

Monday, 30 November 2009

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(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

1 opportunity in a minute to say a little bit about how
2 that conditioned the agenda.

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

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

21 There were constant worries and concerns about what
22 was going on between Israel and the Palestinians, and
23 indeed -- and we may get on to this -- at the time of
24 the Prime Minister's visit to Crawford in April 2002,
25 one of the major pre-occupations of that visit was what

1 to do, if possible, to damp down the confrontation
2 between Israel and the Palestinians.

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

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

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

22 So the agenda throughout this period is complicated
23 and wide-ranging. Iraq is a constant theme, but it
24 would be wrong of me to suggest to you that, sitting
25 where I sat, Iraq was always the top priority, and

1 certainly, in the first half of 2002, we were at least
2 as pre-occupied in London with the crisis between India
3 and Pakistan and the very serious situation in the
4 confrontation between Israel and Palestinian as we were
5 about Iraq.

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

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

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

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

23 I must begin, I think, with 9/11. I have already
24 touched on it and I know other witnesses in front of the
25 Inquiry have referred to it, but I do think it is an

1 absolutely critical moment in this story. It has been
2 described by others as a Pearl Harbour moment for the
3 American administration, and, indeed, for the American
4 people, and I think it was a profoundly shocking event
5 which caused the Bush administration to redefine the
6 threats to the United States, redefine the security
7 context in which the United States had to make policy,
8 and also redefine itself.

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

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

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

1 a conscious decision.

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

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

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

20 I think it was Sir Christopher Meyer who also
21 raised -- and I think quite rightly -- the issue of the
22 anthrax scare. I know from conversations that I had
23 with Dr Rice after 9/11 that they were not only worried
24 about a repeat of an atrocity like 9/11, and they were
25 constantly on the alert for this, but they were puzzled

1 and deeply disturbed by the appearance of the anthrax
2 that seemed to have been targeted against key members of
3 the administration.

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

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

17 Coming to some of the key moments, if I may, in
18 trying to explain to you how this evolution took place,
19 as far as I am aware, the first time that the President
20 mentioned Iraq to the Prime Minister after 9/11 was on
21 14 September in a telephone call and he said, if
22 I recall, that he thought there might be evidence that
23 there was some connection between Saddam Hussein and
24 Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda.

25 The Prime Minister's response to this was that the

1 evidence would have to be very compelling indeed to
2 justify taking any action against Iraq. He also
3 cautioned the President in a letter, in October, against
4 widening the war.

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

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

19 Now, we were aware in Number 10 that, of course,
20 there was a debate going on the United States that was
21 wider than this. Sir Christopher Meyer in the embassy
22 was reporting the debate that was going on in Washington
23 and more widely, and I recall there was an open letter
24 from several key senators in December, warning the
25 administration that they had better do something serious

1 about the programmes of weapons of mass destruction that
2 were being developed in Iraq.

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

7 I think the next event that I am conscious was
8 important in this story for me was when I went to
9 Washington in January on 22 January --

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That was 2002?

11 SIR DAVID MANNING: This is 2002 now. I went with
12 Sir Richard Dearlove, who was then the Chief of the
13 Secret Intelligence Service, and we went to discuss
14 a number of issues, but, of course, Iraq was among them.

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

23 This visit was followed up by various telephone
24 calls, one, in particular, I recall in the middle
25 of February, on 14 February, when Dr Rice confirmed to

1 me that the administration was indeed looking at
2 options, but said there was absolutely no plan at this
3 stage. It was an effort to redefine policy.

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

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

22 I did say to Dr Rice at this meeting, at this
23 reconnaissance meeting, that if the United States was
24 thinking about reviewing its policy and it wanted
25 coalition support, if it wanted the participation of its

1 allies in a new policy, then it would need to address
2 allies' concerns, very much obviously including our own,
3 and I think it is just worth recalling the coalition
4 idea had been powerful after Afghanistan, that the
5 Americans had worked with a coalition and, therefore,
6 there was a lot to be said for encouraging them to work
7 with the coalition on this new issue.

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

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

22 I also said that the Middle East peace process,
23 which I have alluded to already, which was in a very
24 dangerous state at this time, that the Israel/Palestine
25 issue was critical; it was not an optional extra.

1 I suggested that we weren't anywhere near, at this
2 stage, having answers to these problems, and Dr Rice
3 agreed. I said that, naturally, the next stage in this
4 would be for the President and for the Prime Minister to
5 discuss this when the Prime Minister went to Crawford.

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

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

22 It was a visit that has become dominated by
23 speculation about Iraq but, as I said earlier, there
24 were a lot of other issues and I will go on to describe
25 what happened on Saturday morning, when Iraq was

1 actually a very minor part of this debate.

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

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

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

21 The Prime Minister added that he had been saying to
22 the President it was important to go back to the
23 United Nations and to present going back to the
24 United Nations as an opportunity for Saddam to
25 cooperate.

1 I had a follow-up conversation with the
2 Prime Minister afterwards, who told me he had had
3 another opportunity to speak to the President about Iraq
4 and that, on that occasion, he had again pressed for
5 a multilateral approach. The President had told the
6 Prime Minister that he accepted that Saddam Hussein
7 might allow the inspectors in to do their work and, if
8 so, that would mean adjusting the approach.

9 The Prime Minister commented to me that he concluded
10 from this that the President probably did want to build
11 a coalition and that this had led him to dismiss
12 pressure from some on the American right.

13 If I may, I would just like to repeat that Crawford
14 is about many other things as well as Iraq, and the rest
15 of that morning, the Saturday morning, was spent
16 wrestling with the Middle East peace process.

17 This is a moment when the Israeli defence forces are
18 occupying parts of the West Bank, when there is
19 a serious concern about what is going to happen to
20 Yasser Arafat, and there was a lot of concern that
21 Secretary of State Colin Powell should go to the region
22 and go to the region with a plan about how to try and
23 engineer some sort of de-escalation and get the peace
24 process going again. That is what Saturday morning was
25 about and it included a telephone conversation, which

1 I was invited to take part in, between Dr Rice at the
2 ranch, Colin Powell in Washington, who was accompanied
3 by Dr Rice's deputy, as I recall, Stephen Hadley, and
4 General Zinni, who had been trying to bring some kind of
5 order to the Middle East, and a number of other people,
6 and the whole effort on Saturday morning was focused on
7 the Middle East peace process, it was not focused on
8 Iraq.

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

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

20 I arrived in time to have a pre-meeting with the
21 Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, in the
22 State Department before seeing Dr Rice, and when
23 I touched upon Iraq, I said to him that I didn't know
24 where American thinking had reached at this point, but
25 if there was going to be some kind of choice for regime

1 change by the American administration, there were
2 a number of questions that certainly we in London would
3 need answered and I thought the international community
4 would need answered.

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

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

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

1 United Nations.

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

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

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

21 The following morning, I was expecting to have
22 a session with Dr Rice in her office and perhaps with
23 one with or two members of her team, but, to my
24 surprise, I was asked if I would go and see the
25 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.

1 Did you get any flavour of that, because in a way
2 going through the UN route meant you would have to get
3 inspectors in?

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

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

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

21 Many on the American right had a very low opinion of
22 the United Nations and I think it would be fair to say
23 that the view among many who were opposed to UN
24 involvement was that the UN had had lots of chances
25 since 1991 to sort this out and had failed and the last

1 thing that we needed to do was go back there and try
2 again.

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

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

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

22 We know now, though I wasn't aware of it immediately
23 after the event -- and I will come back, if I may in
24 a moment to the meeting I had in Washington -- the
25 following week, I think it was 5 August, Colin Powell,

1 the Secretary of State, and Dr Rice met the President
2 and talked all these issues through.

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

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

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

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

25 Provisionally an agreement was reached -- and this

1 would be the very end of July 2002 or the beginning
2 of August 2002 -- for the Prime Minister to try and go
3 and see the President as soon as the summer holidays
4 were over, and this is what indeed he did.

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

15 So the Prime Minister went to see the President on
16 7 September at Camp David. It was a very brief visit.
17 We thought that we would be going for a discussion
18 between the two of them, with Dr Rice and me present as
19 note-takers, and that the Prime Minister would again set
20 out the arguments, as I have described them to you, for
21 going back to the United Nations, trying to obtain
22 another resolution and trying to work within an
23 international coalition.

24 We met in the President's study, or den, at
25 Camp David and, to our surprise, the Vice-President was

1 also invited to take part. My conclusion at this point
2 was that the President wished to expose the
3 Vice-President to the arguments in favour of going the
4 UN route. This is my supposition, because it was widely
5 thought, certainly in London, that the Vice-President
6 belonged to that group that I described that were intent
7 on regime change and did not want to go back to the UN.

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

15 Our view, the Prime Minister's view, the
16 British Government's view throughout this episode was
17 that the aim was disarmament. It was not regime change.
18 The Prime Minister never made any secret of the fact
19 that if the result of disarming Saddam was regime
20 change, he thought this would be a positive thing, but,
21 for the Americans, it was almost the opposite. It was,
22 "We want regime change in order to disarm
23 Saddam Hussein", but to come back to this discussion, he
24 said that we might need two resolutions; one to set the
25 conditions, and one to take action if those conditions

1 weren't met, and that our message should be either the
2 regime must change in response to UN pressure and to
3 UN Resolutions or it would be changed by military
4 action.

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

10 "We would have cratered the guy."

11 I think the Prime Minister left that meeting
12 thinking that there was a real possibility that the
13 President would opt to go back to the United Nations,
14 but after his meeting, and until the President was due
15 to speak in New York, I think to the United Nations, on
16 12 September, we were aware, not least through the
17 excellent reporting from the embassy in Washington, of
18 the real tussle that was going on in the heart of the
19 administration over whether or not the President should
20 go back to the United Nations, and, if so, what he was
21 going to say when he got there.

22 We did not know for certain what the President would
23 say right up to the time that he stood up in the
24 United Nations to speak, and, in fact, as we now know --
25 and I think Sir Jeremy Greenstock referred to this -- he

1 did indeed call for a return to the United Nations. He
2 challenged the United Nations to deal with the problem
3 and he mentioned that there might have to be
4 resolutions.

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

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

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

23 SIR DAVID MANNING: I think we always believed that the
24 impact of going through a coalition would be enhanced
25 and the UN would be enhanced, if the threat of military

1 action were there in the background. I think it was the
2 view of the British Government that Saddam Hussein was,
3 if you like, paradoxically more likely to resolve this
4 issue through peaceful means if he feared there would be
5 military action if he didn't.

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

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

22 SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't think it would be fair to say we
23 were simply reactive. We had to be reactive because, as
24 I said to you, after 9/11, the American approach to this
25 issue changed. But throughout the time I was involved

1 with this, it was quite clear that our policy was to
2 disarm Saddam Hussein, that we were convinced that he
3 had weapons of mass destruction or that he certainly had
4 the capability -- and probably I should say, and that he
5 had the capability to manufacture weapons of mass
6 destruction and that this had to be dealt with.

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

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

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

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

1 tolerance for containment had changed.

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

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

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

25 So I don't think there was a view in London then

1 that containment was sustainable. It was, of course,
2 discussed as I understand this, before I arrived in
3 Number 10, a narrowing of the focus, a deepening of
4 containment and it is hypothetical. One can't be sure
5 it wouldn't have worked, but I think there was a real
6 sense that it was unlikely.

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

17 It might have been an exaggeration to talk about the
18 risk that the United Nations would start to look like
19 the League of Nations and become an irrelevance, but
20 there was a real fear that if the United Nations simply
21 adjusted its sanctions policy and that this was seen to
22 fail, not only would the consequences be
23 a Saddam Hussein who was rampant again, but that the
24 credibility of the United Nations itself would have been
25 very severely compromised.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: So the United Nations route to disarmament is
2 seen to lead, is it, almost inevitably to, regime
3 change, whether by military invasion or otherwise?
4 SIR DAVID MANNING: It is a very interesting question, this.
5 The truth of the matter is, yes, but it depends what you
6 mean, I think, by "regime change", because, as I said in
7 one of -- in my earlier remarks, the fact was it was
8 certainly our view, and it was a view that was on
9 several occasions conceded by Dr Rice and, indeed, by
10 the President, that if Saddam Hussein accepted the
11 provisions of, as it turned out to be, UN Security
12 Council Resolution 1441, the situation on the ground in
13 Iraq would be so profoundly different that the regime
14 would have changed itself, and, therefore, the threat
15 posed by Iraq to the international community would have
16 been dramatically transformed, because, of course -- and
17 you have heard all this from Sir Jeremy Greenstock --
18 the provisions that were included in UN Security Council
19 Resolution 1441 provided for very intrusive inspection,
20 for complete dismantling of the military capability that
21 Saddam Hussein had in terms of weapons of mass
22 destruction, and that this would in itself have changed
23 the regime. There was speculation that he would have
24 found it very difficult to survive. I don't know
25 whether that would have been correct, but it would have

1 changed the regime in a profound way and in a way that
2 was certainly acknowledged even by the
3 US administration.

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

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

15 There was certainly the perception among some
16 Americans that this route would not produce the result
17 we wanted. It was very unlikely to work. I'm not sure
18 that all Americans believed that and, as I have said,
19 there were moments when certainly the President and the
20 Secretary of State -- sorry, the National
21 Security Council adviser, Dr Rice, said that they
22 believed that it might be possible to change the regime
23 in this way. I think that certainly on the British side
24 there was less scepticism and more hope, but I hoped
25 there was realism about it.

1 Saddam Hussein had a long track record. We knew
2 perfectly well that he had been extremely obstructive
3 over a long period, but I don't think, in answer to your
4 question, that the British Government went into this
5 thinking it was bound to fail.

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

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

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

20 But I think throughout this too, he is very
21 conscious of what he sees as the need to ensure that the
22 United States is not left to deal with international
23 security issues on its own, and he sees it as very
24 important, particularly in the traumatic period after
25 9/11, which I have described, that there is

1 international support for the United States and that the
2 major global challenges to security are met by the
3 international community together, that it shouldn't, if
4 you like, be left to a US global policeman to do these
5 things.

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

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

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

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

25 But I think, as far as I was concerned, I saw

1 material that was sent to the Prime Minister setting out
2 the options that we might have to take part in military
3 action and his responses to them.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: When was that?

5 SIR DAVID MANNING: The first time that he asked, as
6 I recall, for military options, was in June of 2002
7 because, as I have described to you, by this stage, we
8 are aware that military planning is going ahead, the
9 President has said that there will be this -- this
10 planning cell has been set up at CentCom, and the
11 Prime Minister is therefore anxious, I think, to find
12 out what sort of options do we have, and in July of
13 2002, a letter was sent to Number 10 from the
14 Defence Secretary's office essentially saying that they
15 had identified three possibilities if we were to find
16 ourselves involved in military action.

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

23 There was a second option, which was known as the
24 "enhanced support package", so that was the same basic
25 proposition as I have described, but with additional

1 maritime, I think, assets and aircraft, and perhaps --
2 though I am not sure; you will need to check this --
3 a small special forces package offered as well. This
4 would take two months to assemble.

5 But the third option was much bigger, and at this
6 stage, if I recall, it was described as the "discrete UK
7 package", "discrete" as in separate, and this would have
8 involved offering British land forces at divisional
9 strength.

10 I'm not an expert on that, but I think that means
11 about the level of 20,000 troops. This would take much
12 longer to assemble and, if I recall, the advice was this
13 would mean at least six months' preparation.

14 These papers went to the Prime Minister in July and
15 he said that he didn't want to take any decision or
16 accept any of these options. I think in retrospect,
17 looking at this, this was because -- of course, you
18 ought to ask him -- this was the time, as I have
19 described, when we were pressing for the Americans to
20 consider the UN route. I think he didn't want to give
21 any signal that he was keen to think about a military
22 alternative -- as opposed to going back to the UN
23 route, and so, over that summer period no decision was
24 taken.

25 The next occasion that I recall that he was pressed

1 for a decision on military assets was in September,
2 when -- and again, I'm subject to correction by the
3 Ministry of Defence on this. I think they were asked if
4 they would like to send a team to a planning conference
5 in CentCom in Florida, and, if so, what would the
6 British be willing to offer if there were to be military
7 action, and they asked for authority from the
8 Prime Minister to make some sort of suggestion.

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

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

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How important was the UK's military
25 participation to the US support in military and

1 political terms?

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

6 On the political side, I think it was important.
7 Once the United States had decided it wished to go the
8 coalition route, once it had decided it was going to go
9 back to the United Nations and wished to work
10 internationally, as it had done in Afghanistan, the fact
11 that there was going to be a significant British
12 contribution was a major political signal.

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

17 I think militarily -- and now I am speculating
18 because, as I have said to you, I'm not an expert -- you
19 should not exaggerate the importance of our
20 contribution. The Americans were putting in many
21 thousands of troops. On the other hand, when the war
22 actually took place in March of the following year, the
23 American numbers were less than had been advertised as
24 likely, and certainly, at the beginning, there had been
25 talk of over 200,000 American troops being needed for

1 this operation.

2 We may come on to this, but one of the complications
3 later on in this story is that, whereas the Americans
4 had hoped to introduce land forces through the north of
5 Iraq, through Turkey, this proved to be impossible
6 because the Turkish Government wouldn't allow it.

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

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

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

21 SIR DAVID MANNING: It wasn't seen as essential. I think it
22 was seen as politically enormously desirable once the
23 President had taken the decision to work within
24 a coalition, but if you were to say to me, "Do I think
25 the Americans could not have done this operation without

1 British military participation?", my answer would have
2 to be no. I'm sure they could have done. Their
3 capacities far outweighed the capacities of any other
4 country to do it, but I'm clear in my own mind that they
5 much preferred a coalition.

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

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did we attach any conditions to
13 military participation; for example, going through the
14 United Nations route and the Middle East peace process?

15 SIR DAVID MANNING: The Prime Minister had been clear all
16 the way through that, if we were going to reach the
17 point where there was going to be military action, it
18 would only be if we had exhausted all efforts through
19 the United Nations and, if, throughout 2002, he also --
20 and I think I alluded to this -- had said that there
21 must be a proper public information campaign to explain
22 the nature of the risk, as we saw it, and the need to
23 disarm Saddam Hussein. He was very insistent throughout
24 this period, and indeed afterwards, on the need to try
25 and stabilise the Middle East by tackling the

1 confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians and
2 those were certainly conditions, I think, in his mind.

3 I think there was another element. I don't want to
4 say it was, as it were, a condition in quite that way,
5 but he was insistent throughout that a lot of thought
6 needed to be given to what happened on what has been
7 called "the morning after". He raised that with the
8 President. This was raised by, I think, most British
9 interlocutors with their American interlocutors.

10 I don't think I could say to you that that was
11 a condition in the end when the UN route failed for
12 military action, but it was certainly something that was
13 important to him.

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

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

1 That was very, very clear, and that was absolutely
2 essential.

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

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

20 SIR DAVID MANNING: Again, I don't feel that I'm the expert
21 on this, but let me venture a view. I think there
22 probably was some uneasiness in the Ministry of Defence
23 about the lateness of the decisions. I think that was
24 one reason why, although the Prime Minister took no
25 decisions in July, he was pressed again in September.

1 It had particular implications, of course, if, in
2 the end, the British Government decided for option 3,
3 or, as I would call it, the discrete package with the
4 land forces, because, as I said, the advice he was given
5 was that if he wanted to be in a position at some point
6 to deploy a large force, he was going to need six months
7 before it would be ready.

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

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

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But did the actions to make our
25 participation in any military action possible constrain

1 our kind of political room for manoeuvre?

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

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

11 THE CHAIRMAN: This is really about, on the British side and
12 the UK machine, how you dove-tailed together a role in
13 diplomatic political initiative running over many months
14 with a military planning contingency planning effort
15 which has hard deadlines built inside it. Also, you
16 mentioned briefly the "morning after" dimension.

17 How is it actually set up within Whitehall? You
18 were head of the Cabinet Office Defence Overseas
19 Secretariat, you have got the Ministry of Defence and
20 the chiefs of staff organisation, you have got DFID off
21 at the side as part of the "morning after". How was
22 that actually run and put together?

23 SIR DAVID MANNING: I think on the official side the
24 Overseas and Defence Secretariat were involved in
25 a pretty central role. The way that we ran it was that

1 we had a restricted group that met weekly, sometimes
2 under my chairmanship, sometimes under the chairmanship
3 of my deputy, who was running the Overseas and
4 Defence Secretariat on a day-by-day basis, and this was
5 a group that included all those who had access to the
6 most sensitive intelligence.

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

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

24 On top of that, and beyond that, if I can put it
25 like that, I tried to ensure that the conversations

1 I had, or that the Prime Minister had, either internally
2 within government with Ministers, with officials, or
3 with the Americans or, indeed, many other foreign
4 interlocutors -- and it is important to recall that he
5 was in contact with many other foreign leaders apart
6 from President Bush -- I tried to ensure that these were
7 meticulously recorded and distributed around so that
8 there was transparency, and, indeed, I spoke sometimes
9 quite deliberately to the Foreign Secretary or to the
10 Defence Secretary to ensure that they were aware of what
11 was going on.

12 There was also -- and you will know this very well
13 Chairman -- the capacity in Whitehall for overlapping
14 committees, and so members of the overseas and
15 Defence Secretariat would attend meetings in other
16 departments. There was, I think, a pretty regular
17 attendance by the Secretariat at the meetings held by
18 the joint chiefs, for instance. There was access to the
19 meetings of the Joint Intelligence Committee, and there
20 was a general effort, I think, to ensure that different
21 departments were aware through Committee structures,
22 through copying of papers and minutes, of the state of
23 the argument, if you like, the state of the policy, to
24 ensure that there was as much transparency and coherence
25 as possible.

1 Over and above this, of course, is the ministerial
2 structure. What I have been describing to you is the
3 official machinery. Basically, it centred around the
4 pivot of the Cabinet Office. The Iraq war was discussed
5 frequently in Cabinet. The Prime Minister sometimes
6 took the lead, as I recall, sometimes other Ministers,
7 the Defence Secretary, the Foreign Secretary, and there
8 were meetings of Ministers that he convened, again with
9 Ministers who had access to the most sensitive
10 intelligence, who would meet with the heads of the
11 agencies, with the Chairman of the JIC and so on, to
12 discuss particular issues.

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

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

23 SIR DAVID MANNING: I didn't feel, as a senior official,
24 that there was a problem. Certainly I wasn't
25 approached, as I recall, by departments who said that

1 they didn't feel that they were properly informed, and
2 I'm not aware of particular decisions or particular
3 moments when people who should have known things didn't
4 know things.

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

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

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

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Just to be careful, the picture that
23 you are giving Sir John is that there were sufficient
24 decision-making processes within government in meeting
25 the challenges of Iraq. Is that what you are

1 suggesting, at official level?

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

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

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

24 So I don't want in any sense suggest to you I have
25 exhausted all the players involved when I gave my

1 description, but in terms of how the mechanisms worked,
2 I certainly didn't feel that we were in difficulty,
3 because we didn't, at official level, have the
4 structures to make Whitehall respond to the requirements
5 of the crisis.

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

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

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

23 I think it is important, too, to emphasise that
24 I think Prime Minister Blair thought it was right, and,
25 therefore, if it was right, it was worth doing properly,

1 and I think it was Sir Christopher Meyer who referred to
2 the Prime Minister's approach to the foreign policy, and
3 he had used military force on other occasions because he
4 believed it was the right thing to do. He had done it
5 in Kosovo in order to return the Kosovo Albanians to
6 Kosovo. He had done it in Sierra Leone. He had also
7 committed British troops and forces in Afghanistan.
8 Some of those operations had required UN backing, some
9 of them hadn't.

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

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

25 One of the interesting things about that speech in

1 1999 is he singles out two dictators in particular whom
2 he considers to be an enormous menace to international
3 stability; one is Milosevic in Serbia, and the other
4 is Saddam Hussein.

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

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

17 SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I'm sure that the
18 Ministry of Defence were intent on giving him the best
19 advice they possibly could about the military
20 commitment. I think it is important to record that in
21 the run-up to Christmas of 2002, the Ministry of Defence
22 thought that they were going to be asked to deploy
23 a large land force through northern Iraq and their
24 planning was done on the basis that they would be asked
25 to go into northern Iraq, something I understood that

1 CentCom, Central Command in Florida, were keen that we
2 should take on. If it happened, this is what we would
3 be asked to do and their role would be to try to stabilise
4 the interface, if you like, between the Kurdish
5 population in the north of Iraq and the Sunni heartland.

6 Therefore they planned, I think -- and they would be
7 the best people to talk to you about this, but I believe
8 that that was the plan until the end of 2002.

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

21 I'm not a military man, but it seems to me it was
22 quite a remarkable achievement that they were able to
23 switch so rapidly to do this and to do it so
24 effectively. Now, I'm sure that all of this they were
25 working through and explaining. I have to say to you

1 that as an armchair general -- and that is what I was --
2 I had my own misgivings about this campaign, but I was
3 in no sense a military expert.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can you tell us what your misgivings
5 were?

6 SIR DAVID MANNING: Indeed I will. I worried about how
7 prepared we would be to fight in a chemical and
8 biological weapons environment. We had seen
9 intelligence to the effect that Saddam Hussein had
10 certainly threatened to use these weapons early on in
11 any conflict, and I felt it was important that the
12 Prime Minister should know that we were capable of
13 dealing with this.

14 I was worried that, if the planning had been
15 premised on the idea that land forces should come in in
16 considerable numbers from the north, we were now
17 suddenly finding that we couldn't do this. Were we sure
18 that the amended plan was satisfactory?

19 I was also particularly worried about what
20 I understood were the plans for Baghdad, and I can't
21 recall exactly now, but I think -- and of course, this
22 involved American troops, not ours. But as I recall,
23 there was a sort of pie chart showing how the plan was
24 that, if there was resistance from the Republican
25 guards, Saddam Hussein's most trusted troops, various

1 sectors of the city would be taken one after the other,
2 and I worried that this would lead to very intense
3 street fighting and very high casualties. I have to say
4 to you that I was wrong on every count.

5 There was no chemical weapon environment that our
6 troops had to deal with, and, in the end, Baghdad fell
7 without difficulty and the British forces managed to
8 take the Al Faw peninsula and move up and take control
9 of the four southern governorates of Iraq remarkably
10 successfully and remarkably quickly, but I did ask the
11 chiefs of staff and, I think, the Defence Secretary to
12 go over all this with the Prime Minister on
13 15 January 2003, because I did have these concerns and
14 I did think they needed to be addressed, and they
15 certainly addressed them and they certainly proved to be
16 right and I proved to be wrong.

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

25 SIR DAVID MANNING: No, I don't think it meant that,

1 because, if that had been the case, I think the British
2 position on returning to the UN would have been more
3 equivocal than it was.

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

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

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay.

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

23 I think, in that case, let's break for now for ten
24 minutes, and if I can ask those in the room, if you are
25 going to go out, to please come back in ten minutes. We

1 do have to close the doors and the second half of the
2 session will not be available to those who do not make
3 it on time.

4 (3.25 pm)

5 (Short break)

6 (3.39 pm)

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

11 Sir Lawrence?

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

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

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

24 SIR DAVID MANNING: I didn't feel it represented a step
25 change in military policy, if I heard you correctly.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: No, in British policy, not
2 generally.

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

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

20 In a way, I look back at Crawford -- and I think
21 this may have come up in an earlier question -- as
22 a moment when he was saying, "Yes, there is a route
23 through this that is a peaceful and international one,
24 and it is through the UN, but, if it doesn't work, we
25 will be ready to undertake regime change". This,

1 I think, is the balance he wanted to strike between
2 warning Saddam Hussein that he could disarm peacefully,
3 but, if he didn't, he would be disarmed. I do think
4 that came out of Crawford, yes.

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

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

20 I think, when it comes to the Axis of Evil speech,
21 unpacking the "Axis of Evil" phrase, the
22 Prime Minister's view on the Iraq component of this was
23 that we should deal with Iraq by going back to the UN
24 and trying to get the international community to do this
25 and disarm Saddam Hussein and, as far as Iran was

1 concerned, in my experience, both in the job I was then
2 in and subsequently when I moved to Washington, the view
3 was that, again, we wanted this issue handled by the
4 international community, and one of the things that he
5 was keen to do was to encourage the American
6 administration to move in behind what were known as the
7 "European 3" and try and find a negotiated way through.

8 So I don't dispute your contention that he
9 identified with the risks that he saw to the
10 international system, but I do think he was pretty clear
11 that he wanted these handled multilaterally and in
12 a multinational context, if possible, although, as
13 I said before the break, ultimately, if this proved
14 impossible, he was willing to use force.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just summing up that, would you
16 say -- I suppose it's a slightly different question.

17 Would you say that the United States asked Britain
18 to be involved in this new direction of policy or
19 Britain offered to be involved because it was important
20 for Britain that we sought to move the Americans through
21 this policy in a particular way?

22 SIR DAVID MANNING: I'm not sure that it was as clear as
23 that on either side, to be honest. I think you have to
24 go back to the hectic weeks after 9/11, when it was very
25 uncertain what was going to happen internationally,

1 when -- and I travelled around with the Prime Minister
2 a good deal. He visited large numbers of government
3 heads of state between 9/11 and the end of the year, and
4 his sense, I think, was that it was vital to try to
5 bring together the broadest possible international
6 partnership for dealing with issues that could not be dealt
7 with at the international level even by the United States.

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

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

23 So I don't think it was so much President Bush going
24 to the Prime Minister and saying, "I want you to join
25 and do my agenda", or the Prime Minister saying, "I want

1 to associate myself with you", I think there was a view
2 that the Prime Minister had that the moment was grave,
3 that there were some very serious issues, that he
4 wanted, if he could, to ensure that the transatlantic
5 relationship was broadened into a wider partnership, as
6 wide as possible in dealing with issues like weapons of
7 mass destruction, like the Middle East peace process and
8 like encouraging, if possible, as it were, moderate
9 Islamic countries to confront extremism.

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

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

18 SIR DAVID MANNING: I think certainly the latter, and it was
19 difficult, I think, to see how you could approach -- at
20 least we thought or he thought -- the Iraq problem
21 without going through the multilateral route. I'm sure
22 he also felt it was also essential -- "sensible", in
23 your words -- to try and tackle the Middle East peace
24 process, which was in a state of considerable disarray
25 and very dangerous.

1 So I think these were issues that he felt were both
2 sensible and essential, and certainly, when it came to
3 arguing the case over Iraq quite specifically, these
4 were things that he felt it was essential to put to the
5 United States.

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

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

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

21 I think he was conscious that, you know, words were
22 not enough. Rhetoric was easy, but you had to try and
23 benchmark it. This didn't happen. I think, when it
24 comes to information -- and again, others were more
25 involved with this than I was, but one of the reasons,

1 both in the Afghan crisis and over Iraq, that he wanted
2 to publish information as he saw it was because he
3 thought it was important that the public were as aware
4 as possible of the pressures that he had seen coming
5 across his desk.

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

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

24 So far from seeing progress at this stage, what we
25 were doing was firefighting.

1 I think the really important element that he wanted
2 progress on and pressed consistently on throughout this
3 period was that there should be a new road map, and
4 I think another witness has mentioned the fact that
5 President Bush did, in the summer of 2002, concede that
6 American policy was a two-state solution, and I think
7 that the Prime Minister wanted to build on that and
8 wanted the United States administration to set out how
9 you got to that solution.

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

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

25 SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I think, as I mentioned to you, he

1 raised this in his discussions with the president.
2 Certainly I raised them in mine with Dr Rice and I know
3 they were raised by other British interlocutors.
4 I think the assumption that the Americans would have
5 a coherent plan which would be implemented after the war
6 was over obviously proved to be unfounded.

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

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

19 SIR DAVID MANNING: I think it was certainly an issue we had
20 identified for concern. We had done work ourselves on
21 it. I can recall asking the Foreign Office
22 in September 2002 to prepare work on what a post-Saddam
23 Iraq would look like, what the issues might be, and
24 throughout the discussions in the second half of 2002
25 and the early part of 2003, there is insistence on the

1 British side at all levels that there must be a role for
2 the United Nations.

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

13 I was going to say I think it is important to be
14 aware of the different currents that were running in
15 Washington. I mentioned earlier on that it depends
16 which interlocutors you talked to, and this was
17 certainly true on the aftermath issue, and I think there
18 was a view among some -- and some of them would have
19 been in the administration and some wouldn't -- that
20 once the war in Iraq was over, that there would be
21 a period when the Iraqis would themselves celebrate
22 their liberation, that they would rapidly -- rapidly new
23 leaderships would emerge. Some in the United States
24 hoped and believed that there would be a role for the
25 exiled community to take over, and there was, I think,

1 a sense among some, or wishful thinking among some, that
2 what would happen in Iraq would reflect something of
3 what had happened after the second world war in Japan or
4 Germany. There might be a brief time, when the
5 Americans had some sort of military government, that the
6 Iraqis would emerge to take control and that there would
7 be a flowering, if you like, of democratic freedom in
8 Iraq.

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

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

22 SIR DAVID MANNING: I suspect in February when it became
23 clear that ORHA had been set up and General Garner had
24 been appointed to run it. I would have to go back to
25 the papers to check the date.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just ask you one final
2 question? When we were talking about the various
3 conditions, are these a check list for our own
4 decision-making in terms of going to war?

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

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

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

22 SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't think those five tests were laid
23 out in that way. I think the conditions I have
24 described to you were the conditions that the government
25 was working to during that period. I think, above all,

1 the condition that the Prime Minister had set was that
2 we should work through the United Nations and, in
3 a sense, those conditions, he thought, would be subsumed
4 under UN activity and action. I mean, you would have to
5 ask him that, but I'm assuming that.

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

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

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

24 SIR DAVID MANNING: All these issues were certainly
25 discussed by him and the Foreign Secretary and the other

1 Ministers at the moment when it became clear that the
2 second resolution was not going to pass.

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

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.

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

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

24 SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, the Americans were aware that the
25 Prime Minister was very keen to have a second resolution

1 and the President, although I think probably by this
2 stage impatient with the UN route, was willing to try to
3 secure a second resolution, because he could see that
4 this was enormously important to Prime Minister Blair.
5 But it was important to the international community much
6 more widely.

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

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

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

23 I think in the end they concluded that it was not
24 going to run for a variety of reasons, and it was
25 abandoned, as Sir Jeremy Greenstock said, in

1 early March. The Prime Minister then concluded -- which
2 takes us back to our previous discussion -- that, in
3 that, case the diplomatic track had been exhausted and
4 he would accept the need to take military action, but we
5 did press immensely hard to try to sustain the UN route
6 over the January and February, and I felt that it was
7 very important to do that, to give Hans Blix and the
8 UNMOVIC team every opportunity to try and make the
9 inspections programme work.

10 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

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

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

22 SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I think there was. I think the
23 Prime Minister certainly discussed that with his
24 Ministers. I take you back, though, to the point that
25 he had always made it clear that his objective was the

1 disarmament of Saddam Hussein. He wanted to do this
2 through the UN route. If it failed, he was, I think,
3 committed to staying the course as he saw it, and taking
4 military action to effect this. Because I think if he
5 was unable to do this through the international route,
6 then he was prepared, at the end of the day, to take
7 part in military action.

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

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

23 What sort of meetings did the Prime Minister hold in
24 this period leading up to Crawford, in the first quarter
25 of 2002, at which this new line was thrashed out?

1 SIR DAVID MANNING: I think the meetings he held in that
2 first quarter were very much the sort of meetings I have
3 already described to you. These would be meetings of
4 Ministers who were inside, as it were, the ring of
5 secrecy, if I can put it like that, those who were
6 unofficially people who belonged to the ad hoc group of
7 Ministers who would be considering this; the Foreign
8 Secretary, the Defence Secretary and so on.

9 But I think it would be misleading to give you the
10 sense that, before Crawford, the Prime Minister thought
11 that somehow or other there were some really major
12 shifts that he could articulate.

13 We were trying to find out during this period how
14 American thinking was developing, and certainly I went,
15 as I have described earlier on, to Washington to talk to
16 Dr Rice in March to try and find out, and to reflect, as
17 I saw it, how the Prime Minister's mind was turning, so
18 that when he did have a discussion with the President
19 in April, they would have some sense of where each other
20 was coming from. But I don't think it would be right to
21 say that in February and March the Prime Minister was
22 articulating a new policy.

23 I think that when it became clear to him that the
24 United States was thinking of moving its policy forward
25 towards regime change, he wanted to try and influence

1 the United States and get it to stay in the UN, to go to
2 the UN route, which is what we spent the rest of the
3 year trying to do, but he was willing to signal that he
4 accepted that disarmament might not be achieved through
5 the UN route.

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

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sir Christopher certainly gave the
15 impression that, by this time, certainly as far as he
16 was concerned, containment was more or less a dead duck.

17 I'm really wondering, in London, what sort of an
18 options review was taking place in this period when
19 clearly the Americans had gone on to a different tack?

20 SIR DAVID MANNING: I think you are right about the
21 Americans moving on to a different tack. I think the
22 perception, as I said, was that containment was probably
23 finished, that it would not be possible to continue with
24 a containment strategy of the kind that had prevailed
25 before 9/11. I think that's right, but I don't think,

1 at that stage, there was a view in London -- at least
2 I wasn't aware of it -- that we had completely given up
3 on containment. We were waiting, I think, at this point
4 to see what sort of pressure the United States would
5 produce in the light of the debate that we knew was
6 taking place in handling Iraq.

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

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

21 When you were talking earlier about immediately
22 after 9/11, you said that in a telephone conversation
23 with Prime Minister Blair, the President did mention
24 Iraq and the Prime Minister said to him, "Let's focus on
25 Afghanistan", and there is not a very tenuous link, if

1 any, with Al-Qaeda and what was happening in Iraq.

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

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

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

25 I think -- and I was talking just now to Sir Roderic

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

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

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

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

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

24 THE CHAIRMAN: What about the United Kingdom?

25 SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, can I perhaps back up a little bit

1 and just talk about Resolution 1441? Because it is in
2 two halves and I think, in order to understand what
3 follows, particularly in the December to March period,
4 it is important to be aware of what we were looking for.

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

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

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

23 We in London, and certainly, I personally, believed
24 that the inspections should be given more time to work.
25 You, yourself, said, Chairman, that these inspections

1 hadn't run for very long. I think that's correct.

2 In some ways they had -- although they had not found
3 the smoking gun, the famous smoking gun, they had not
4 been wholly disappointing. I think we suggested to
5 Hans Blix that we had identified something like
6 19 possible sites. I think Hans Blix and his team had
7 looked at ten of them and had turned up some quite
8 interesting material in two, three or four of those
9 sites. Therefore, letting the inspections run longer,
10 I believed, would have been a useful thing to do.

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

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

24 Do you think that the suggestions for extended
25 periods of inspection by the French and others, six

1 months in one case, 45 days, I think, from another, were
2 purely tactical to try to hold off the invasion moment,
3 or were they potentially for real?

4 SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't know that I can be sure in my
5 answer to that. I think that there was an element of
6 tactics and I think it is important to recall how bad
7 political relationships were at the top among different
8 governments at this time.

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

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

1 have corrected themselves a little bit.

2 It is worth recalling how difficult the run-up to
3 1441 was. The fact is that, of course, it looked
4 extremely successful when we got it, and it was
5 a remarkable diplomatic achievement, much to the credit,
6 not least, of Sir Jeremy Greenstock, but it was very
7 difficult and contentious to get there and the
8 atmosphere was certainly worse at the time of the second
9 resolution phase than it had been at the first, but, in
10 a sense, that was something that might have changed
11 again.

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

1 willing to rally to a second resolution if the
2 inspection process was given more time.

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

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

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

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

25 SIR DAVID MANNING: I didn't feel there was a contradiction,

1 as far as we were concerned, because we wanted to disarm
2 Saddam Hussein. If it was impossible to do this, it was
3 always our intention that we should do this through the
4 UN and in international company.

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

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

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

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

1 we were pressing very hard.

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

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

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

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

1 was it, on the planning screen at all?

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

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

20 Nevertheless, the extent to which security broke
21 down, in Baghdad in particular, and around Baghdad, in
22 the period from April to July was not foreseen and was
23 deeply troubling. There are, I think, a number of
24 reasons for this. One reason certainly was that,
25 I think, the American military thought that they were

1 fighting a war and that, when the war was over, they
2 were expecting to go home and they were not in the mode
3 of, if I can put it, peace-keeping or policing. They
4 did not think that that was their responsibility.

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

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

19 In and around Baghdad and the north, security broke
20 down. There was a dreadful moment, if I recall, in the
21 middle of April, when looting broke out in Baghdad and
22 there were hospitals that were looted, there were
23 museums that were looted and so on, and I can remember
24 speaking to Dr Rice about this and expressing our
25 concern and to be fair, she was equally concerned. But

1 I think it was clear that it was very difficult to
2 persuade the American military on the ground at this
3 point that they had to take over policing
4 responsibilities.

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

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

24 One of the important things, obviously, for the
25 international community that was in Iraq was to be able

1 to demonstrate that day-to-day life was coming back
2 into -- it was going to improve basically, and there was
3 no sign at this stage that this was happening.

4 It seemed to me it was vital that, first of all,
5 there was a different form of military activity in these
6 areas, so there was an attempt to reconnect, but, also,
7 it was important that there was a policing operation
8 that was put in hand. I remember speaking to Dr Rice
9 who was very conscious, you know, she knew herself ORHA
10 was in serious trouble, and saying that these things
11 were essential and that we had to -- the Americans had
12 to do something to promote much more effective security
13 arrangements, that they had to start getting on top of
14 the electricity, the water issues, and, in particular,
15 pressing again for the United Nations to be involved as
16 quickly as possible in the hope that this could help to
17 redress the difficulties.

18 We also -- we, the UK -- sent people out to try and
19 help. I mean, ORHA was in Baghdad, it was not
20 technically in our sector, as it were, but departments
21 in London sent people to try and reinforce ORHA and to
22 help ORHA. Sir John Sawers was sent out to work with
23 Jay Garner and then his successor as head of the CPA,
24 and Sir Jeremy Greenstock himself was sent. So there
25 was an attempt to try to redress these deficiencies as

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

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

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

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

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

1 occupying power role.

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

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

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

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Two final points on this from me.

24 First, given the scale of the civilian casualties in
25 the aftermath or over the years, the whole invasion and

1 what followed took on a totally different ethical,
2 moral, as well as political dimension, of global
3 proportions. Just reverting, there was no foresight of
4 something on that scale, something so terrible. Was it
5 foreseeable, with hindsight?

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

24 I recall in my visit to Baghdad in May of 2003, and
25 indeed the Prime Minister's visit to Basra a few days

1 later, that there was, at that stage, an intention to
2 promote consultative mechanisms and there had been some
3 success with these.

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

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

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

25 But it was very striking in the first months after

1 the war concluded that there were inadequate troops to
2 seal the border with Syria, and inadequate troops to
3 seal the border with Iran, and that, therefore, if there
4 were going to be serious military insurgencies, two
5 sources for these insurgencies were wide open.

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

15 I think it is probably also worth adding that in the
16 immediate aftermath of the military action, the
17 Americans seemed to lose focus, and I think they
18 themselves would admit that. I think there was a sense
19 of exhaustion. I don't think Iraq was given the same
20 attention after the conclusion of the conflict that it
21 was given in the months before. I think attention had
22 switched to a lot of other things that had been put on
23 to the backburner while this went ahead, and the
24 combination of the poor arrangements that were put in
25 place by the Department of Defence at the expense of the

1 planning done by the State Department, together with the
2 situation on the ground as I have described it and the
3 lack of focus at the top of the American administration
4 proved to be a very unfortunate combination.

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

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

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

24 Quite clearly, the American administration decided
25 to do something about ORHA because it changed ORHA. It

1 disbanded ORHA and put the Coalition Provisional
2 Administration in.

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

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

19 So I think you have to work on the assumption that
20 there were very divided views in Washington about how to
21 handle this and it is -- as I said, it goes, if you
22 like, in a spectrum from the State Department, who
23 thought they had done a lot of planning and were going
24 to be running Iraq, probably to a sort of neo-con view
25 that nobody needed to run it anyway, because, once the

1 war was over, it would re-establish itself as
2 a flourishing democracy and the Iraqis would take over
3 with or without leadership from the exiled community.

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

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

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

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

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

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was this your view or was it
25 a shared view?

1 SIR DAVID MANNING: No, it was a shared view, I think.

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

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Roderic?

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

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

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

22 SIR DAVID MANNING: In my view, we certainly had the option
23 of not taking part and we had always said that we wanted
24 to go the UN route. We had made it clear that we needed
25 a second resolution, so if you are saying

1 hypothetically, "Did we have any options?", yes, of
2 course, we did, we had the option of not going, but as
3 I think I have also said to you, the Prime Minister was,
4 I think, clear in his own mind that if he felt the UN
5 route had been completely exhausted, that he would stand
6 by his commitment that he would take military action.

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

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

16 SIR DAVID MANNING: I think he felt there might have been
17 some play left in terms of a few days only in trying to
18 prolong the possibility of further inspections, and
19 certainly his enthusiasm for the tests that we had
20 established for the discussions we tried to have with
21 the "undecided six", as Sir Jeremy Greenstock mentioned,
22 these all pointed to the fact that he was very keen to
23 try and keep the UN route going as long as possible, but
24 I think he concluded by -- certainly by the second week
25 of March, that the UN route was not going to work and

1 the issue was not that, it was when the Americans would
2 decide they had given the UN route their best shot and
3 it wasn't going to work and when they were going to
4 go ahead without it.

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

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

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Because?

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

18 I think I felt that the first resolution was
19 necessary in order to bring the international community
20 together. The second resolution would be necessary if
21 the first resolution had not successfully disarmed
22 Saddam Hussein and that we wanted to keep the
23 international community together to take action in
24 a common way to enforce the disarmament resolution --
25 the disarmament policy, and it seemed to me that I had

1 been saying it was essential and I believed it was
2 essential.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Martin?

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

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

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

21 SIR DAVID MANNING: I think we had tried as hard as we could
22 and I think they initially gave the inspections route
23 a shot. I think that if I can go back to 1441, some had
24 been less enthusiastic than others about the provision
25 for inspections at all, but the President had insisted

1 that he would accept both the declaration element in the
2 resolution and the inspection provision, and it went
3 ahead. The American mood oscillated. There is no
4 doubt, during the autumn of 2002 and at the time that
5 the resolution was passed, there was a recognition, both
6 by the President and by Dr Rice, that this might work
7 actually, and that, if it did, it would be a welcome
8 alternative to going the military route.

9 They were quite explicit about that, but I think,
10 once Saddam Hussein produced this declaration on
11 8 December that was unconvincing to say the least, they
12 began to think that this was going to be a replay of his
13 previous obstruction in the way he had behaved in the UN
14 and I think, once they had watched some of the early
15 attempts by the inspectors to look at what was going on
16 on the ground, they convinced themselves that actually
17 this was not going to work.

18 There was one particular item that they were
19 concerned about, which was that the inspectors should
20 have the option, should have the opportunity, to talk to
21 scientists who had worked on the WMD programmes in Iraq,
22 without any interference. So they were not to be
23 accompanied by minders, and if Hans Blix and his team
24 wanted to, they could take them out of the country to
25 talk to them. Their argument was, if Saddam Hussein's

1 word was correct, he should have no problem with that,
2 and this was obstructed all the way down the line.

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

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

22 I think the combination of feeling that
23 Saddam Hussein was determined to prevent the UN route
24 from succeeding and the pressure over the military
25 timetable meant that the administration decided that it

1 had to go ahead in the middle of March.

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

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

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence?

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

22 SIR DAVID MANNING: I think, looking at what we expected as
23 a result internationally, there were positives and there
24 were negatives, if I can put it like that. The key
25 positive was the expectation that Iraq would be rid of

1 weapons of mass destruction and this, in turn, would
2 have a knock-on effect in the region. Saddam Hussein
3 was somebody who had, after all, invaded Kuwait, had
4 started a war earlier on with Iran, was a potential
5 threat to his neighbours all the time, and whatever many
6 of them were prepared to say in public, in private they
7 were in no doubt that it was very uncomfortable indeed
8 living alongside Saddam Hussein. There was an
9 expectation, I think, that this would at least help to
10 promote a greater degree of stability and perhaps
11 cooperation in the Gulf than was possible while
12 Saddam Hussein was in place.

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

19 I think I would just like to add there that although
20 this isn't technically a foreign policy point, I think
21 the Prime Minister and his other Ministers also thought
22 actually it would be the liberation of a lot of people
23 in Iraq. I think we perhaps tend to forget now the
24 scale of internal oppression that certainly at the time
25 weighed in the argument. This was a dictator who had

1 murdered, as we now think, hundreds of thousands of his
2 own people, and we knew after the Gulf War, that he had
3 unleashed a reign of terror on the Marsh Arabs, among
4 others.

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

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

24 So I certainly don't want to suggest that we thought
25 it would be an unalloyed benefit and we certainly did

1 not believe in, if I can call it like this for
2 shorthand, the neo-con view that somehow or other an
3 Iraq would emerge which would be the catalyst for
4 a complete transformation of the Middle East.

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

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

24 SIR DAVID MANNING: I think, after the war was over, there
25 was a real effort by everybody on the British side with

1 their American interlocutors, from the Prime Minister
2 down, to press for remedial action and, as I said to
3 you, I think it is true that there was a loss of focus
4 and attention by the American administration after the
5 war, and I think we did try then to affect the decisions
6 that were taken. Again I think this is probably
7 something that John Sawers and Sir Jeremy Greenstock
8 will be able to talk more about, but I don't think -- we
9 certainly didn't stop trying to influence the way in
10 which the post-war situation and settlement was devised
11 in Iraq, but there were very considerable difficulties
12 and one has to be realistic about the degree of
13 influence we had, not least because, of course, we were
14 not in Baghdad, we were in Basra.

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

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

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

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Usha?

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I just ask a very brief
24 question, because my understanding is that Saudi Arabia
25 and the other countries had sort of suggested that if

1 you pursued the inspectors' route and there was
2 a material breach, that they would collectively put
3 pressure on Saddam Hussein to go. How seriously was
4 that considered?

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

18 But in the end this turned out to be a mirage,
19 I think. I never saw, myself anyway, a really firm,
20 credible proposal and plan to deliver this. There were
21 suggestions and noises and hints that it might be the
22 way that this could work itself out. Personally,
23 I think, if there had been a serious plan, it would have
24 been well worth investigating, but I never felt,
25 unfortunately, that it was really likely to materialise.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir David, we have come to the end of quite
2 a long afternoon. I wonder, is there anything in
3 conclusion that you would like to say to the Committee
4 that there hasn't been a chance to discuss so far?
5 Otherwise, we will conclude the session.

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

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Right.

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

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

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

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

24 (5.01 pm)

25 (The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am the following day)

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SIR DAVID MANNING 2

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