washington who did advocate going back to the UN had serious opposition from others in the system and outside the system who did not want to go back to the UN.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Against that background, when did you conclude that there was a significant likelihood of large-scale military action by the USA? Because I can see that you were trying to influence --

SIR DAVID MANNING: Not until much later. It was quite clear to me that, by this stage, there was a battle for the President's attention, there were those advocating an early resort to force, but I concluded, after my visit to the United States and my conversation with the President, that his mind was not made up.

I went back to London. I saw the Prime Minister, who I think was at Chequers, and I said to him that I did not think that a return to the UN route was a lost cause and that it was worth his while to continue to press the President to go down the UN route.

 Provisionally an agreement was reached -- and this
would be the very end of July 2002 or the beginning
of August 2002 -- for the Prime Minister to try and go
and see the President as soon as the summer holidays
were over, and this is what indeed he did.

I think, to go on with your question, if you allow
me, this is a key moment in this story, because there
had been what I would call more noise in the American
system during August about being ready to take military
action, but when I came back from holiday at the end
of August, Dr Rice phoned me to say that we could
disregard this. No decision to do this had been taken
at all and that the President was very anxious to see
the Prime Minister and to talk through the best course
of action.

So the Prime Minister went to see the President on
7 September at Camp David. It was a very brief visit.
We thought that we would be going for a discussion
between the two of them, with Dr Rice and me present as
note-takers, and that the Prime Minister would again set
out the arguments, as I have described them to you, for
going back to the United Nations, trying to obtain
another resolution and trying to work within an
international coalition.

We met in the President's study, or den, at
Camp David and, to our surprise, the Vice-President was
also invited to take part. My conclusion at this point was that the President wished to expose the Vice-President to the arguments in favour of going the UN route. This is my supposition, because it was widely thought, certainly in London, that the Vice-President belonged to that group that I described that were intent on regime change and did not want to go back to the UN.

Over, I suppose, a couple of hours, the Prime Minister laid out the case and he also, at this point, said that it might even be necessary to have two resolutions, one to set the conditions that Saddam Hussein must meet for disarmament -- and I think it is important here to bring out a distinction perhaps between us and the Americans.

Our view, the Prime Minister's view, the British Government's view throughout this episode was that the aim was disarmament. It was not regime change. The Prime Minister never made any secret of the fact that if the result of disarming Saddam was regime change, he thought this would be a positive thing, but, for the Americans, it was almost the opposite. It was, "We want regime change in order to disarm Saddam Hussein", but to come back to this discussion, he said that we might need two resolutions; one to set the conditions, and one to take action if those conditions
weren't met, and that our message should be either the
regime must change in response to UN pressure and to
UN Resolutions or it would be changed by military
action.

The President said on this occasion that if by any
chance Saddam accepted and implemented the terms of
a new resolution, we would have succeeded in changing
the very nature of the regime, and in a colourful
phrase, which has stayed with me, he said:

"We would have cratered the guy."

I think the Prime Minister left that meeting
thinking that there was a real possibility that the
President would opt to go back to the United Nations,
but after his meeting, and until the President was due
to speak in New York, I think to the United Nations, on
12 September, we were aware, not least through the
excellent reporting from the embassy in Washington, of
the real tussle that was going on in the heart of the
administration over whether or not the President should
go back to the United Nations, and, if so, what he was
going to say when he got there.

We did not know for certain what the President would
say right up to the time that he stood up in the
United Nations to speak, and, in fact, as we now know --
and I think Sir Jeremy Greenstock referred to this -- he
did indeed call for a return to the United Nations. He challenged the United Nations to deal with the problem and he mentioned that there might have to be resolutions.

Shortly after that speech, Dr Rice telephoned me to say that, in fact, he had been given the wrong text and that he had had to ad lib this, but fortunately -- certainly fortunately from our point of view -- he had put in this reference to the need to return and to have new UN Resolutions to try and resolve this through the UN.

Now, I have set this out because I hope that gives some sense as to why there isn't just one key moment in this process, and how, by the autumn of 2002, we hoped in London that it would be possible to resolve this problem through the United Nations.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I just come back to -- in fact, you have given how the whole thing evolved and the efforts being made by you and others to influence and persuade them to go the United Nations route, but did we at any stage believe that the possibility of military threat was essential to achieve a regime change?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think we always believed that the impact of going through a coalition would be enhanced and the UN would be enhanced, if the threat of military
action were there in the background. I think it was the 
view of the British Government that Saddam Hussein was, 
if you like, paradoxically more likely to resolve this 
issue through peaceful means if he feared there would be 
military action if he didn't.

So I think you are right to raise this. I think 
there was certainly implicit -- indeed explicit was the 
threat that, if he was not prepared to accept the UN 
routes and the provisions of the UN Security Council 
Resolutions, then military action would follow, and 
indeed it is, I think, in that quotation I gave you from 
the Prime Minister, clear that it was always going to be 
made plain to Saddam Hussein that he had an option. He 
could resolve this peacefully or, if not, the 
United Nations, as we hoped, would then deal with the 
situation by military means.

BARONESS USAHA PRASHAR: Just finally before I hand over to 
Sir John, did we actually have a policy worked out in 
terms of what we wanted to do in Iraq or were we just 
reacting to the pressures in the United Nations, the 
administration, from different quarters?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't think it would be fair to say we 
were simply reactive. We had to be reactive because, as 
I said to you, after 9/11, the American approach to this 
issue changed. But throughout the time I was involved
with this, it was quite clear that our policy was to
disarm Saddam Hussein, that we were convinced that he
had weapons of mass destruction or that he certainly had
the capability -- and probably I should say, and that he
had the capability to manufacture weapons of mass
destruction and that this had to be dealt with.

Our policy was that he had to be disarmed. So
I think that was the essential policy followed by the
British Government throughout, and this is a big and
important distinction between saying that the policy was
simply regime change. It wasn't. Our policy was
disarmament.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sir David, the United Kingdom policy
objective, you tell us, was essentially disarmament of
Saddam and of his regime. The strategy to pursue that
objective was the UN route, so far as the United Kingdom
was concerned.

Could you say something about what the range of
desirable or acceptable outcomes for pursuing that
objective through that strategy might be? Indefinite
containment perhaps?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Indefinite containment, I suspect -- and
I know other witnesses have talked to you about this --
looked increasingly implausible. I think, after 9/11,
the mood had changed dramatically in Washington and the
tolerance for containment had changed.

As I said, I think the idea that you could contain threat was replaced by the view in Washington that you had to confront threats and deal with them before they materialised. That was the American policy.

I was not involved directly in Iraq affairs before the summer of 2001, but my impression when I arrived at Downing Street was that the Foreign Office, my predecessors, thought that there was not a great deal of life left in the containment strategy. It was not -- it seemed to be decaying. It was increasingly difficult to sustain international support and enthusiasm for it. There were quite potent arguments, I believe, that Saddam himself was capitalising on a containment policy through taking control of the UN food programme and so on.

I think the view was that what would happen if we sustained the containment policy was that it would progressively unravel and that we would find ourselves in a position where very probably Saddam Hussein would manage to, if you like, escape the bounds that had been put upon him by the United Nations and would then be intent upon reconstituting, expanding and generally developing his weapons of mass destruction policy.

So I don't think there was a view in London then
that containment was sustainable. It was, of course, discussed as I understand this, before I arrived in Number 10, a narrowing of the focus, a deepening of containment and it is hypothetical. One can't be sure it wouldn't have worked, but I think there was a real sense that it was unlikely.

There was also, I think, in assessing our own policy, a belief that it was very important to try and bolster the credibility of the United Nations itself as an institution. One theme that ran through the insistence of British Ministers in going back to the United Nations was that this was where this problem had been handled, that Saddam Hussein was in breach of United Nations Resolutions, and, therefore, it must be in the UN that this flagrant violation of the international community's demands and will should be met.

It might have been an exaggeration to talk about the risk that the United Nations would start to look like the League of Nations and become an irrelevance, but there was a real fear that if the United Nations simply adjusted its sanctions policy and that this was seen to fail, not only would the consequences be a Saddam Hussein who was rampant again, but that the credibility of the United Nations itself would have been very severely compromised.
THE CHAIRMAN: So the United Nations route to disarmament is seen to lead, is it, almost inevitably to, regime change, whether by military invasion or otherwise?

SIR DAVID MANNING: It is a very interesting question, this. The truth of the matter is, yes, but it depends what you mean, I think, by "regime change", because, as I said in one of -- in my earlier remarks, the fact was it was certainly our view, and it was a view that was on several occasions conceded by Dr Rice and, indeed, by the President, that if Saddam Hussein accepted the provisions of, as it turned out to be, UN Security Council Resolution 1441, the situation on the ground in Iraq would be so profoundly different that the regime would have changed itself, and, therefore, the threat posed by Iraq to the international community would have been dramatically transformed, because, of course -- and you have heard all this from Sir Jeremy Greenstock -- the provisions that were included in UN Security Council Resolution 1441 provided for very intrusive inspection, for complete dismantling of the military capability that Saddam Hussein had in terms of weapons of mass destruction, and that this would in itself have changed the regime. There was speculation that he would have found it very difficult to survive. I don't know whether that would have been correct, but it would have
changed the regime in a profound way and in a way that
was certainly acknowledged even by the
US administration.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would there have been, do you judge,
different expectations in the mind collectively of the
US administration and the UK administration -- say,
Crawford in the spring or Texas in July or the autumn --
about whether regime change without a major military
adventure was likely to be achieved through the UN
route?

SIR DAVID MANNING: There may have been, and, again, I would
like to come back to the distinction I made when I was
answering Lady Prashar's question. I think it depends
whom you talked to.

There was certainly the perception among some
Americans that this route would not produce the result
we wanted. It was very unlikely to work. I'm not sure
that all Americans believed that and, as I have said,
there were moments when certainly the President and the
Secretary of State -- sorry, the National
Security Council adviser, Dr Rice, said that they
believed that it might be possible to change the regime
in this way. I think that certainly on the British side
there was less scepticism and more hope, but I hoped
there was realism about it.
Saddam Hussein had a long track record. We knew perfectly well that he had been extremely obstructive over a long period, but I don't think, in answer to your question, that the British Government went into this thinking it was bound to fail.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. One last point from me and then I will return the questioning to Lady Prashar.

Going back to Crawford, clearly a critical encounter, do you judge that the President and the Prime Minister had a shared view that wherever events ended up in Iraq policy, they would still be together when that final point was reached?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think you would have to ask the Prime Minister about that yourself. I think the Prime Minister's view throughout this crisis was that he wanted to disarm Iraq, that if that led to regime change, so be it, and he would not be anything other than delighted to see the back of Saddam Hussein, but that was not the policy.

But I think throughout this too, he is very conscious of what he sees as the need to ensure that the United States is not left to deal with international security issues on its own, and he sees it as very important, particularly in the traumatic period after 9/11, which I have described, that there is
international support for the United States and that the major global challenges to security are met by the international community together, that it shouldn't, if you like, be left to a US global policeman to do these things.

So I think his view was that he expected to be with the United States at the end, but this would only be possible if the United Nations were the channel to get to the end, and he very much hoped that throughout this period the United Nations would prove to be a satisfactory way of managing the issue.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I just come back to the question of military action, Sir David, because I just want to be clear: at what point did the UK decide in principle to participate in military action and what were the factors that influenced that, because you know, I'm not clear?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Let me try and elucidate, but can I do so by pointing out that this is not an area that I consider myself to be entirely expert on, and I know that you will be seeing those who served in the Ministry of Defence later on in this Inquiry, so my own observations on this will be obviously subject to what they say.

But I think, as far as I was concerned, I saw
material that was sent to the Prime Minister setting out
the options that we might have to take part in military
action and his responses to them.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: When was that?

SIR DAVID MANNING: The first time that he asked, as
I recall, for military options, was in June of 2002
because, as I have described to you, by this stage, we
are aware that military planning is going ahead, the
President has said that there will be this -- this
planning cell has been set up at CentCom, and the
Prime Minister is therefore anxious, I think, to find
out what sort of options do we have, and in July of
2002, a letter was sent to Number 10 from the
Defence Secretary’s office essentially saying that they
had identified three possibilities if we were to find
ourselves involved in military action.

These were something that was called the "in-place
support package". Broadly speaking, that consisted of
British military assets that were already in the region,
such as the planes that were flying the No Fly Zone and
so on, and the use of bases that we had, like
Diego Garcia.

There was a second option, which was known as the
"enhanced support package", so that was the same basic
proposition as I have described, but with additional
maritime, I think, assets and aircraft, and perhaps --

though I am not sure; you will need to check this --

a small special forces package offered as well. This

would take two months to assemble.

But the third option was much bigger, and at this

stage, if I recall, it was described as the "discrete UK

package", "discrete" as in separate, and this would have

involved offering British land forces at divisional

strength.

I'm not an expert on that, but I think that means

about the level of 20,000 troops. This would take much

longer to assemble and, if I recall, the advice was this

would mean at least six months' preparation.

These papers went to the Prime Minister in July and

he said that he didn't want to take any decision or

accept any of these options. I think in retrospect,

looking at this, this was because -- of course, you

ought to ask him -- this was the time, as I have

described, when we were pressing for the Americans to

consider the UN route. I think he didn't want to give

any signal that he was keen to think about a military

alternative -- as opposed to going back to the UN

route, and so, over that summer period no decision was

taken.

The next occasion that I recall that he was pressed
for a decision on military assets was in September, when -- and again, I'm subject to correction by the Ministry of Defence on this. I think they were asked if they would like to send a team to a planning conference in CentCom in Florida, and, if so, what would the British be willing to offer if there were to be military action, and they asked for authority from the Prime Minister to make some sort of suggestion.

At this stage, the Prime Minister said that he was willing, on an entirely contingent basis, for the military to suggest that we would be willing to offer package 2, as I think it had then been renamed, ie the enhanced support package, but that it had to be absolutely clear that no political decisions in Britain had been made on this.

As I understand it, that is how the position stayed, although -- and I'm not entirely clear what happened, but clearly, during October, there was further discussion, I think, between the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary about this and I think, as time passed, there was an acceptance that, if it came to military action, that we probably would be willing to move to package 3, rather than package 2.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How important was the UK's military participation to the US support in military and
political terms?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I feel much more qualified to try and
give you an answer to that on the political side and,
again, I would ask you to ask my colleagues who were in
the Ministry of Defence about the military significance.

On the political side, I think it was important.

Once the United States had decided it wished to go the
coalition route, once it had decided it was going to go
back to the United Nations and wished to work
internationally, as it had done in Afghanistan, the fact
that there was going to be a significant British
contribution was a major political signal.

So I'm sure that, from a political point of view, if
you decide you are not going to go unilaterally, you
decide that a sizeable British contribution is a major
asset to you.

I think militarily -- and now I am speculating
because, as I have said to you, I'm not an expert -- you
should not exaggerate the importance of our
contribution. The Americans were putting in many
thousands of troops. On the other hand, when the war
actually took place in March of the following year, the
American numbers were less than had been advertised as
likely, and certainly, at the beginning, there had been
talk of over 200,000 American troops being needed for
We may come on to this, but one of the complications later on in this story is that, whereas the Americans had hoped to introduce land forces through the north of Iraq, through Turkey, this proved to be impossible because the Turkish Government wouldn't allow it.

Therefore, I think if you take 20,000 British troops, if that is the right number, who are excellent troops, and you put those into the final effort, which I think was about 150,000 or 160,000, that seems to me to have been quite an important contribution, but not decisive.

The Americans could have done this operation without us. We always knew that. We had told them that. But nevertheless, I'm sure they were grateful to have a sizeable British contribution when, in the end, it came to military action.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So are you saying that our contribution wasn't seen as necessary by the United States?

SIR DAVID MANNING: It wasn't seen as essential. I think it was seen as politically enormously desirable once the President had taken the decision to work within a coalition, but if you were to say to me, "Do I think the Americans could not have done this operation without
British military participation?", my answer would have
to be no. I'm sure they could have done. Their
capacities far outweighed the capacities of any other
country to do it, but I'm clear in my own mind that they
much preferred a coalition.

We were not the only country. I think it may have
been Sir Christopher Meyer, but one of the previous
witnesses has said that there were 30 or 40 countries in
the end that were in this coalition, but, clearly, our
own contribution was far more significant than most
other partners in that coalition.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did we attach any conditions to
military participation; for example, going through the
United Nations route and the Middle East peace process?
SIR DAVID MANNING: The Prime Minister had been clear all
the way through that, if we were going to reach the
point where there was going to be military action, it
would only be if we had exhausted all efforts through
the United Nations and, if, throughout 2002, he also --
and I think I alluded to this -- had said that there
must be a proper public information campaign to explain
the nature of the risk, as we saw it, and the need to
disarm Saddam Hussein. He was very insistent throughout
this period, and indeed afterwards, on the need to try
and stabilise the Middle East by tackling the
confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians and those were certainly conditions, I think, in his mind. I think there was another element. I don't want to say it was, as it were, a condition in quite that way, but he was insistent throughout that a lot of thought needed to be given to what happened on what has been called "the morning after". He raised that with the President. This was raised by, I think, most British interlocutors with their American interlocutors. I don't think I could say to you that that was a condition in the end when the UN route failed for military action, but it was certainly something that was important to him.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were these so-called conditions seen as essential or desirable, or did we give the impression in US minds, the government here, that military participation was inevitable.

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, I don't think we gave that sense. Certainly it wasn't a sense -- I didn't feel that it was inevitable. I was quite clear, when I was sent to Washington at the end of July to talk about the way the state of the debate in America, that we were clear that the United States could take military action if it wished to, but we would not do so unless the United States decided to go back to the United Nations.
That was very, very clear, and that was absolutely
essential.

I think throughout the following months the
Prime Minister hoped very much that the UN route would
be productive and we expended an enormous amount of
energy on trying to ensure that it was. Until the very
last weeks, if you like, before the conflict broke out,
we were trying to secure, first of all, the first
resolution, which we did in November, and then a second
resolution and I think the Prime Minister's view was
that going through the UN was absolutely essential, yes.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You said earlier that the
Prime Minister didn't wish to give any impression at any
stage, you know, that military action would be
necessary, as you wanted to go through the
United Nations, but did that have any implications for
the military's ability to give out all the necessary
supplies and equipment? What was the impact of that on
the preparation?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Again, I don't feel that I'm the expert
on this, but let me venture a view. I think there
probably was some uneasiness in the Ministry of Defence
about the lateness of the decisions. I think that was
one reason why, although the Prime Minister took no
decisions in July, he was pressed again in September.
It had particular implications, of course, if, in the end, the British Government decided for option 3, or, as I would call it, the discrete package with the land forces, because, as I said, the advice he was given was that if he wanted to be in a position at some point to deploy a large force, he was going to need six months before it would be ready.

So I think -- I think there was a sense in the Ministry of Defence probably that we had to try and ensure that the policy that we were following diplomatically did not mean that it excluded military options, but my impression was that he was reluctant to take these decisions until he had to, that some might have said he went beyond the ideal of when he had to, he left it quite late, but I think he always felt that he wanted to give the sense that the diplomatic approach in the United Nations was paramount.

But having said that -- and I think I referred to this -- he was quite clear that Saddam Hussein had to understand there was a military option because he believed that if Saddam Hussein was aware that there could be a military campaign, he was more likely, paradoxically, to accept the diplomatic solution.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But did the actions to make our participation in any military action possible constrain
our kind of political room for manoeuvre?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't think I'm aware of that. As far as the Prime Minister was concerned, there were two tracks. One was absolutely the track he wished to follow, which was the diplomatic track through the United Nations and the international coalition, and we pursued this to the end, but he also, I think, felt he had to be in a position, if that failed, to be able to use force if he needed to.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I think Sir John wants to come in.

THE CHAIRMAN: This is really about, on the British side and the UK machine, how you dove-tailed together a role in a diplomatic political initiative running over many months with a military planning contingency planning effort which has hard deadlines built inside it. Also, you mentioned briefly the "morning after" dimension. How is it actually set up within Whitehall? You were head of the Cabinet Office Defence Overseas Secretariat, you have got the Ministry of Defence and the chiefs of staff organisation, you have got DFID off at the side as part of the "morning after". How was that actually run and put together?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think on the official side the Overseas and Defence Secretariat were involved in a pretty central role. The way that we ran it was that
we had a restricted group that met weekly, sometimes
under my chairmanship, sometimes under the chairmanship
of my deputy, who was running the Overseas and
Defence Secretariat on a day-by-day basis, and this was
a group that included all those who had access to the
most sensitive intelligence.

I should say this group was not only focused on
Iraq. As I have said, we were very pre-occupied for
a lot of the time with a lot of other very pressing
issues, but it was an opportunity to bring -- to report
on the progress that different departments had made, on
the latest assessment that may have come out of the
agencies, the political issues that were being
confronted by the Foreign Office, the difficulties that
the Ministry of Defence might be encountering and so on
and so forth.

This was widened with a second group that was also
organised from the Overseas and Defence Secretariat to
include those who had either less access to sensitive
intelligence, or, indeed, perhaps very little access to
it, so that, if you like, the circle of those involved
and exposed to what was going on was much, much widened.
This was a role that the Secretariat tried to play.

On top of that, and beyond that, if I can put it
like that, I tried to ensure that the conversations
I had, or that the Prime Minister had, either internally within government with Ministers, with officials, or with the Americans or, indeed, many other foreign interlocutors — and it is important to recall that he was in contact with many other foreign leaders apart from President Bush — I tried to ensure that these were meticulously recorded and distributed around so that there was transparency, and, indeed, I spoke sometimes quite deliberately to the Foreign Secretary or to the Defence Secretary to ensure that they were aware of what was going on.

There was also — and you will know this very well Chairman — the capacity in Whitehall for overlapping committees, and so members of the overseas and Defence Secretariat would attend meetings in other departments. There was, I think, a pretty regular attendance by the Secretariat at the meetings held by the joint chiefs, for instance. There was access to the meetings of the Joint Intelligence Committee, and there was a general effort, I think, to ensure that different departments were aware through Committee structures, through copying of papers and minutes, of the state of the argument, if you like, the state of the policy, to ensure that there was as much transparency and coherence as possible.
Over and above this, of course, is the ministerial structure. What I have been describing to you is the official machinery. Basically, it centred around the pivot of the Cabinet Office. The Iraq war was discussed frequently in Cabinet. The Prime Minister sometimes took the lead, as I recall, sometimes other Ministers, the Defence Secretary, the Foreign Secretary, and there were meetings of Ministers that he convened, again with Ministers who had access to the most sensitive intelligence, who would meet with the heads of the agencies, with the Chairman of the JIC and so on, to discuss particular issues.

So there were various overlapping and interlocking mechanisms, both at official level and at ministerial level.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just before I return the questioning to Baroness Prashar, would you give us an assessment of how well that complex system, both official and ministerial, met the needs of events throughout the period 2002 into the final decisions in early 2003? Did those who needed to know, know? Did those who needed to share in the decision-taking, share?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I didn't feel, as a senior official, that there was a problem. Certainly I wasn't approached, as I recall, by departments who said that
they didn't feel that they were properly informed, and
I'm not aware of particular decisions or particular
moments when people who should have known things didn't
know things.

That is not to say that everybody felt the same way
about this, but I wasn't conscious of the sharing of
information being a particular problem in the system.

Having said that, there were people who were very
heavily loaded throughout this time, and I have referred
to all the other issues that people were trying to deal
with, so there is undoubtedly a factor of loading.
I think there is a factor of fatigue, if I'm honest with
you, about sustaining teams of people dealing with this
through crisis. But I didn't sense, where I was sitting
that there was a problem of communication,
certainly among officials.

Ministers, of course, will speak for themselves, but
of course they also had access to the Prime Minister if
they wanted it and there were a number of bilateral
meetings with the Prime Minister.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Just to be careful, the picture that
you are giving Sir John is that there were sufficient
decision-making processes within government in meeting
the challenges of Iraq. Is that what you are
suggesting, at official level?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes. I did not feel that, at official level, we were unable to manage the decision-making processes or to relay the wishes of Ministers to the system or to reflect systems' concerns to Ministers themselves.

Certainly I don't recall moments of crisis over this or of people coming to me and saying, "We need different official mechanisms". I am conscious, as I just said to the Chairman, that you are dealing actually with quite a small number of people, not least because they are privy to the most sensitive intelligence, there is an intelligence issue here, particularly for something like Iraq, but I wasn't aware that the way in which the policy was pursued was inhibited, if you like, or compromised by difficulties at official level.

I should have added into this mix, of course, that in the Iraq case you also had information and advice coming from Sir Jeremy Greenstock in New York about how the UN should be managed, which was an enormously important component of this. You had the advice coming from Sir Christopher Meyer from Washington about, "Are we getting our messages right to the United States?"

So I don't want in any sense suggest to you I have exhausted all the players involved when I gave my
description, but in terms of how the mechanisms worked,
I certainly didn't feel that we were in difficulty,
because we didn't, at official level, have the
structures to make Whitehall respond to the requirements
of the crisis.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Sir David, can I just come back to
our military involvement? Why did we decide to
participate militarily on the scale that we did,
including the significant land component?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I think we decided, in the end, to
participate in the way we did because, when the
diplomatic track collapsed, the Prime Minister concluded
that he had always said that, if we had exhausted the
diplomatic route, we would take part in the military
action.

My view -- and of course he will say for himself
what his view was -- is that he believed that, having
said that, and having exhausted the diplomatic
opportunities, he would be as good as his word. I think
he felt that if he had said it was important to disarm
Saddam Hussein, that ultimately he was going to take
part in the action that he believed would do that.

I think it is important, too, to emphasise that
I think Prime Minister Blair thought it was right, and,
therefore, if it was right, it was worth doing properly,
and I think it was Sir Christopher Meyer who referred to the Prime Minister's approach to the foreign policy, and he had used military force on other occasions because he believed it was the right thing to do. He had done it in Kosovo in order to return the Kosovo Albanians to Kosovo. He had done it in Sierra Leone. He had also committed British troops and forces in Afghanistan. Some of those operations had required UN backing, some of them hadn't.

I would also endorse what Sir Christopher, I think, said about the importance of a speech the Prime Minister gave in 1999 to the Economic Club in Chicago. Again, it was long before my time of working for him, but it was a speech, I think I'm correct in saying, called "The Doctrine of International Community", and I think it is important, in understanding the Prime Minister, not to assume that when we reached the point that he commits troops, he is doing this because it is something George Bush tells him to do.

I think his foreign policy approach on moments like this becomes muscular, and he believes there are moments when the international community must act, and if the only way you can act is to deploy force, that is what you had better do.

One of the interesting things about that speech in
1999 is he singles out two dictators in particular whom he considers to be an enormous menace to international stability; one is Milosevic in Serbia, and the other is Saddam Hussein.

I think when you try and assess, at the end of this attempt to go through the UN, why, ultimately, he committed troops, it was because he believed it was the right thing to do. He believed he had exhausted the alternatives. He believed that it would deal with the disarmament issue, and this is part and parcel of his approach to international security.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You have obviously described the personal commitment of the Prime Minister to all of that, but were you satisfied that he was being given military advice on the participation in this campaign and the implications of this, the challenges?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I'm sure that the Ministry of Defence were intent on giving him the best advice they possibly could about the military commitment. I think it is important to record that in the run-up to Christmas of 2002, the Ministry of Defence thought that they were going to be asked to deploy a large land force through northern Iraq and their planning was done on the basis that they would be asked to go into northern Iraq, something I understood that
CentCom, Central Command in Florida, were keen that we should take on. If it happened, this is what we would be asked to do and their role would be to try to stabilise the interface, if you like, between the Kurdish population in the north of Iraq and the Sunni heartland. Therefore they planned, I think -- and they would be the best people to talk to you about this, but I believe that that was the plan until the end of 2002.

I recall being telephoned early in the New Year, I think on 3 January, by Dr Rice, who said that despite their efforts, and, I think, despite their previous expectations, the Americans had been unable to persuade the Turks to allow land forces to be introduced through the north. So really very late, as we now know with hindsight, in this process, the British military are asked to adjust their planning completely, and instead of being asked to go in through the north, they are asked if they would take part in an amphibious landing on the Al Faw peninsula on the very first day of the campaign.

I'm not a military man, but it seems to me it was quite a remarkable achievement that they were able to switch so rapidly to do this and to do it so effectively. Now, I'm sure that all of this they were working through and explaining. I have to say to you
that as an armchair general -- and that is what I was --
I had my own misgivings about this campaign, but I was
in no sense a military expert.
BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can you tell us what your misgivings
were?
SIR DAVID MANNING: Indeed I will. I worried about how
prepared we would be to fight in a chemical and
biological weapons environment. We had seen
intelligence to the effect that Saddam Hussein had
certainly threatened to use these weapons early on in
any conflict, and I felt it was important that the
Prime Minister should know that we were capable of
dealing with this.
I was worried that, if the planning had been
premised on the idea that land forces should come in in
considerable numbers from the north, we were now
suddenly finding that we couldn't do this. Were we sure
that the amended plan was satisfactory?
I was also particularly worried about what
I understood were the plans for Baghdad, and I can't
recall exactly now, but I think -- and of course, this
involved American troops, not ours. But as I recall,
there was a sort of pie chart showing how the plan was
that, if there was resistance from the Republican
guards, Saddam Hussein's most trusted troops, various
sectors of the city would be taken one after the other, and I worried that this would lead to very intense street fighting and very high casualties. I have to say to you that I was wrong on every count.

There was no chemical weapon environment that our troops had to deal with, and, in the end, Baghdad fell without difficulty and the British forces managed to take the Al Faw peninsula and move up and take control of the four southern governorates of Iraq remarkably successfully and remarkably quickly, but I did ask the chiefs of staff and, I think, the Defence Secretary to go over all this with the Prime Minister on 15 January 2003, because I did have these concerns and I did think they needed to be addressed, and they certainly addressed them and they certainly proved to be right and I proved to be wrong.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I have one brief question, if I may -- and I want to go back. You said earlier that after 9/11 the Prime Minister was quite concerned that the United States shouldn't be left alone to deal with the aftermath. Did that therefore mean that we were not pressing hard for our own conditions, that our main aim was to make sure that we actually contained what the USA did?

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, I don't think it meant that,
because, if that had been the case, I think the British position on returning to the UN would have been more equivocal than it was.

It was quite clear to me in the summer of 2002 that the only way that we could accompany the Americans in a shift in policy that might conceivably lead to regime change was if they opted to go through the United Nations and if there were a new Security Council Resolution.

That is what the visit I described to you, at the end of July, was about, it was what the Prime Minister's visit to Camp David in September was about, and it is what, in the end, the President decided to do, but I don't think that would have been -- it would not have been possible to have softened those conditions, and so it was absolutely essential, as far as the British Government was concerned.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think we are coming to the point where we ought to take a break, but, just before we do, can I ask my colleagues if they have any urgent questions that can't wait until after the break?

I think, in that case, let's break for now for ten minutes, and if I can ask those in the room, if you are going to go out, to please come back in ten minutes. We
do have to close the doors and the second half of the
session will not be available to those who do not make
it on time.

(3.25 pm)

(Short break)

(3.39 pm)

THE CHAIRMAN: Sir David, we would like to pick up some
points arising out of the first half of this session, so
what I will do straight away is turn to
Sir Lawrence Freedman to kick off on that.

Sir Lawrence?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much. I want to go
back to Crawford.

When we spoke to Sir Christopher Meyer, I think it
is fair to say we got a sense that, in a way, this was
a turning point in UK policy, and that, whether or not
we were in favour of regime change as an interesting
consequence of disarmament, nonetheless the
Prime Minister spoke explicitly of regime change in
a speech just afterwards.

Again, for clarification's sake, would you say
Crawford did represent a step change in British policy
or was it a combination of something else.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I didn't feel it represented a step
change in military policy, if I heard you correctly.
SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: No, in British policy, not generally.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think certainly in the speech -- and I think Sir Christopher referred to this -- the Prime Minister's remarks in his speech at College Station were notably tough. I'm not sure whether that was the first time in public the Prime Minister had used the phrase "regime change" or not, I can't recall, but I note that Sir Christopher suggested it was. But it was a notably tough speech and I agree with that.

If I go back to what I reported to you as the outcome, as we learned about it on Saturday morning, of his discussions, it seemed to me quite clear that, on the one hand, the Prime Minister was very clearly urging the President to go back to the -- to adopt the UN route and a coalition strategy, but was absolutely prepared to say that, at the same time, he was willing to contemplate regime change if this didn't work.

In a way, I look back at Crawford -- and I think this may have come up in an earlier question -- as a moment when he was saying, "Yes, there is a route through this that is a peaceful and international one, and it is through the UN, but, if it doesn't work, we will be ready to undertake regime change". This,
I think, is the balance he wanted to strike between
warning Saddam Hussein that he could disarm peacefully,
but, if he didn't, he would be disarmed. I do think
that came out of Crawford, yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We have heard again, during 2001,
there had been a clear focus on containment, which
appeared to be shared by Secretary of State Powell at
least, and that in the Axis of Evil speech
in January 2002, the President had appeared to strike
out on a new course. So, in a way, what Britain was
doing now was associating itself with the new course of
the American administration.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think the view that the Prime Minister
would have taken at that stage was that he was
absolutely clear that the risks that would be identified
after 9/11 were common risks. As I said, there were
many issues we were trying to deal with, weapons of mass
destruction, the trade in weapons of mass destruction,
and that these problems had to be confronted.

I think, when it comes to the Axis of Evil speech,
unpacking the "Axis of Evil" phrase, the
Prime Minister's view on the Iraq component of this was
that we should deal with Iraq by going back to the UN
and trying to get the international community to do this
and disarm Saddam Hussein and, as far as Iran was
concerned, in my experience, both in the job I was then in and subsequently when I moved to Washington, the view was that, again, we wanted this issue handled by the international community, and one of the things that he was keen to do was to encourage the American administration to move in behind what were known as the "European 3" and try and find a negotiated way through. So I don't dispute your contention that he identified with the risks that he saw to the international system, but I do think he was pretty clear that he wanted these handled multilaterally and in a multinational context, if possible, although, as I said before the break, ultimately, if this proved impossible, he was willing to use force.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just summing up that, would you say -- I suppose it's a slightly different question. Would you say that the United States asked Britain to be involved in this new direction of policy or Britain offered to be involved because it was important for Britain that we sought to move the Americans through this policy in a particular way?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I'm not sure that it was as clear as that on either side, to be honest. I think you have to go back to the hectic weeks after 9/11, when it was very uncertain what was going to happen internationally,
when -- and I travelled around with the Prime Minister a good deal. He visited large numbers of government heads of state between 9/11 and the end of the year, and his sense, I think, was that it was vital to try to bring together the broadest possible international partnership for dealing with issues that could not be dealt with at the international level even by the United States.

Now, Iraq was an issue, as I have said to Lady Prashar and others, that, ultimately, if the United States had decided to deal with this militarily, they could have done so, but I think the Prime Minister's view was that there was an opportunity in the aftermath to this appalling atrocity to try to build a different sort of international community and as broadly as possible.

I think he was also very exercised at this time about relationships between what I would loosely call the western community and the Muslim world, and therefore felt it was very important to try and build bridges to the Muslim world and not to make issues like Afghanistan or Iraq appear to be in some sense a Muslim issue.

So I don't think it was so much President Bush going to the Prime Minister and saying, "I want you to join and do my agenda", or the Prime Minister saying, "I want
to associate myself with you", I think there was a view that the Prime Minister had that the moment was grave, that there were some very serious issues, that he wanted, if he could, to ensure that the transatlantic relationship was broadened into a wider partnership, as wide as possible in dealing with issues like weapons of mass destruction, like the Middle East peace process and like encouraging, if possible, as it were, moderate Islamic countries to confront extremism.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Following from that, does that provide the background to the conditionality that has been set? You have mentioned a number of issues, the UN Middle East peace process, perhaps presentation of the case has been particularly important.

Are these conditions, or are they more things that it would be sensible to do if you are going to make this policy work?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think certainly the latter, and it was difficult, I think, to see how you could approach -- at least we thought or he thought -- the Iraq problem without going through the multilateral route. I'm sure he also felt it was also essential -- "sensible", in your words -- to try and tackle the Middle East peace process, which was in a state of considerable disarray and very dangerous.
So I think these were issues that he felt were both sensible and essential, and certainly, when it came to arguing the case over Iraq quite specifically, these were things that he felt it was essential to put to the United States.

I have mentioned, too, his insistence that there should be an effort to explain the current -- as he saw it then, the challenges, and that was also a theme.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: With all these conditions it is quite difficult, with the exception of the UN, to actually know when it has been met. There are all sorts of things you may try and do with the Arab/Israel conflict, but for anybody to say they have settled it would be quite heroic.

SIR DAVID MANNING: That is a fair point. I think it was difficult. I think he wanted to see real progress, in benchmark terms, on the Middle East peace process. Throughout 2002, he is pressing for a new Middle East conference and offering London as the centre for it. This didn't happen, but he pressed very hard.

I think he was conscious that, you know, words were not enough. Rhetoric was easy, but you had to try and benchmark it. This didn't happen. I think, when it comes to information -- and again, others were more involved with this than I was, but one of the reasons,
both in the Afghan crisis and over Iraq, that he wanted to publish information as he saw it was because he thought it was important that the public were as aware as possible of the pressures that he had seen coming across his desk.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But with, I mean, delivery of information, as we know there were problems with that, this was to some extent under his control, but when you are looking at the Middle East peace process and certainly also with the UN, you become very dependent upon other countries and other attitudes and so on. So in both cases, it may be quite difficult to know when you have done enough or when you think the --

SIR DAVID MANNING: To be candid, I think we were always disappointed with the progress that was made on the Middle East. I have referred to his efforts to promote some kind of conference in 2002. Far from getting to the position where we had some sort of conference, we found ourselves trying to defuse a very dangerous confrontation between the Israelis and the Palestinians, with Yasser Arafat confined to his compound in Ramallah under shellfire from the Israeli defence forces and the risk that they might actually go in and take him out.

So far from seeing progress at this stage, what we were doing was firefighting.
I think the really important element that he wanted progress on and pressed consistently on throughout this period was that there should be a new road map, and I think another witness has mentioned the fact that President Bush did, in the summer of 2002, concede that American policy was a two-state solution, and I think that the Prime Minister wanted to build on that and wanted the United States administration to set out how you got to that solution.

Certainly throughout the rest of that year we pressed very hard for a road map and for the publication of that road map. I have to tell you that it was very hard pounding. In the end, the United States administration did publish the road map, but very late, and as I recall -- and I may have my dates wrong, but I don't think it was actually set out until after the war had begun. Again, I am afraid, you know, it was a triumph of hope over experience because it did not, in the end, produce a road map to peace.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Would that also be a good description of the condition on the day after the aftermath, which is sort of coming in and out of it of your descriptions as to the importance of being prepared for --

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I think, as I mentioned to you, he
raised this in his discussions with the president.

Certainly I raised them in mine with Dr Rice and I know they were raised by other British interlocutors.

I think the assumption that the Americans would have a coherent plan which would be implemented after the war was over obviously proved to be unfounded.

There was confusion over this. We were under the impression that the State Department would be in control after the war. In fact, it turned out to be the Department of Defence that took control and the whole way in which ORHA was set up, the Organisation for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, under General Garner in the weeks after the war turned out to be obviously deficient in managing the problem.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you have a sense of the deficiencies in the period up to March 2002? Was this sort of weighing on you, that maybe we weren't as prepared as we should be --

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think it was certainly an issue we had identified for concern. We had done work ourselves on it. I can recall asking the Foreign Office in September 2002 to prepare work on what a post-Saddam Iraq would look like, what the issues might be, and throughout the discussions in the second half of 2002 and the early part of 2003, there is insistence on the
British side at all levels that there must be a role for
the United Nations.

I personally thought there was a risk of very
considerable dislocation after the war, if there was
a war, after it was over, and it seemed to me important
that the United Nations should be involved in trying to
cope with the aftermath. They had all the expertise,
they clearly had the capacity to come in and, if you
like, I believed very, very strongly that the situation
should be managed within the UN before the war, and if
war was what we came to, it was very important to bring
the UN in afterwards.

I was going to say I think it is important to be
aware of the different currents that were running in
Washington. I mentioned earlier on that it depends
which interlocutors you talked to, and this was
certainly true on the aftermath issue, and I think there
was a view among some -- and some of them would have
been in the administration and some wouldn't -- that
once the war in Iraq was over, that there would be
a period when the Iraqis would themselves celebrate
their liberation, that they would rapidly -- rapidly new
leaderships would emerge. Some in the United States
hoped and believed that there would be a role for the
exiled community to take over, and there was, I think,
a sense among some, or wishful thinking among some, that what would happen in Iraq would reflect something of what had happened after the second world war in Japan or Germany. There might be a brief time, when the Americans had some sort of military government, that the Iraqis would emerge to take control and that there would be a flowering, if you like, of democratic freedom in Iraq.

That was one -- I would call that the sort of neo-con wishful thinking thesis. I think others were aware that it would be much more difficult than that and I think probably the State Department in particular had done a lot of work on what it thought it would have to do in Iraq. As I understand it, it was told very late in the day by the administration, the top of the administration, that it would be actually in the hands of the Defence Department to run.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think we are going to obviously deal with these questions in some detail. Just out of interest, when were we told that the Defence Department rather than the State Department was in charge?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I suspect in February when it became clear that ORHA had been set up and General Garner had been appointed to run it. I would have to go back to the papers to check the date.
SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just ask you one final question? When we were talking about the various conditions, are these a check list for our own decision-making in terms of going to war?

You mentioned the Prime Minister's speech in Chicago in April 1999. Now, at one point, obviously, that was about humanitarian intervention, and you have made it clear that this was a different issue, at least to start with under Saddam, but, as I recall, there were five tests that were set at the end of that speech.

One of them: are we sure of our case? Another one: is this the last resort? A third one: is this action militarily feasible? A fourth one: are we prepared for the long-term? And the fifth one: is this in the national interest?

I'm curious as to whether there was a point when these five tests, which seem to me to do for a generality of international issues, were put to the key decision-makers so that we could be sure we were doing the right thing, and, if so, when and how would that have happened?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't think those five tests were laid out in that way. I think the conditions I have described to you were the conditions that the government was working to during that period. I think, above all,
the condition that the Prime Minister had set was that we should work through the United Nations and, in a sense, those conditions, he thought, would be subsumed under UN activity and action. I mean, you would have to ask him that, but I'm assuming that.

But if you are saying to me, "Did that speech form some kind of series of benchmarks that everybody had to tick?" No. As I said, I thought it was essential that we went through the UN route, because it seemed to me that those conditions -- and I wasn't reading them on a regular basis, but what you have set out there would have been implicit in working through the international community. But if you are saying, "Did he send the speech round and say 'Have we satisfied these conditions?'", no.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Perhaps it is a shame he didn't.

Was it a part of this, that -- whether you used the Chicago criteria or not, was there a point when you went through ticking boxes to make sure that we were doing the right thing? Leaving aside what the Chicago -- the plan for the long-term fits in pretty clearly with what you have just said about your concerns about the day after.

SIR DAVID MANNING: All these issues were certainly discussed by him and the Foreign Secretary and the other
Ministers at the moment when it became clear that the second resolution was not going to pass.

There were meetings, I recall, in Number 10 when Ministers had to take the decision about were they going to go and how far, where the sorts of issues that you have said were in the speech, how far were these fulfilled and how far was this in the British national interest? The Prime Minister's view, and obviously the British Government's view in the end, was that, on balance, this was the right thing to do, but it is certainly the case until very late, before the war begins, that the effort to stay within the international community and through the UN is the paramount concern of the British Government.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Can I just follow up, Sir David, on that?

In the period after the first inspectors' report, when there was tremendous scepticism in the United States, great scepticism about the UN, and then through to the discussion of the second resolution, what influence were we able to have from Britain to try to keep, at that stage, the Americans on the UN route?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, the Americans were aware that the Prime Minister was very keen to have a second resolution
and the President, although I think probably by this stage impatient with the UN route, was willing to try to secure a second resolution, because he could see that this was enormously important to Prime Minister Blair. But it was important to the international community much more widely.

If you were going to build a coalition, it was clearly, I suspect, for the Australian Government, the Spanish Government and others, a very desirable outcome. So we did press very hard during the period of January and February to work for a second resolution.

I think, as Sir Jeremy Greenstock said the other day, you know, the progress oscillated from day-to-day; on some days, we felt we were making progress towards this goal, and, on other days, we clearly felt we weren't.

I felt, myself, that it was essential to try to get the second resolution and pressed the American administration and my own contacts very, very hard to do that. In fairness, there were moments when they seemed to concede themselves that this would be a very desirable thing to achieve, if possible.

I think in the end they concluded that it was not going to run for a variety of reasons, and it was abandoned, as Sir Jeremy Greenstock said, in
early March. The Prime Minister then concluded -- which takes us back to our previous discussion -- that, in that, case the diplomatic track had been exhausted and he would accept the need to take military action, but we did press immensely hard to try to sustain the UN route over the January and February, and I felt that it was very important to do that, to give Hans Blix and the UNMOVIC team every opportunity to try and make the inspections programme work.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Two quick questions, if I may. Just going back to these conditions, I mean, effectively we ended up in a situation in which none of our conditions, or our shopping list, if you like, had actually been fully met, international acceptance and legitimacy, a wide coalition, the Middle East peace process, you said we were disappointed with the results on, proper planning for the aftermath, and exhausting the UN route.

Now, when we have reached that point, was there a reconsideration at the top level as to whether we should actually go ahead?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I think there was. I think the Prime Minister certainly discussed that with his Ministers. I take you back, though, to the point that he had always made it clear that his objective was the
disarmament of Saddam Hussein. He wanted to do this through the UN route. If it failed, he was, I think, committed to staying the course as he saw it, and taking military action to effect this. Because I think if he was unable to do this through the international route, then he was prepared, at the end of the day, to take part in military action.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Secondly, if I can just take you back a little before that, we heard from Sir Christopher Meyer last week how, in his view, the instructions he was getting from London changed in the first quarter of 2002, that by the time you came out to Washington in March of that year, there had been a change of our policy, if not in public, at least in what you were saying to the Americans in private and what he was then instructed to say to the Americans in private.

You have talked about the process of meetings, regular meetings at official level in London, but also the Prime Minister convening meetings of relevant Ministers and chiefs of the defence staff and heads of the agencies.

What sort of meetings did the Prime Minister hold in this period leading up to Crawford, in the first quarter of 2002, at which this new line was thrashed out?
SIR DAVID MANNING: I think the meetings he held in that first quarter were very much the sort of meetings I have already described to you. These would be meetings of Ministers who were inside, as it were, the ring of secrecy, if I can put it like that, those who were unofficially people who belonged to the ad hoc group of Ministers who would be considering this; the Foreign Secretary, the Defence Secretary and so on.

But I think it would be misleading to give you the sense that, before Crawford, the Prime Minister thought that somehow or other there were some really major shifts that he could articulate. We were trying to find out during this period how American thinking was developing, and certainly I went, as I have described earlier on, to Washington to talk to Dr Rice in March to try and find out, and to reflect, as I saw it, how the Prime Minister's mind was turning, so that when he did have a discussion with the President in April, they would have some sense of where each other was coming from. But I don't think it would be right to say that in February and March the Prime Minister was articulating a new policy.

I think that when it became clear to him that the United States was thinking of moving its policy forward towards regime change, he wanted to try and influence
the United States and get it to stay in the UN, to go to
the UN route, which is what we spent the rest of the
year trying to do, but he was willing to signal that he
accepted that disarmament might not be achieved through
the UN route.

But I don't think he felt -- he must obviously
answer for himself on this, but I don't think he felt
that these were moments of decision in February
and March before he went to Crawford. I think he saw
that much more as an attempt to find out where the
Americans had got to, but to impress on them his own
conviction that we needed to ensure that inspections
were continued in the Iraq context.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sir Christopher certainly gave the
impression that, by this time, certainly as far as he
was concerned, containment was more or less a dead duck.
I'm really wondering, in London, what sort of an
options review was taking place in this period when
clearly the Americans had gone on to a different tack?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think you are right about the
Americans moving on to a different tack. I think the
perception, as I said, was that containment was probably
finished, that it would not be possible to continue with
a containment strategy of the kind that had prevailed
before 9/11. I think that's right, but I don't think,
at that stage, there was a view in London -- at least
I wasn't aware of it -- that we had completely given up
on containment. We were waiting, I think, at this point
to see what sort of pressure the United States would
produce in the light of the debate that we knew was
taking place in handling Iraq.

Our concern, I think, and the Prime Minister's view
during this period, was that it must be retained within
the United Nations, but I think -- you know, again, he
will answer for himself -- I don't think he thought,
when he went to Crawford, that it was likely that the
President at this stage would accept containment any
longer, and I suspect that he probably didn't think
containment was relevant any longer, but I think he did
think there was everything to play for in terms of
trying to ensure that the Iraq problem remained managed
in an international context, rather than that the
Americans went unilaterally for regime change.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. Can I take you further
back, because this is in the same sort of territory?

When you were talking earlier about immediately
after 9/11, you said that in a telephone conversation
with Prime Minister Blair, the President did mention
Iraq and the Prime Minister said to him, "Let's focus on
Afghanistan", and there is not a very tenuous link, if
any, with Al-Qaeda and what was happening in Iraq.

Why did then Iraq become a priority? I can see why it became a priority for the United States. How come we were kind of led in that direction when we were pursuing the policy of containment, and why did we make it a priority?

SIR DAVID MANNING: In the early months of 2002, as I said earlier on, I think it is important to remember that there were a lot of other priorities too. In a sense I think we knew that we had to deal with Iraq as a more pressing priority because the US administration were going to insist on making it more prominent. They were concerned about the threat from Iraq in a new way because they believed threats internationally were now threats that they had to meet rather than contain. So the approach differed.

We were at least as preoccupied in the early months of 2002 with the crisis between India and Pakistan and the Middle East peace process, and, indeed, trying to improve relations with Russia, as we were with Iraq, but Iraq was given a salience, it was given an importance, because the US administration was determined to confront the international community over this perceived threat. Therefore, we had to respond to that.

I think -- and I was talking just now to Sir Roderic
about this -- there was a sense in London that containment would not work anymore. We had to decide what were we going to do about Iraq. This was something that the Prime Minister wanted resolved in an international context, that I think very, very quickly -- and as I said, he made this point early on -- he wanted the inspectors to be reintroduced into Iraq to deal with this threat and he saw -- he believed that international pressure was the best way of trying to ensure that that happened, and that in turn was the best way of managing the Iraq crisis that had been given a new prominence by an American administration that was no longer willing to settle for containment.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to pick up the timing issue of the decision to invade in March. The UNMOVIC inspectors have been in, but not for very long. They have produced two reports, one of which is a piece of history, actually, the first one in January.

The United States Government was not particularly impressed, I think, with UNMOVIC's importance. Is that right?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I think that's a fair description.

THE CHAIRMAN: What about the United Kingdom?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, can I perhaps back up a little bit
and just talk about Resolution 1441? Because it is in
two halves and I think, in order to understand what
follows, particularly in the December to March period,
it is important to be aware of what we were looking for.

The first, as I’m sure you know, was a declaration
by Saddam Hussein about what his holdings of WMD were.
The second was that he should give unfettered access to
an intrusive inspection regime and cooperate with it.

Now, you are quite right, the US administration was
not persuaded that either of these things was happening.
In fact, if I can just say in parenthesis I think
Saddam Hussein actually had an opportunity in 1441 to
have avoided military action, and that if there had been
a sensible declaration or he had shown willingness to
accept a measure of inspection, history would have been
different.

But the fact is that the Americans believed that he
was obstructing Hans Blix and the inspectors, and
I think they were reinforced in that view when Hans Blix
gave his report -- the first report on 27 January -- and
believed that this showed, in effect, that the UN route
was not working.

We in London, and certainly, I personally, believed
that the inspections should be given more time to work.
You, yourself, said, Chairman, that these inspections
hadn't run for very long. I think that's correct.

In some ways they had -- although they had not found
the smoking gun, the famous smoking gun, they had not
been wholly disappointing. I think we suggested to
Hans Blix that we had identified something like
19 possible sites. I think Hans Blix and his team had
looked at ten of them and had turned up some quite
interesting material in two, three or four of those
sites. Therefore, letting the inspections run longer,
I believed, would have been a useful thing to do.

I regretted that this process ended when it did, but
the fact is that, by this stage, the United States was
convinced these provisions were not working and it was
also convinced that a second resolution was impossible
because of the political backdrop, not least the
suggestion that the French made that they would not
approve any second resolution, so I think you get into
a situation where there is impatience in Washington with
the process and a determination to bring it to an end.

THE CHAIRMAN: There is a phrase in circulation, I think it
is properly an Americanism, about "Let's go fish or cut
bait", and clearly, by mid-March, that point had been
reached in the American minds.

Do you think that the suggestions for extended
periods of inspection by the French and others, six
months in one case, 45 days, I think, from another, were
purely tactical to try to hold off the invasion moment,
or were they potentially for real?
SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't know that I can be sure in my
answer to that. I think that there was an element of
tactics and I think it is important to recall how bad
political relationships were at the top among different
governments at this time.

One of the difficulties, I felt, certainly
between January and March, was the lack of communication
between those who were on different sides of the
argument and I think there was undoubtedly a tactical
perception that, "Well, let us prevent this going ahead,
not least because we don't think Hans Blix is given
enough time".

I'm not sure I believe it was entirely tactical, and
perhaps this is because of my own views. I think there
were undoubtedly those who believed that the inspectors
should have been given longer to do their job, and it
was possible that, if they had been given the
opportunity, either they would have found something
significant, or, indeed, if they hadn't, that would have
been increasingly telling, and it would also, in my
view, have perhaps given an opportunity for some of
these difficult and damaged political relationships to
have corrected themselves a little bit.

It is worth recalling how difficult the run-up to 1441 was. The fact is that, of course, it looked extremely successful when we got it, and it was a remarkable diplomatic achievement, much to the credit, not least, of Sir Jeremy Greenstock, but it was very difficult and contentious to get there and the atmosphere was certainly worse at the time of the second resolution phase than it had been at the first, but, in a sense, that was something that might have changed again.

Therefore, I felt myself that we should have given longer for this process to work. I'm not at all sure it would have worked and I know that -- I think you asked Sir Jeremy, "Would it have had any effect?" I don't know and I think it is quite possible, as he said, that we would have anyway arrived where we did, but it felt to me it was rushed at the end. I was involved in trying to prolong the debate over the second resolution. I was asked by Prime Minister Blair to go to talk to the Mexican President and to the Chilean President in late February or early March, to see whether we could rally the Mexicans and the Chileans behind a second resolution, and they made it clear, certainly in the case of President Lagos of Chile, that he might be
willing to rally to a second resolution if the
inspection process was given more time.

At that point, we tried to develop a series of tests
that would have been put in front of Saddam Hussein. He
would have been given time to show whether he was
complying with them, and, if not, that would have been
a trigger for unified action.

We never were able to explore this, because, in the
end, we were not allowed to proceed all the way, the
Americans were not willing to allow this to go ahead,
and we ended up pulling the resolution or at least
leaving it on the table in early March.

Now, it might well not have worked. I'm not
suggesting to you that I was absolutely convinced that
we would have had a success with the second resolution
because we would have had an extended period of
inspection, but as I have said in public before, I do
think it would have been worth trying.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there an internal contradiction in this
situation between allowing the inspectors more time, if
that could have been negotiated and achieved, thereby
making a second resolution possibly potentially
achievable, but, of course, a second resolution is then
itself the trigger for military action?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I didn't feel there was a contradiction,
as far as we were concerned, because we wanted to disarm Saddam Hussein. If it was impossible to do this, it was always our intention that we should do this through the UN and in international company.

Although I always felt it would be regrettable -- it was always the last resort to take military action -- it would have been quite different taking military action on the basis of a second resolution. So it seemed to me a very desirable end for us to try to achieve.

As I have said, even if we had been able to enforce delay or achieve delay, it is quite possible that relationships were so difficult and basic interests were so conflicted that this would not have had an effect, but I would like to have seen a longer period to try.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would one potential advantage of delay have been the ability to refine and develop the aftermath planning?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I think there are all sorts of possibilities about delay. This is one aspect. We might have become more aware of the risks that were being run by setting up ORHA really very late. It might well have been, and I hope it would have been, much more plausible to have involved the United Nations very quickly after any kind of military action, and this was certainly one of the aims we had and one of the things
we were pressing very hard.

I think there are a number of possible scenarios you can develop that another two, three, four months, might have produced. As I said to you, I think one of them is that it might have been that the very strained relationships among the P5, the very difficult relationships across Europe -- it was not simply a transatlantic split-- there might have been an opportunity to rebuild a consensus and take policy forward and I think it was worth a try.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Well, we have come to the aftermath. There was clearly both contingency planning and some scenario work. I think, as we understand the documents we have seen, the primary concern, perhaps two, were things that didn't eventuate.

One was that we would be in a CBW warfare situation with all the consequences flowing from that, including the possible use by Saddam of those weapons on his own folk.

The scenario that was not foreseen, are you aware -- I haven't found it yet in the documents -- was that there would be a massive and rapid deterioration and breakdown of internal security, and then followed, though not necessary entirely caused, by, at a later stage, this whole series of insurgencies. This was not,
was it, on the planning screen at all?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think people had referred to the risk
that a war would produce or reveal the social,
political, religious, ethnic tensions that were
inevitably suppressed by this dictatorship that Saddam
had imposed, but -- and I think there was an awareness
that there were risks in this, but I don't think anybody
envisaged the extent to which a security vacuum would
develop in Iraq immediately after the war.

Now, I need to be specific about this, because, of
course, the British sector, after the war, is that of the
southern four governorates -- and it was in a sense less
pronounced there, the security vacuum that I want to
talk about because we were dealing with the Shia
population, and, as people said at the time, it was much
easier for us in the immediate aftermath than it was for
the coalition forces that were further north, and
certainly in the Sunni heartland, and that is an
important point.

Nevertheless, the extent to which security broke
down, in Baghdad in particular, and around Baghdad, in
the period from April to July was not foreseen and was
deeply troubling. There are, I think, a number of
reasons for this. One reason certainly was that,
I think, the American military thought that they were
fighting a war and that, when the war was over, they
were expecting to go home and they were not in the mode
of, if I can put it, peace-keeping or policing. They
did not think that that was their responsibility.

I think there was not either an anticipation by ORHA
or the American authorities -- they had not anticipated
the extent to which Iraqi security would itself
disintegrate. I think the war was over much quicker
than anybody expected. I think they felt the police had
disappeared, the army and the military had apparently
disappeared, and they didn't step in to take the place
of the security authorities that were there.

This, I think -- and again, I'm not an expert
militarily, but I think this was a real distinction with
the way that our own military operated in Basra. As
I understand it, they did get out and patrol and try to
impose some kind of security in our zone, but that was
a different philosophy of military action.

In and around Baghdad and the north, security broke
down. There was a dreadful moment, if I recall, in the
middle of April, when looting broke out in Baghdad and
there were hospitals that were looted, there were
museums that were looted and so on, and I can remember
speaking to Dr Rice about this and expressing our
concern and to be fair, she was equally concerned. But
I think it was clear that it was very difficult to persuade the American military on the ground at this point that they had to take over policing responsibilities.

So the situation in this area of Iraq developed so that you had, in effect, a lot of the time, very, very weak or almost non-existent security, which made it even more difficult, I think, for ORHA, which was certainly not a model of organisation, to operate.

I was asked by the Prime Minister to go to Baghdad in May, which I did, I was accompanied by Sir John Scarlett, who was then the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, and we went to have a look at the situation on the ground. I was very struck by this security problem, by the reluctance of the United States soldiers to, as it were, get out of their tanks, take off their helmets and start trying to build up links with local communities. They looked still much more in war-fighting mode than they did in peace-keeping mode, and it was also clear that there had been a serious problem in underestimating the degree of infrastructure damage that had been left behind by the Saddam regime.

One of the important things, obviously, for the international community that was in Iraq was to be able
to demonstrate that day-to-day life was coming back

into -- it was going to improve basically, and there was

no sign at this stage that this was happening.

It seemed to me it was vital that, first of all,

there was a different form of military activity in these

areas, so there was an attempt to reconnect, but, also,

it was important that there was a policing operation

that was put in hand. I remember speaking to Dr Rice

who was very conscious, you know, she knew herself ORHA

was in serious trouble, and saying that these things

were essential and that we had to -- the Americans had

to do something to promote much more effective security

arrangements, that they had to start getting on top of

the electricity, the water issues, and, in particular,

pressing again for the United Nations to be involved as

quickly as possible in the hope that this could help to

redress the difficulties.

We also -- we, the UK -- sent people out to try and

help. I mean, ORHA was in Baghdad, it was not

technically in our sector, as it were, but departments

in London sent people to try and reinforce ORHA and to

help ORHA. Sir John Sawers was sent out to work with

Jay Garner and then his successor as head of the CPA,

and Sir Jeremy Greenstock himself was sent. So there

was an attempt to try to redress these deficiencies as

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we perceived them by sending people out to try and help
ORHA, and in due course, the Coalition Provisional
Authority.

But in a way, I am afraid, when it comes to the
security issue, the setting up of the Coalition
Provisional Authority did not help, because
Ambassador Bremer, who arrived, if I recall rightly, at
the end of May, concluded that he would disband the
Iraqi army and carry out a very far-reaching purge of
the Ba'ath Party.

My view was that these were policies that added to
the difficulties, because we might have addressed the
security vacuum by trying to encourage Iraqi police,
Iraqi military, to cooperate with us, instead of which,
they are disbanded and then become natural dissidents
and potential insurgents.

THE CHAIRMAN: There is an irony, isn't there, that, by
committing the United Kingdom to the large land package,
the divisional strength contribution, we took on the
status of an occupying power.

The Coalition Provisional Authority, as it were,
discharges those, and these are legal duties under
international law, but was the United Kingdom's role,
responsibility and power or influence within the CPA
sufficient to allow it properly to discharge its
occupying power role.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I'm not sure that I can answer that in any detail. I think it is very much a question for Sir Jeremy Greenstock. The CPA is set up in my last two months, I think, while I'm in Downing Street, and I have to say that my perception of this is that our impact on the CPA was limited, that it was difficult.

The perception I had -- and it may or may not be correct -- is that Ambassador Bremer arrived with pretty much -- in American eyes -- full plenipotentiary powers -- and I referred to these issues about the disbanding of the Iraqi army and the thoroughgoing purge of the Ba'ath Party. These seemed to have been, as far as I'm aware, decisions that he took himself on his own authority despite the fact that we were very concerned about it and despite the fact, as I knew from conversations I had had with American interlocutors that they were not planning to do this.

So I think the extent to which the Coalition Provisional Authority under Ambassador Bremer is influence-able, if you like, is not only a problem for London, it turns out to be a problem for Washington.

THE CHAIRMAN: Two final points on this from me.

First, given the scale of the civilian casualties in the aftermath or over the years, the whole invasion and
what followed took on a totally different ethical,
moral, as well as political dimension, of global
proportions. Just reverting, there was no foresight of
something on that scale, something so terrible. Was it
foreseeable, with hindsight?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think it was -- it was very difficult
to foresee it being on that scale. I think that is the
case, but, as I said to you, it has always seemed to me
that if you release the pressures that are contained in
a dictatorship, and one as savage as the one that
Saddam Hussein had imposed, it is very hard to predict
what is going to happen, because old scores will be
settled, divisions that we were very well aware were
there in the country would have the chance, probably, to
bubble up again, and if you have that combination and
a security vacuum, there is obviously a very great risk
that there will be violence, but I don't think anybody
envisaged the violence on the scale that occurred, and
I think, had the security arrangements been managed
differently in the months after the invasion, for the
reasons that I have given you, I think it is quite
possible that the situation would have been very
different.

I recall in my visit to Baghdad in May of 2003, and
indeed the Prime Minister's visit to Basra a few days
later, that there was, at that stage, an intention to promote consultative mechanisms and there had been some success with these.

Zal Khalilzad, who was an early American envoy to Iraq, had encouraged and promoted consultative processes in the north. General Robin Brims, if I'm correct, was in command in Basra, and he early on established what was in effect a consultative council, a sort of Majlis in Basra, and I think, had the security situation been more stable, had the army and the police been co-opted, if you like, in large numbers, had there been far less of a witch hunt against the Ba'ath Party, which of course was Sunni, then the situation might have been very different together with this consultative process.

I also think, though, that there was a problem about troop numbers, and one of the difficulties in the months after the invasion was it seemed to me that there were inadequate troops.

The United States, as I said to you earlier, had intended originally to come in from the north with larger numbers. I think there were always Americans who were worried that, even then, the numbers weren't great enough, but this is something perhaps to explore with others who are more militarily expert than I am.

But it was very striking in the first months after
the war concluded that there were inadequate troops to seal the border with Syria, and inadequate troops to seal the border with Iran, and that, therefore, if there were going to be serious military insurgencies, two sources for these insurgencies were wide open.

In addition to this, it was very striking that there didn't seem to be enough troops to control the arms dumps. So if you had the sort of security vacuum that I have described and you can't control the border because you don't have enough troops, and on top of that -- where you have created dissidents or there are insurgents or disgruntled groups, and they have access to arms dumps, you are left with a very dangerous cocktail.

I think it is probably also worth adding that in the immediate aftermath of the military action, the Americans seemed to lose focus, and I think they themselves would admit that. I think there was a sense of exhaustion. I don't think Iraq was given the same attention after the conclusion of the conflict that it was given in the months before. I think attention had switched to a lot of other things that had been put on to the backburner while this went ahead, and the combination of the poor arrangements that were put in place by the Department of Defence at the expense of the
planning done by the State Department, together with the
situation on the ground as I have described it and the
lack of focus at the top of the American administration
proved to be a very unfortunate combination.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Now, Usha, would you like to
conclude with some questions?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Yes, indeed. If I can just pursue
that a little further, you touched on the question of
you know, the causes. Was your analysis shared by the
United States?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Again, I think I would answer by saying
it depends whom you spoke to in the United States.
I think self-evidently Ambassador Bremer would contest
what I said. In a sense, it was easy for me. I wasn't
having to deal with it on the ground in the way that he
was. I think, though, that as I have said to the
Chairman, when I spoke to interlocutors in the
United States, particularly after I had been to Baghdad,
there was a recognition that my experience was indeed
reflecting serious problems on the ground, and I never
felt, certainly when I spoke to Dr Rice, that she was
deluding herself that ORHA had turned out to be
a successful operation.

Quite clearly, the American administration decided
to do something about ORHA because it changed ORHA. It
disbanded ORHA and put the Coalition Provisional
Administration in.

I think probably ORHA has had a very bad press. It
is worth saying that my understanding is -- although I
didn't know this at the time -- that General Garner, who
was in charge of ORHA, had every intention of trying to
coop the Iraqi military and wanted to reconstitute at
least part of the Iraqi army.

My understanding, certainly when I talked to
Dr Rice, was that she was well aware of the desirability
of trying to coop the army, trying to limit the degree
of purge of the Ba'ath Party, and I remember saying to
her, after the revolutions in Eastern Europe, at the
time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, we would
never have said at this point that anybody who had
belonged to one of the Communist parties in these
countries could never take part in government again,
and she absolutely accepted that.

So I think you have to work on the assumption that
there were very divided views in Washington about how to
handle this and it is -- as I said, it goes, if you
like, in a spectrum from the State Department, who
thought they had done a lot of planning and were going
to be running Iraq, probably to a sort of neo-con view
that nobody needed to run it anyway, because, once the
war was over, it would re-establish itself as
a flourishing democracy and the Iraqis would take over
with or without leadership from the exiled community.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Who took the decision on
de-Ba'athification and when was that taken?

SIR DAVID MANNING: As far as I know -- and I can't be
certain about who took this decision, and indeed, this
remains to this day, so far as I'm aware, a source of
great controversy in America itself, but as far as I'm
aware, this was a decision taken by Ambassador Bremer
when he took over as the head of the Coalition
Provisional Authority.

I can't say to you that I ever saw a piece of paper
that proved it was his decision alone, but there has
been, as I understand it, a long controversy over this
and how this decision was reached and who in Washington
knew about it. I can only say it took us completely by
surprise, and, judging from my conversations with
Dr Rice, it took her completely by surprise.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What was her view then and what was
your view now?

SIR DAVID MANNING: My view then is the same as my view now;
that it was a mistake.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was this your view or was it
a shared view?
SIR DAVID MANNING: No, it was a shared view, I think.

There was absolutely no -- nobody in London, and
certainly I'm not aware of anybody in London, either an
official, myself or at ministerial level, who thought
that disbanding the army or having a purge
of the Ba'ath Party was a good idea.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Roderic?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Evidently, the British Government didn't
have much leverage over the Coalition Provisional
Authority or even less, no doubt, over the question of
troop numbers that you have just been talking about.

If we go back to the end of the UN route, you,
today, like Sir Jeremy Greenstock on Friday, have said
very clearly that you would have favoured a longer
period for the inspectors to operate, but that American
patience ran out.

Now, when we were told by Washington that they were
not willing to allow the process to run longer, did the
British Government have any leverage at that point? Did
we have any options and what were they?

SIR DAVID MANNING: In my view, we certainly had the option
of not taking part and we had always said that we wanted
to go the UN route. We had made it clear that we needed
a second resolution, so if you are saying
hypothetically, "Did we have any options?", yes, of course, we did, we had the option of not going, but as I think I have also said to you, the Prime Minister was, I think, clear in his own mind that if he felt the UN route had been completely exhausted, that he would stand by his commitment that he would take military action.

I think personally he thought it was very important that if the UN route failed, that he went to Parliament, and he did do that, and, as you know, Parliament endorsed the decision and the British participation went ahead. There were a range of options open to us at that point, but I was not surprised that the Prime Minister chose, in those circumstances, to commit British troops.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So he felt by March 2003 that the UN route had been completely exhausted?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think he felt there might have been some play left in terms of a few days only in trying to prolong the possibility of further inspections, and certainly his enthusiasm for the tests that we had established for the discussions we tried to have with the "undecided six", as Sir Jeremy Greenstock mentioned, these all pointed to the fact that he was very keen to try and keep the UN route going as long as possible, but I think he concluded by -- certainly by the second week of March, that the UN route was not going to work and
the issue was not that, it was when the Americans would
decide they had given the UN route their best shot and
it wasn't going to work and when they were going to
go ahead without it.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Had he and you been telling the
Americans, maybe in the preceding month when both of you
were making an enormous effort with
Sir Jeremy Greenstock and Jack Straw and others to get
a second resolution, that it was essential for the
British Government to have a second resolution?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I had told them it was essential.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Because?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Because it seemed to me -- and I have to
say here that I had always been in favour of
a two-resolution route and there had been quite a debate
about this, the pros and cons of this, and I think
Sir Jeremy started alluding to this.

I think I felt that the first resolution was
necessary in order to bring the international community
together. The second resolution would be necessary if
the first resolution had not successfully disarmed
Saddam Hussein and that we wanted to keep the
international community together to take action in
a common way to enforce the disarmament resolution --
the disarmament policy, and it seemed to me that I had
been saying it was essential and I believed it was essential.

THE CHAIRMAN: Martin?

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: The UN route had ended in terms of there not being a second resolution, but it hadn't ended in terms of the inspectors still being in Iraq. How does that fit into our --

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think when it became clear, Sir Martin, that we were not going to get a second resolution, it also became clear that there would be military action, and, therefore, the inspectors had to withdraw. It would have been unwise for them to have stayed, I think, against the backdrop of the expectation that, because the route to a second resolution had failed, there might not be military action. It always seemed clear to me that if we didn't get a second resolution, military action would follow.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: So it wasn't really within our power, politically or diplomatically, to persuade the United States to pursue the inspectors route --

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think we had tried as hard as we could and I think they initially gave the inspections route a shot. I think that if I can go back to 1441, some had been less enthusiastic than others about the provision for inspections at all, but the President had insisted
that he would accept both the declaration element in the
resolution and the inspection provision, and it went
ahead. The American mood oscillated. There is no
doubt, during the autumn of 2002 and at the time that
the resolution was passed, there was a recognition, both
by the President and by Dr Rice, that this might work
actually, and that, if it did, it would be a welcome
alternative to going the military route.

They were quite explicit about that, but I think,
once Saddam Hussein produced this declaration on
8 December that was unconvincing to say the least, they
began to think that this was going to be a replay of his
previous obstruction in the way he had behaved in the UN
and I think, once they had watched some of the early
attempts by the inspectors to look at what was going on
on the ground, they convinced themselves that actually
this was not going to work.

There was one particular item that they were
concerned about, which was that the inspectors should
have the option, should have the opportunity, to talk to
scientists who had worked on the WMD programmes in Iraq,
without any interference. So they were not to be
accompanied by minders, and if Hans Blix and his team
wanted to, they could take them out of the country to
talk to them. Their argument was, if Saddam Hussein's
word was correct, he should have no problem with that, and this was obstructed all the way down the line.

So I think there were a number of factors at work which convinced the Americans that they had given the UN route an opportunity to succeed, they had given Saddam Hussein an opportunity actually to disarm himself, which would have probably prevented regime change in the sense certainly that the neo-cons expected, and he had rejected this offer and time had run out.

I think, too, you have to -- again, this is a military question really, but you have to look at the situation in March. I think there was probably quite a lot of pressure on the President at this point from the military saying, "Well, if you are going to go the military route any time soon, you had better get on with it. The conditions are getting worse, it is getting hotter. We need to get going", and I think also the troops had been hanging around for a long time. "We can't sustain this indefinitely. So if you are going to tell us to do it, we need to get on and do it".

I think the combination of feeling that Saddam Hussein was determined to prevent the UN route from succeeding and the pressure over the military timetable meant that the administration decided that it...
had to go ahead in the middle of March.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was the pressure of the military
timetable a factor for the UK as well?

SIR DAVID MANNING: It was a factor in the sense that it was
a factor on the United States. Once we had made the
decision that if the UN route failed, we would be
alongside the United States in military action, then we
were certainly tied to that timetable, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you. Sir David, you have
given a very vivid account of the sort of perfect storm
that overtook Iraq and the coalition forces after the
invasion. But, of course, as you have also indicated,
expectations prior to the war, particularly in the
United States, were much more optimistic, and it has
been argued that the hope was that establishing a
different sort of regime in Iraq would create all sorts
of other foreign policy opportunities for the
United States. Were these shared in the United Kingdom.
What sort of Middle East did we think would happen from
a successful invasion?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think, looking at what we expected as
a result internationally, there were positives and there
were negatives, if I can put it like that. The key
positive was the expectation that Iraq would be rid of
weapons of mass destruction and this, in turn, would have a knock-on effect in the region. Saddam Hussein was somebody who had, after all, invaded Kuwait, had started a war earlier on with Iran, was a potential threat to his neighbours all the time, and whatever many of them were prepared to say in public, in private they were in no doubt that it was very uncomfortable indeed living alongside Saddam Hussein. There was an expectation, I think, that this would at least help to promote a greater degree of stability and perhaps cooperation in the Gulf than was possible while Saddam Hussein was in place.

So I think it was a shared hope - it wasn't a certainty but it was a shared hope - that an Iraq without weapons of mass destruction, an Iraq that was perhaps on the road to stability and some form of democracy, would be a much better place for its neighbours.

I think I would just like to add there that although this isn't technically a foreign policy point, I think the Prime Minister and his other Ministers also thought actually it would be the liberation of a lot of people in Iraq. I think we perhaps tend to forget now the scale of internal oppression that certainly at the time weighed in the argument. This was a dictator who had
murdered, as we now think, hundreds of thousands of his own people, and we knew after the Gulf War, that he had unleashed a reign of terror on the Marsh Arabs, among others.

So I think there was a sense not only would this help in terms of regional stability but it would also bring about a better regime inside Iraq, which was in itself a good. But on the other hand, I was also very conscious, you know, that there were negatives, and we were very conscious that there were negatives. I have alluded already to the risk that it would appear that the western community was picking on an Arab nation, and we were concerned that there would be a backlash of some sort if it was seen that military action had been taken against Iraq and that this would complicate wider relationships.

Fairly or not, some administrations, some states, made a connection between how energetic are you willing to be to deal with Iraq and how energetic are you willing to be to deal with the Middle East peace process, and this was one reason why Prime Minister Blair was intent on trying to make progress there.

So I certainly don't want to suggest that we thought it would be an unalloyed benefit and we certainly did
not believe in, if I can call it like this for
shorthand, the neo-con view that somehow or other an
Iraq would emerge which would be the catalyst for
a complete transformation of the Middle East.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: (inaudible) I suppose, a reflection
on what you have been telling us today. You have
described some areas of British influence on an American
process, a successful effort to encourage the Americans
to go to the United Nations, a hard effort to encourage
them to take the Middle East peace process and the road
map more seriously and then increasing difficulties,
first, with moving forward on the second resolution and
giving the inspectors more time and then a serious of
decisions that you have described, on which it is clear
you weren't consulted. I presume this includes
abandoning ORHA and setting up the CPA. I presume you
weren't consulted on that either: Deba'athification,
disbanding the army.

Is there a sort of sense in this that we sort of
htiched ourselves some time early in 2002 to an American
wagon that was then rolling along and that, to start
with, we were able to give it some direction but
eventually we were just a passenger?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think, after the war was over, there
was a real effort by everybody on the British side with
their American interlocutors, from the Prime Minister
down, to press for remedial action and, as I said to
you, I think it is true that there was a loss of focus
and attention by the American administration after the
war, and I think we did try then to affect the decisions
that were taken. Again I think this is probably
something that John Sawers and Sir Jeremy Greenstock
will be able to talk more about, but I don't think -- we
certainly didn't stop trying to influence the way in
which the post-war situation and settlement was devised
in Iraq, but there were very considerable difficulties
and one has to be realistic about the degree of
influence we had, not least because, of course, we were
not in Baghdad, we were in Basra.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But we were affected obviously by --

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, of course we were affected, the
whole coalition that went in with the United States was
affected by what happened on the ground, and that's why,
of course, we made energetic representations about
various aspects which worried us so much.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think that's fine, thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Usha?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I just ask a very brief
question, because my understanding is that Saudi Arabia
and the other countries had sort of suggested that if
you pursued the inspectors' route and there was a material breach, that they would collectively put pressure on Saddam Hussein to go. How seriously was that considered?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, it was always, I thought, a very attractive idea but I can't say to you that I ever saw a moment when it seemed to me very likely. There were discussions, there were hints, suggestions, from various Arab governments that it might be possible, in the light of a UN Resolution to persuade Saddam, if you like, that the game was up and that he should leave peacefully, and there were suggestions like this until really quite late in the process. Again, I think it is correct for me to say to you that in the conversations I had with Americans, some of them said this would be very welcome, they wished this would happen, that he would go and that there could be a period to allow him to leave.

But in the end this turned out to be a mirage, I think. I never saw, myself anyway, a really firm, credible proposal and plan to deliver this. There were suggestions and noises and hints that it might be the way that this could work itself out. Personally, I think, if there had been a serious plan, it would have been well worth investigating, but I never felt, unfortunately, that it was really likely to materialise.
THE CHAIRMAN: Sir David, we have come to the end of quite a long afternoon. I wonder, is there anything in conclusion that you would like to say to the Committee that there hasn’t been a chance to discuss so far?

Otherwise, we will conclude the session.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't think so, Chairman, thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Right.

Well, our thanks to you, Sir David, as the witness, and to all members of the public who have put in a long afternoon here. It is helpful to the Inquiry that you are here.

Looking ahead to tomorrow, in the morning we have Sir Edward Chaplin, who was the director of the Middle East side of the Foreign Office at the time, and Sir Peter Ricketts, who has already been a witness before this Inquiry, in his role as Political Director in the period 2002 and 2003.

Just to complete the advertisements, the programme for the rest of this week is already up on the Inquiry website and the programme for next week is being released in the course of today.

So, with thanks again to all those present, that concludes this session.

(5.01 pm)

(The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am the following day)
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