THE CHAIRMAN: Welcome everyone. Just a few opening remarks. The purpose of this session is to examine developments in United States policy towards Iraq between 2001 and 2003 and the UK's response, and we are continuing this theme in hearings next week.

I think I should emphasise that the focus of the Inquiry is, of course, on the United Kingdom Government decisions, actions and policies, but, to understand that, it is important also to understand the development of United States policy and the interaction between them.

So this session will cover foreign policy priorities and decision-making processes in the US administration in the period, the evolution of policy on Iraq and the Middle East in Washington from 2001 until early 2003, including the decision to take military action in March 2003 and the UK's relationship with the United States over the period.

I would like to make two general points again, as before each session, to recall that the Inquiry has access to many thousands of government papers, including
the most highly classified for the period we are considering, and we are developing the picture of the policy debates and the decision-making process. These evidence sessions are important in informing the Inquiry's thinking and complementing the documentary evidence. It is important that witnesses are able to be open and frank in their evidence while respecting national security, and I remind every witness that they will be later asked to sign a transcript of their evidence to the effect that the evidence they have given is truthful, fair and accurate.

We have with us today Sir Christopher Meyer, who was our ambassador in Washington throughout the period under discussion this morning.

Welcome, Sir Christopher.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Good morning, I apologise for my delay in coming, for reasons almost beyond my control.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Without more ado, can I turn to Sir Martin Gilbert to open the questions?

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: My first question to Sir Christopher relates to the months leading up to the election of President Bush, and I wondered if you could tell us briefly what you learnt yourself during those months of the views of the senior members of the incoming
administration, in particular Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice with regard to Iraq.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: It wasn't until fairly late in the day, in that year, that we knew who were going to occupy the chief positions in the Bush administration.

So until that became clear, to find out what was going on, what was being planned, it became necessary to speak to members of a group who were known informally as the Vulcans, the Vulcans were a group of American advisers who advised George W Bush when he was the presidential candidate, and when I went down to Texas in early 1999, which was shortly before he declared himself as a candidate, he said to me with very great frankness, "I don't know much about foreign policy. I'm going to have to learn pretty damn fast, and one of the things I'm going to have to do is surround myself with good people".

The "good people" turned out to be this group called the Vulcans, led by Condoleezza Rice and Paul Wolfowitz; Paul Wolfowitz, of course, who became Deputy Secretary for Defence. So my team and I focused on this group and, as the year 2000 went by, certain policies began to take shape. I think the most definitive account I had of where the Bush administration was likely to go -- and
always bear in mind this was before 9/11,
self-evidently -- was a conversation with
Condoleeza Rice at the British Embassy on, if I remember
rightly, 6 December 2000, followed by a conversation
with Karl Rove, who was President Bush's chief political
strategist at that time, and over, I suppose,
a 90-minute discussion at breakfast on 6 December, Rice
spelt out the outlines of the Bush foreign policy.

I already had instructions from London to put in
a few fixes on how we wanted certain things to develop
and I have to say to you that Iraq and the Middle East
did not feature very prominently in this account of
where Bush's priorities would lie.

There was an enormous focus on Russia; not Russia as
Russia, but on nuclear missile defence and what was
going to happen to the anti-ballistic missile treaty,
which she, and later the President, would make, I think,
the top foreign policy goal of the period before 9/11.

On Iraq -- I just want to say a little bit more
about context in a moment, but on Iraq it was, "We need
to look at this, things aren't going well. The policy
of sanctions is in tatters, the smuggling, Saddam is
going away with blue murder. We need to do something
about that".

So I suppose the batting order there was nuclear
missile defence, Russia in that context, not a lot about the Middle East.

I remember her saying to me, "We don't want President Bush to become the Middle East desk officer like Bill Clinton", because Clinton was in the final throes of trying to fix the Arab/Israel problem, which eventually failed, and nor are we terribly keen of doing that in Northern Ireland either.

So we got a heavily missile-centric account of foreign policy. I think it was two days later I saw Karl Rove, and he more or less gave me the same account, but emphasising that, as with most Presidents of the United States, in the first few months, you focus on domestic priorities, not on your foreign priorities, and that was the very, very clear message from Rove; it was going to be tax cuts, it was going to be education, it was going to be healthcare for senior citizens.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: It is interesting that in your book "DC Confidential", you write of those first few months, about Colin Powell, that he was always sceptical about belligerent notions for dealing with Saddam Hussein.

What were those belligerent notions of those you spoke to at that time?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: The belligerence of that moment focused on arming and financing Iraqi dissident groups.
If you went up on the Hill, as the embassy team and
I did quite frequently, what you would hear from the
republican senators and their staff was, "There are some
really good dissident groups out there. We need to
finance them and arm them and shake Saddam's
foundations".

Now, the group of choice was something called the
INC, the Iraqi National Congress, if I remember rightly,
most of whose members were located in London and were
led by Ahmed Chalabi, who has frequently featured in
what has happened in Iraq since then.

There was a view on the Republican right that
Chalabi and his people were a really valid opposition to
Saddam Hussein, and they only needed to be equipped and
armed and they would, despite the failure of a rebellion
against Saddam several years previously, should be able
to do the trick.

If you went to the State Department, and
particularly to Colin Powell and his deputy
Richard Armitage, they would say, "The INC is no good,
it is a busted flush. We shouldn't rely on them", but
that was the belligerent trend running through the
administration before 9/11. "Let's focus on the
opposition".

Meantime -- and this was the greater strand of the
two, if you like -- the focus, particularly from Colin Powell, was on what we termed in London narrowing and deepening sanctions, for a variety of reasons. The sanctions regime itself was pretty tattered. The process of approvals in New York had become totally constipated. There was a heavy propaganda campaign against them. Bush, I have to say, by -- Saddam Hussein himself was saying, "It is the children and women and the defenceless of Iraq that are suffering from sanctions", and a lot of people bought into this. So we felt uncomfortable, both for technical reasons, the sanctions weren't doing their job, and also because it was being used as a stick with which to beat us around the head. So the duo of Colin Powell and the late Robin Cook focused for, whatever it was, eight, nine months on trying to do narrowing and deepening, and I have to say it failed.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Robin Cook's visit to Washington, for which, of course, you were there, what was his input at that time as regards to the sanctions debate?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I don't know why I say this, but, somewhat to my surprise, he had struck up an extremely good relationship with Colin Powell very quickly. Powell had come to London in either 1999 or 2000 to give a kind of motivational speech to the Ministry of Defence
on how you handled diversity in the armed forces and the
Ministry of Defence itself.

This had gone down a storm, and in the margins of
that event, he and Robin Cook met in a London hotel and
had a very good conversation. I remember Powell coming
back and saying, "That Robin Cook, I can do business
with him. This is a good guy".

Strategically, they saw eye to eye very rapidly. It
is a bit like, you know, people say, "Well, Tony Blair
was so close to Bill Clinton, how on earth could he get
close to George Bush?" Well, Robin Cook had been very
close to Madeleine Albright, and he didn't find it
difficult to strike up a good working relationship with
Colin Powell.

So Cook's input I think was appreciated and taken
into account by Colin Powell and it was a relationship,
of real mutual advantage.

Can I just wind back a bit, because I want to say
something about the Iraq Liberation Act? Can I do that,
because it sets a kind of context?

Maybe I'm anticipating a question, in which case
I apologise, but to understand the context, it has to be
emphasised that the regime change in Iraq was an
official United States policy and it went back to the
Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, when the Act, the bill, was
passed unanimously by the Senate, it was passed by an overwhelming majority in the House of Representatives and it was signed into law by Bill Clinton in October of 1998.

So regime change, and to quote the Act - “to establish a programme to support a transition to democracy in Iraq”, was an official American policy which George Bush inherited from Bill Clinton. The fact that Bill Clinton didn’t do much about it was neither here nor there, because he was a bit knocked about after the Lewinsky and impeachment business, but that was the policy that George Bush inherited.

Sometimes people say to me, “It was the nutters in the administration, the right wingers, the neo-cons, who invented regime change”. Absolutely wrong. This was inherited from a Democrat administration, as were a number of other policies as well.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: At this time, you are stressing that regime change was using the Iraqi opposition, it wasn’t direct intervention.

Were there groups within the administration, people to whom you were talking, with whom actual military force against Saddam was being discussed at that time as an option?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I think so. Whether it was being
actually discussed as such in the administration in those months before 9/11, it is very hard to judge, but Paul Wolfowitz, who became Deputy Defence Secretary, and who was the leading neo-con in the US administration, a man of very, very brilliant intelligence, harnessed to a particular view of the world and the way in which Americans should deploy their power -- and I remember him saying to me, years previously, probably in 1997 or 1998 when I first arrived in Washington, at which time he was Dean of the Paul H Nitze School of International Relations, "We should invade southern Iraq, seize the oil fields, base ourselves in Basra and from there launch raids in Baghdad, and little by little we will bring the regime down".

That was the outer fringe, the extreme fringe, of the belligerence movement, but that, as a policy between, say, January, Inauguration Day, and 9/11, I don't think ever got into the mainstream of the US administration debate, which continued to be focused on, as I say, narrowing and deepening sanctions and, "What can we do with Ahmed Chalabi and his people?"
sanctions supporters to the wild men, if you like, of the Wolfowitz type.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: For Camp David -- was it 22 February/24 February -- of course, Iraq was not
gigantically high on their agenda either.

I just have to say one thing, despite the best
endeavours of the [FCO] Iraq Inquiry Unit, who have done
a fantastic job in assembling the archives, I have not
been able to find the four, or was it five, telegrams
I sent before the Prime Minister's inaugural visit with
the President to refresh my memory of the wisdom or
otherwise of the advice that I sent him, but, before the
meeting, as sort of diplomats do, Rice and I decided to
try and clear away as much of the foreign policy
undergrowth as possible in advance so that the President
and the Prime Minister could concentrate on creating
a strong personal relationship.

Condoleezza Rice said to me, "The main purpose of the
this meeting is bonding. We want the President and the
Prime Minister to bond well", because she was saying at
the time that the United Kingdom was the United States'
most important friend and ally. So it was important
that they should get on.

So the two foreign policy issues, at that moment,
that were at the top of the agenda, were the
anti-ballistic missile treaty and nuclear missile
defence. That was the American concern, and we, for our
part, were in the throes of developing the St Malo
initiative between France and the United Kingdom on
building up European defence.

So we, on the British side, had a enormous concern
that, if the American -- and this was also inherited
from Bill Clinton, I have to say, the notion of
developing nuclear missile defences. It didn't spring
from the loins of George W Bush. We were very, very
worried that if the Americans went gung-ho for getting
rid of the anti-ballistic missile treaty and started
dismantling some of the key elements of old detente that
this could unravel -- seriously could prejudice the
relationship with Russia and all kinds of other
repercussions.

The Americans had a counterpart anxiety, which was
that, in developing the European defence initiative with
the French, we had been seduced in some way by the
incredibly cunning French of being led into a trap that
would undermine NATO. So what we came up with was
a draft joint declaration which would put these
anxieties to bed, and that agreement was actually
finalised at Camp David by John Sawers, the
Prime Minister's foreign policy adviser, and by Rice
herself. So that was at the top of the tree.

So one of the things I said, if I remember rightly from one of my briefing telegrams, was "This is something we need to defuse. If we are lucky, we will be able to defuse it well in advance of the meeting", which in actual fact is what happened, "Otherwise, the kinds of things we need to talk about are the Middle East", the Middle East much more than Iraq at the time actually.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: The tightening of sanctions was on the agenda, but, I take it, not something which was --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: No, it wasn't. It wasn't a huge item. There was a long discussion of Russia and the President -- at the time, I think Tony Blair was the European leader who had -- I mean, Sir Roderic will confirm whether what I'm saying was right or wrong -- he was the European leader who had the most face time with Putin. He was kind of the Putin expert at the time.

Bush was very keen to sort of download Blair's assessment of Putin and where the Putin leadership was going. We spent a long time on that. Iraq came up at the beginning really almost to be dismissed. Part of the problem was that Colin Powell was at Camp David, he had to go, I think he had to go to the region, and so, as soon as the Prime Minister and the President sat down
for lunch and had five minutes of politesse between them, the President immediately asked Colin Powell to give his assessment of where things were in the region and what we needed to do about Iraq, and then it left the agenda, as far as I know, never to come back at that particular summit.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You have mentioned bonding, and bonding is obviously an important question. How would you yourself characterise the impression made, first of all at that Camp David summit, by each of the leaders on each other and then looking forward with your experiences going through, say, to the Chequers meeting, how did they relate to each other, and again in particular with regard to Iraq and the Middle East problem?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Of course, the massive anxiety that I had was after the extraordinarily close relationship between George W -- sorry, between Tony Blair and Bill Clinton, that changing gear to a Republican administration and to George W in particular would be very difficult and that the Anglo-American relationship might suffer as a result. So the bonding business was terribly important. The Americans themselves, as I said, recognised this, and I was -- I was really quite anxious about
this. I had asked, after the American election finally became clear, after the Supreme Court delivered its verdict, Rove and Rice separately, "The fact that Tony Blair has had this enormously close relationship with a democratic President, is this going to be a problem for us?"

Each gave a similar answer, which was basically: it is a good thing for the world that Britain and America are close, and if Clinton and Blair were close, good, that's not a problem for us. As for the future, it was sort of, "By your work shall ye be known", sort of thing. "Let's hope for the best. Time will tell. We are starting with a blank sheet of paper".

I did recount this in my book because I thought it such an emblematic moment that, there were the two of them sitting face-to-face across a lunch table up at Camp David, very informal, and with a minimum of ceremony, absolute minimum, I think the President said "Hello, Tony. May I call you Tony? Welcome to Camp David", and Blair, without missing a beat, said,"Hello, George. May I call you George? Great to be here. What are we going to talk about?" Bush said, "Colin has got to go, so let's talk about the Middle East". Just like that. Tshoom!

You sort of sensed, and the sense developed as the,
whatever it was, 36 hours went on, that, whatever happened in policy terms, whatever substantive issues arose to challenge, these two men were going to get on, and that was exactly what happened. They had a very good weekend together. So did the wives. The press conference probably, when they had the "Colgate" moment which you may remember, the press conference didn't really do justice, I don't think, to the nature of the relationship that already looked promising.

So if we look at what happened from that moment up to, say, the Chequers visit in June of that year, and they met at various international meetings from time to time. There was a -- my memory is slightly confused here, but I remember Condoleezza Rice saying to me, "The President has just got back and he said the only human being he felt he could talk to was Tony, the rest of them were like creatures from outer space", or some such phrase. It was a slowly warming relationship all through the year, up to and including the Chequers meeting. Then we had the summer holidays and then life itself changed, for obvious reasons.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I have just two more questions before 9/11. The first is, during that period -- again focusing on Iraq -- were the members of the administration you were talking to at that time
beginning to contemplate removing Saddam by force, perhaps even within a fixed period?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I didn't see that emerging from the interagency process at all. Every now and again, one would say to Condoleezza Rice or to Colin Powell, "How is the Iraq review going?", and they would just say, "Well, we are still talking about it".

It wasn't going anywhere, to be honest with you, and, in fact, it looked at the time, technically after the summer break in early September -- it kind of looked like the Bush administration as a whole wasn't going anywhere. It lost a sense of direction very rapidly and I remember sending a telegram on 10 September, literally went out on the eve of 9/11. I think we were about to have a visit by John Prescott and this was a form of briefing for him -- saying, "This is an administration which appears to be running out of steam", was losing a sense of direction --

THE CHAIRMAN: Can I interrupt just to ask, did you mean generally across the whole range of policy?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I do. I'm sort of compressing things here. What had happened domestically was, with immense political effort, Bush -- I mean Bush put all his political capital, most of his political capital in those first few months in getting a big tax-cut through
congress, getting benefits and prescription medicine for senior citizens.

He got them but they were pyrrhic victories, they exhausted him and he lost his majority in the Senate as a result. Come September 2001, before 9/11, everybody was saying that effort has killed him. Rumsfeld, there was a huge bear market in Rumsfelds, because he didn't seem to be reorganising the Department of Defense as he promised to do. He got lost in detail, so the story went. There was a big bear market in Colin Powells because his narrowing and deepening and what he was doing in the Middle East was going nowhere, and there was a cataclysmic market in Paul O'Neills, who was the Treasury Secretary who was soon to be dismissed.

So on the very eve of the great atrocity, it looked like an administration that had got into trouble very quickly.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just to round off, Iraq really not figuring very much, if at all?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Iraq was not -- it was like a grumbling appendix, I think is the way I would describe it.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Could I press you a little bit on that? Because I would very much like to know your view and your perception of what was happening with regard to
American policy in Iraq and the No Fly Zones. The escalation in February and then the subsequent developments, how did they fit into the administration of the Iraq policy as to what you saw it as being?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Yes, I'm sorry, I clearly forgot -- the No Fly Zones had been a problem under the Clinton administration. People were starting to get anxious about two things. One was that a plane would actually get shot down. What did you do? What kind of reaction did you come up with? Also, there were worries about legality.

Typically, greater worries on our side than appeared to be on the American side, and if I remember rightly, this anxiety about how long we could sustain No Fly Zones and stay within the law was a rising concern throughout 2000.

But if your question is, "But were the Americans thinking to themselves, if a plane is shot down, we will invade and overthrow Saddam Hussein", it was not in that category. That was not the context in which we were talking about it.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: There would be a retaliation.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: The Americans would say, "Of course. If they shoot down one of our planes, we will kick the s*** out of them for doing it".
We had worries, not only about the No Fly Zones themselves and the legitimacy of aircraft overflying, but we were very much concerned by the proportionality, in the legal sense of the word, of any retaliation.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: So we were trying to exercise a restraining influence --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I suppose so, but we were never put to the test, thank God, it never happened.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: That brings us to 9/11 which was a different sort of test, and I suppose the real question is: at what point after 9/11 did the policies specifically towards Iraq change and sharpen?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Well, again, I couldn't find any record of this in the archives. On 9/11 itself, in the course of the day, I had a telephone conversation with Rice, and said, "Condolences. Anything we can do to help? Who do you think did it?" She said, "There is no doubt this has been an Al-Qaeda operation", but at the end of the conversation, "We are just looking to see whether there could possibly be any connection with Saddam Hussein".

That was the very first time on the day itself that I heard the name of the Iraqi leader mentioned in the context of 9/11.

Well, as has been recorded by multiple sources, most
of them American, that little reference to
Saddam Hussein in that telephone conversation by the
following weekend turned into a big debate at Camp David
between President Bush and his principal advisers.

There was a big ding-dong about Iraq and I debriefed
various contacts about this afterwards and the story
varied, depending a little bit on who you talked to, but
it seemed that Paul Wolfowitz, who was there, although
he was not a Cabinet member, he was a Deputy Secretary,
he was there with Rumsfeld, argued very strongly for
retaliation that would include Iraq.

It is not clear from the record to what extent he
was supported by Rumsfeld. Some people said Rumsfeld
was very strongly behind it, others said Rumsfeld was
not, but the decision taken that weekend was that the
prime concern was with Al-Qaeda, it was Al-Qaeda in
Afghanistan, and Iraq, whatever the policy would be, had
to be set aside for the time being.

That is, I believe, exactly what Tony Blair was told
when he arrived a few days later, on 20 September, for
a meeting with the President. Because Blair was
extremely concerned, and rightly so, that the reaction
to Al-Qaeda -- retaliation against Al-Qaeda would become
diluted, dissipated, by looking at Iraq at the same
time, which didn't merit it.
He had sent Bush a message setting out his views on what needed to be done and he argued very strongly for a laser-like focus on Al-Qaeda and Afghanistan. By the time he got to Washington, on 20 September, he found that the door was already open. He didn't have to argue the case. The President had taken that decision.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: To return to the topic we were looking at earlier about the relationship between the Prime Minister and the President, and also, perhaps, between the Prime Minister and the Americans generally, at his speech to the Labour Party conference in October, he spoke very strongly -- the phrase you often quote, and rightly so:

"We were with you at first, we will stay with you to the last."

What I would like to know is, how did this speech, in what it said and what it implied, affect your own work in terms of working with the administration, first of all across the general field of foreign policy, and then, again, when Iraq came back on the agenda, with regard to Iraq?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: In those few weeks after 9/11, Tony Blair's reputation in the United States of America was sealed. It continues to this day. The man above all other Europeans who came first out of the slips and
who expressed his sympathy for, support for the
United States of America in its hour of need with
unparalleled eloquence.

That speech and that particular phrase which you
have just quoted, Sir Martin, resonated enormously
around the United States. It is a question of
whether -- which resonated more? Was it that, or was it
the band of the Coldstream Guards playing the Stars and
Stripes at the changing of the guard very soon after
9/11, which Condoleezza Rice told me made her break down
and cry when she saw it on television.

So to be ambassador to the United States of America
in the slipstream of this stuff was -- I make no bones
about it, a heady and exhilarating experience, because
wherever you went -- you didn't have to do anything,
just walk through a door -- people would rise to their
feet and give you a sort of storming round of applause.

So you had to -- you know, you had to be careful not
to be swept away by this stuff.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How did this affect, and what was your
perspective, on the relationship of the other figures in
Britain, the Ministry of Defence, the Prime Minister's
office and their American opposite numbers in the
aftermath of 9/11? Did they have the knowledge needed
of American policy to influence it, again when
eventually Iraq emerged?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Well, they -- I mean, we were
sending an enormous amount of advice back to London on
how the situation was moving and what we thought were
the important issues and the different positions of the
different bits of the administration, because, even
during the period leading up to 9/11, it became plain --
I'm not sure if this is to your point, but I will say it
anyway -- it had already become plain that there was
a potential problem between Colin Powell, on the one
side, and the Vice-President Dick Cheney and the
Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on the other.

This became, on Iraq policy, and indeed on
Arab/Israel policy, the fault line that ran through the
administration, a fault line which was never covered and
which opened ever wider as the months went by.

I think one of our principal purposes, for all
Ministers who came through town, even if they didn't
deal directly with foreign policy, but certainly for
Robin Cook, and, afterwards, Jack Straw, was to say,
"Your interlocutor", that's the way I am talking about
the Secretary of State now, "in the State Department" --
remember there are a lot of people around in this
administration who don't agree with him and are his
political enemies, and that begs the question of: where
was Condoleezza Rice in all of this? I think if you plot a graph through the months and years up to the Iraq war, you have to say that she more and more was in the camp of Colin Powell's enemies, although she didn't actually see her role as, so she said, banging heads together. She chaired the meetings of the so-called Principals Committee.

One of the complaints from a lot of people was these meetings ended without any proper conclusion, because it was impossible to reconcile the views of the big beasts who identified -- I'm not quite sure if I have answered your question.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You are answering it. You have used your phrase "big beasts", so what I want to know now is, what was your briefing to the people who were coming over with regard to this fault line in American policy and how did you feel they could influence it?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: If you were talking about Powell, Rice, Cheney and Rumsfeld, there were very few Ministers who came over who actually merited that access. So we can talk about the Prime Minister, by definition that included the President as well. You included the Foreign Secretary, who nearly always got in to see Cheney but didn't necessarily go and see Rumsfeld. So what I used to say to Ministers was, "On whatever aspect
of Iraq policy, the State Department are on board, but
you are going to have to argue very fiercely with the
Vice-President's office and”, if they went to see him,
"with Rumsfeld's office, and also with Condoleezza Rice
how important these matters are”.

The one thing that ran all through 2002, in
particular, was, if it came to war in Iraq, we would all
be in much better shape for the war itself and for the
aftermath if this was done within the framework of an
international coalition blessed by the United Nations.

You didn't have to argue that with the
State Department. You sure as hell had to argue it with
the Vice-President and with Rumsfeld, and, up to
a point, with Condoleezza Rice.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: That brings me to my last question
before I hand over to Sir Roderic Lyne, and it brings me
to Crawford in April 2002.

What I would like to ask you is this: to what extent
did American and British policy towards Iraq merge
in April 2002 along the lines that you suggested during
that weekend at the Crawford ranch, in particular Bush's
commitment at that time, as he put it, to put Saddam on
the spot by following the UN inspectors' route and also
by constructing an international coalition, which was
the Prime Minister's strong input? How do you feel
about that convergence of policy at that time?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: It took a while for policy to converge -- sorry, if we are talking about Americans, the President accepting, for realpolitik reasons, it would be better to go through the United Nations than not, which was a repudiation of where his Vice-President stood.

It took a while to get there, probably until August of that year. I said in my briefing telegram to Tony Blair, before Crawford, a copy of which, again, I couldn't get hold of in the archive -- and by that time there had been a couple of months, maybe more, maybe three months, in which contingency discussion of, "If it came to a war in Iraq, how would you do it?" It was all very -- it was all very embryonic.

Of course, while regime change was the formal policy of the United States of America, it didn't necessarily mean an armed invasion, at that time, of Iraq and it may sound like a difference without a distinction or a distinction without a difference, but it wasn't, not at that time, and so I said -- I think as I remember I said to Tony Blair, "There are three things you really need to focus on when you get to Crawford. One is how to garner international support for a policy of regime change, if that is what it turns out to be. If it
involves removing Saddam Hussein, how do you do it and
when do you do it?" And the last thing I said, which
became a kind of theme of virtually all the reporting
I sent back to London in that year was, "Above all" --
I think I used the phrase "above all -- "get them to
focus on the aftermath, because, if it comes to war and
Saddam Hussein is removed, and then ...?"

The other thing at that time, Sir Martin, which
people tend to forget is actually what was blazing hot
at the time and a far more immediate problem -- and it
wasn't Iraq, it was the Middle East, because the
Intifada had blown up, hideous things were going on in
the West Bank, the Israeli army were in the West Bank
and we had prevailed on the Americans, as one example of
British influence working that year, to put out a really
tough statement before Tony Blair arrived in Crawford
telling the Israelis in summary that they needed to
withdraw from the West Bank towns and withdraw soon.

Now, let me be quite frank about this. Crawford was
a meeting at the President's ranch. I took no part in
any of the discussions, and there was a large chunk of
that time when no adviser was there, I think -- I don't
know whether David Manning has been before you yet, but
when he comes before you, he will tell you, I think,
that he went there with Jonathan Powell for a discussion
of Arab/Israel and the Intifada. I think it was at that
meeting that there was a kind of joint decision between
Bush and Blair that Colin Powell should go to the region
and get it sorted.

I believe that, after that, the two men were alone
in the ranch until dinner on Saturday night where all
the advisers, including myself, turned up.

So I'm not entirely clear to this day -- I know what
the Cabinet Office says were the results of the meeting,
but, to this day, I'm not entirely clear what degree of
convergence was, if you like, signed in blood, at the
Crawford ranch. There are clues in the speech which
Tony Blair gave the next day at College Station, which
is one of his best foreign policy speeches, a very fine
piece of work.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How do you assess the balance in that
speech between, as it were, potential pre-emption and
the UN rule in Iraq?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: There were lots of interesting
things in those speeches. It sort of repays a kind of
Kremlinological analysis. To the best of my knowledge,
but I may be wrong, this was the first time that
Tony Blair had said in public "regime change".

I mean, he didn't only deal with Iraq, he mentioned
other issues as well. But he -- I think what he was
trying to do was draw the lessons of 9/11 and apply them to the situation in Iraq, which led, I think, not inadvertently, but deliberately, to a conflation of the threat by Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein.

It also drew in spirit on the 1999 Chicago speech on humanitarian intervention. When I heard that speech, I thought that this represents a tightening of the UK/US alliance and the degree of convergence on the danger that Saddam Hussein presented:

Compare and contrast with all the hoo-hah about 45 minutes, which I gather was the subject of discussion yesterday, which came up in the autumn, what you had in that speech at College Station was a rather sophisticated argument which said -- which was pre-emption, but which said, "Saddam is too dangerous. His record is too bad. The potential threat he presents cannot be ignored".

I think, "Doing nothing is not an option", was a phrase in the speech. "So, therefore, we have to do something about it". It was a good speech, but it sort of -- it lost influence as the months went by.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

Sir Roderic?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sir Christopher, I would like to come back to Crawford, but before I do so, I would like to go
back over one or two of the points you have made up to
now.

Talking about the summer of 2001, you said that the
Iraq review wasn't really going anywhere. Indeed, at
a time when you said the administration wasn't going
anywhere. That was the period in which Britain and the
United States tried, and at the time did not succeed, to
get a smart sanctions resolution through the UN Security
Council and the effort at that stage failed in July of
that year.

Is the implication of your remarks that this really
wasn't a serious exercise from the point of view of the
US administration?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I think it was a serious exercise.
I think it was a very serious exercise. I know that
Colin Powell took this extremely seriously and he
devoted a vast amount of energy to it.

One of the reasons why people were speculating in
the September that his star was on the wane was because
he had expended so much energy and had come back with
virtually nothing.

So I would not say that American efforts in this
respect were desultory or half-hearted. What they, and
we, couldn't get round were the objections, and
particularly the French and the Russians, for the kind
of stuff we wanted to put in the new Security Council Resolution, and then there was trouble -- and you have to ask Jeremy Greenstock about this.

There were difficulties in the Committee that reviewed embargoed items. There was a row about the items. There was also a conceptual problem we had with the United States which has its origins in the Clinton administration, that you had to construct something which makes the sanctions smarter, threatens Saddam Hussein with dire consequences if he tries to subvert the sanctions or circumvent them, but also offers him the famous light at the end of the tunnel if, against all prognostications, he suddenly became virtuous and came into compliance with the new resolution and those preceding it.

For the Americans, for domestic political reasons, acknowledging that there had to be some kind of incentive to Saddam in a resolution was very hard to sell in congress in the light of the Iraq Liberation Act.

All that said, they tried hard, I thought.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That included the White House.

Colin Powell put a lot of effort into it. Did he have the full backing of the White House on this?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I don't think they were very
interested.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: They weren't interested?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I mean, Condoleeza Rice kept an eye on it. She was a very diligent person and I think was regularly briefed by Colin, but it was clearly Colin Powell's game. “Here is the ball. You run with it. See how far you get and then come back”.

But it wasn't as if President Bush popped up regularly and said, "We must have a new Security Council Resolution". That never happened.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: As you already said, the other game was regime change, which was established to you as policy inherited from the Clinton administration, but where, as you have also said, the key fault line was whether this was policy that was actually going to be implemented, and how.

At what point -- and clearly this was after 9/11 -- did the most senior levels of the US administration settle on a policy of the forcible removal of Saddam Hussein's regime as their primary objective?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I think almost very -- once the shock of 9/11 had sunk in, once the anthrax scare had been and gone -- this is -- this followed the month after 9/11. It was something which, when I was in Washington, I didn't give anything like enough
importance to. I didn't realise what an impact this had had on the Administration.

The anthrax scare was, suddenly, people were getting letters tainted with anthrax. What we now know, and I didn't realise at the time, was this really steamed up the Administration, because they thought the last person who had ever used anthrax aggressively was Saddam Hussein in his own country.

So anthrax letters going around the place really spooked people, and if you read a book by Jacob Weisberg called "The Bush Tragedy", this is set out in detail. It led to Dick Cheney suggesting, and being slapped down by the President, that the entire population of the United States should be inoculated against smallpox, which would have led to 20 million deaths, or something like that, through the by-products.

So, to answer your question, well before the end of the year, those who had been arguing on the right wing that there was a need to settle accounts with Saddam and do it fast, suddenly got much more traction with the President of the United States. The President himself, as Commander-in-Chief in the war against terrorism suddenly was reinvigorated and found a real purpose for his Presidency, something which had not been evident before 9/11.
I think I use a metaphor in that book where I say it was almost as if the people who really wanted to deal with Iraq and deal with it soon, burst out of the closet, the closet door having been blown open by the shock of 9/11. Everything changed after 9/11.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Certainly by the time the President gave his State of the Union address in January 2002, the Axis of Evil speech -- I mean, you say in your book, effectively containment was dead, the President's belief was that Iraq was too dangerous to be left to containment and he had decided at this point that, "The officially mandated policy of regime change" -- I'm quoting from your book -- "should be actively pursued".

Now, at this stage, what was the British Government's policy?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: The British Government's policy was one of profound legal objection to a regime change and a belief that it wasn't realistic to seek to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

Now, I say that slightly cautiously, because I remember an exchange between the British delegation which comprised John Sawers and Jonathan Powell with Condoleezza Rice in the visit they paid to Washington, which we haven't mentioned so far to see members of the Administration in waiting. So we are talking
about January 2001, and we provided for Powell and
Sawers to meet a very wide range of people from the
Vice-President downwards.

One of those meetings was with Rice and there was
a brief exchange about Iraq, and I remember John Sawers
saying, the forcible overthrow of the Iraq regime was not on
. It is not practicable, it is not something we can
do. She said, "Hang on a minute, we shouldn't take this
option off the table", but the next remark was in the
context of Iraqi dissident groups. It wasn't a big land
invasion or anything like that.

I have wandered off the subject here.

So we had a legal problem with regime change and, at
the time, the British Government's efforts were still
focused on this narrowing and deepening of sanctions,
a policy that was dying before our very eyes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That was in January 2001.

By January 2002 --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Everything was changing then.
SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- the British Government was still
against regime change, their policy was still
containment.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: No, the lawyers -- well, the
policy --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was it just the lawyers?
SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: -- it wasn't to abandon containment,
but the knowledge that Iraq was under active discussion
in Washington, in a way that hadn't been the case
before, the signals that we were picking up from our
military advisers in the British Embassy, that the
thinking was now going ahead on Iraq, that Rumsfeld had
been tasked to think about this and come back, and
Rumsfeld and Franks -- the general in charge of the
Central Command -- was being told to look at all this,
that started wheels turning, I believe, inside the
Foreign Office.

So by the time you have the first meeting between
the President and the Prime Minister, which was at
Crawford in April 2002, they weren't there to talk about
containment or sharpening sanctions. There had been
a sea change in attitudes in the US administration to
which the British Government, progressively from October
onwards, had to adapt and make up its mind where it
stood on these various issues.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So at what point between October 2001 and
Crawford in April 2002, did your instructions change
from you should be advocating containment to the
British Government supported regime change?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I got a chunky set of instructions
in March of 2002.
SIR RODERIC LYNE: Instructions from?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: From -- very good question. I got the instructions -- David Manning --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's Number 10 Downing Street?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Number 10 Downing Street. By that time, the Prime Minister's foreign policy adviser, because he had taken over from John Sawers in the previous year. In fact, he was in Washington the very night before 9/11 to meet Condoleezza Rice and others to break himself in as the Prime Minister's foreign policy adviser.

So David Manning came over in March of 2002 with a set of instructions to prepare the way for the Prime Minister's visit at Crawford, which would take place on -- what was it, April 6, 7 and 8 of that year?

One of the main things that he was seeking to do -- and this was new, and I, if you like, borrowed his instructions to do my side of things -- was to say to the Americans, "Look, if you want to do regime change, and if this is going to require military action, you guys are powerful enough to do it all on your own. You can do it on your own, you have got the power to do it, but if you are going to do this and you want your friends and partners to join you, far better then that you should do it inside an alliance, preferably taking
the UN route”.

That, I think, was the single most important message which was delivered to the US administration at that time. David Manning, of course, had his relationship with his opposite number, Condoleezza Rice and he spoke to her on that. Then, a few days later, I was responsible for dropping the second shoe and had Wolfowitz to lunch, to Sunday lunch, and I went through the same script with him, an account of which, highly classified, sent to only about three people in London, in due course appeared in the Sunday Telegraph, a photograph in fact.

This was all about trying to sell -- Wolfowitz was viscerally hostile to the United Nations policy. He said this was not the way to go. So I had to come up with a set of arguments, which I thought he might find just about appealing enough not to become a serious obstacle to a policy that would involve the UN.

Sir Roderic Lyne: Reflecting all this, you say in your book that, before the Prime Minister actually went to Crawford in April of 2002:

“Blair had already taken the decision to support regime change, though he was discreet about saying so in public.”

That is to say, Sir David Manning comes to
Washington in March. At this point, you effectively know you have a different line to take, as you recorded in your telegram and recorded in your book. You then have lunch with Wolfowitz and you tell him -- you emphasise the Prime Minister's commitment to regime change, but, as you also say, he is having to be discreet about saying so in public.

You also in your book referred to tensions between the Foreign Office and Number 10 and you say that sometimes, if Americans asked you whether statements made by Jack Straw or Geoff Hoon were British Government policy, you had to tell them that this was not necessarily so.

So were we in the situation in which we had a public policy of advocating containment, UN inspectors and all of that, but a private policy in which you were telling the United States that we were in favour of regime change, so long as -- and we will come back to this -- some important conditions were fulfilled, and you were getting one set of instructions from Number 10 and a slightly different line from the Foreign Office, which you said was against regime change partly for legal reasons and yet another line from Number 10.

I mean, what was British policy at this time?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I think my memory is that
containment and sharper sanctions had run its course.

It simply wasn't practical to pursue this at the UN.

You will get confirmation of that from

Jeremy Greenstock.

It is not as if the British Government was speaking

with a forked tongue, that the Foreign Office was

sending out one set of instructions and Number 10

another, I think the attitude of Downing Street on this

was this: it was a fact that there was a thing such as

the Iraq Liberation Act. It was a fact that 9/11 had

happened and it was a complete waste of time, therefore,

in those circumstances, if we were going to be able to

work with the Americans, to come to them and say any

longer -- and bang away about regime change and say, "We

can't support it", and the way I think the attempt was

made to square the circle of supporting something to

which the Foreign Office, and maybe other lawyers

objected, was actually so to wrap it, so to

contextualize it, that regime change, if and when it

happened, would be with the benefit of the support of

the international community in the framework of UN

action, quite possibly through a Security Council

Resolution.

So in other words, one -- as you will see from the

leaked letter recording my conversation with Wolfowitz,
I didn't say just, "We're with you on regime change. Now, let's go get the b*****d". We didn't do that. What we said was, "Let's do it cleverly, let's do it with some skill", and that means, apart from anything else, go to the UN and get a Security Council Resolution, because, if you were able to do that, then the objections of the Foreign Office legal advisers would fall away.

So how can I put it? You talked the talk of regime change, but you walked the walk, you hoped, of a UN Security Council Resolution permitting the use of force, if that is when it was going to come to.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Those are the "yes, buts" that you have described in your book, and I do want to come back to that, but just before we do, are you effectively saying that the British Government's policy was changed in Washington rather than in London? It was a consequence of Washington that our line had changed, not because we had sat down and decided that this was the correct strategy?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I wouldn't say that it was as extremely poodle-ish as that. I don't think that's a fair comment. One of the things you have to remember is that Tony Blair was a true believer about the wickedness of Saddam Hussein and his realisation of that
pre-dates by a very long time the arrival of George Bush in the White House.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was that a policy of his government or just of himself?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Can I read you something? May I do this? This is a speech which I may have referred to in the book. Just a paragraph. This is a speech Tony Blair made in January 1998, which is, again, context, and I quote -- 1998, which is early, he hadn't even been Prime Minister for a year:

"We have a clear responsibility in the interests of long-term peace in the world to stop Saddam Hussein from defying the judgment of the world's community. He must be either persuaded by diplomacy or made by force to yield up his long-cherished ambition to develop nuclear, chemical and biological weapons; weapons which threaten not only his immediate neighbours in the Middle East, but pose a direct and fundamental challenge to world peace.

"All our experience of him teaches us that it is sometimes hard to succeed with him via diplomacy, but one thing is for sure: diplomacy stands no chance of success at all unless he knows that if he fails to listen to reason, we have the force to back it up."

Now, I never saw any evidence over all the years
that I was in Washington that that fundamental view ever changed, and I think you can see things, hear things, said by Tony Blair, years later, that reflect that exactly.

So I would just -- I have read that out to try and set the context of the way in which policy was moving in London.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Coming back to the American view, effectively you said that containment by the early part of 2002 was a dead duck. Where did this leave the policy? Did it mean that, as far as the Americans were concerned, it was simply now only a question of when, rather than whether, military action would be taken, or was the United States administration still looking at other options?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: The way I have always tried to approach this -- it may be the impossible question. The way I have always tried to approach this -- and it still gives me reason to think about this even today -- is at what point -- are you asking me at what point was it clear that war was inevitable? Is it the same question? Because that's a damn hard question to answer. What was inevitable, I think, was that the Americans were going to bust a gut to carry out the mandated policy of regime change.
SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm asking you if they had left themselves with any alternatives.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: To regime change? They couldn't.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: To taking military action to effect regime change.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I remember a conversation with Condoleezza Rice in November 2002, a point between the passage of Resolution 1441 and, on December 7th, Saddam Hussein's declaration of his holding of weapons of mass destruction.

I remember having this conversation with Condoleezza Rice, because what I wanted to know was, you know, a bit like the First World War on mobilisation, whatever you want to do, was it possible to turn the trains round or not? She said to me -- and this is -- offers an answer to your question. I said, "What are your priorities?" She said, "The best outcome would be if the pressure of coercive diplomacy" -- that's to say what is going on at the UN -- "plus the troop build-up and the knowledge of contingency planning led to Saddam's removal; either he goes off into exile, or he is overthrown by an internal coup".

That was always an alternative running in the minds of some in the Administration.

The second -- the worst option, she said, was to be
constantly jerked around by an eternal process of
inspection, and so I said, "So war is somewhere in the
middle between those two things", and she said, "Well,
fair enough".

So there was always the option, there was always the
option that all this stuff that was going on, the rumble
of war, would create ructions inside Iraq itself which
would lead to Saddam's removal. It didn't happen. It
might have happened if we had waited a bit longer, but
it didn't happen.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Let's just pursue this angle a little
further. When you had your celebrated lunch with
Wolfowitz, you said what was needed was a clever plan to
wrong-foot Saddam Hussein and you said that this should
include putting the UN at the heart of this strategy.
We need to wrong-foot him in the eyes the Security
Council. One way was to demand the readmission of the
UN weapons inspectors into Iraq. If he refused, this
would not only put him in the wrong, but also turn the
searchlight on to the multiple Security Council
Resolutions with which he remained in breach.

Now, perhaps partly thanks to your eloquence and the
British Government's persuasion and also, I think, to
the pressure from Colin Powell by the autumn of 2002,
President Bush has gone to the UN, he has endorsed
a strategy of going down what was called the UN route, and this leads up to the new Security Council Resolution.

Was that just an exercise to wrong-foot Saddam Hussein, as you put it, to Wolfowitz?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Well, it was more than that, but you have to aim off here for the person I was talking to. I had to put it in those -- how can I put it? -- I had to put it in those possibly cynical terms to persuade him that this wasn't a limp-wristed pitiful European lack of will, pathetic-type thing, of which the Europeans are frequently accused by the Americans, but was actually a cunning plan to get the guy.

Had I been talking to somebody else, like you, I would have said, "If we go to war, this thing is going to be incredibly perilous. What we need to do is to refresh the old Security Council Resolutions -- God knows how many there are, 15, 16, 17 -- particularly Resolutions 678 and 687. We can only do that if we can create some kind of consensus within the UN and get a Security Council Resolution that actually provides us with what we need".

Then you no longer have to worry about the legality or otherwise of regime change, because you have provided Saddam, through this Security Council Resolution with
a set of things that he has to do, which, if he doesn't
do, you wrong-foot him and then you can take action.

Actually, that is precisely what 1441 did.

Unanimously, thanks to the astonishing skill of
Jeremy Greenstock in New York, and others, we got
a unanimous resolution that put -- even Syria voted for
it, for Pete's sake, which puts all the onus on Saddam
to prove his innocence.

So if I look back on all that now and I look back on
that conversation with Wolfowitz, what I was saying --
and I'm not claiming any kind of prophetic powers here
at all -- that was what I said we had to do and, for
a moment, that's what we got on November 5, 2002.

It all fell apart for reasons we can discuss in
a moment, but that is what we got, and, if we were going
to go to war with Iraq, that was the best trajectory to
follow.

Now, the British, as you mentioned this, I think
played some role in influencing George Bush down this
path against the wishes of his Vice-President, very
vociferously expressed, Tony Blair's pressure,
Jack Straw's pressure all played their own part and
I think pressure from David Manning and myself. We did
play a part.

I suspect, though, that the greater part was played
by a combination, in this case, of Condoleezza Rice and
Colin Powell, who, in a very private supper with the
President on 5 August, made the case for taking the
international UN route, and the President -- the number
of times I heard people say this to me -- who sometimes
was ruled by his heart and sometimes was ruled by his
head and the two things would come into conflict time
and time again -- in his heart he just wanted to get
over there and kick Saddam out.

In his head -- and he had a very strong sense of
realpolitik, he realised he couldn't just do that and he
submitted to the recommendations of his national
security adviser and Secretary of State with a chorus of
Europeans and an Australian, of whom Tony Blair was the
most significant, that he would give the UN route
a throw.

So when we all came back from our summer holidays in
eyear September, he told Tony Blair and others that that
was what he was going to do, but, Sir Roderic, that was
only the start of a battle of attrition, where one
defensive position after another, erected by the
Vice-President's office and some in DOD, had to be
overcome, at the bayonet almost, to get
Resolution 1441 -- and this was, for five minutes or so,
a significant achievement.
SIR RODERIC LYNE: So at this point, even if it was only lasting for five minutes, in November 2002, British and American policy had come together with support from the other members of the Security Council in favour of putting the inspectors back into Iraq?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Sorry, Saddam had already agreed before 1441 to let the inspectors back in. He had already agreed.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Under pressure --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Under coercive diplomacy --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- and the resolution launches UNMOVIC.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: -- classic result.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were the British and American Governments aiming for the same target through those inspections? I mean, you talk about this war of attrition in Washington, were the Americans aiming for regime change and the British for the disarmament of Saddam Hussein?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: The Americans acknowledged that, if Saddam Hussein were to have a kind of Damascene conversion and reveal all and agree to all kinds of confidence-building measures, that in effect, even with him still there, you would have had a kind of regime change, and there was an acknowledgment in London, and Tony Blair, I think, had said this publicly once or twice, and it was grudgingly acknowledged inside the US
Administration, that it could be possible that in reaction to this concerted pressure of the international community, of which that Resolution 1441 was the high point, that it wouldn't be necessary to go to war.

Another way of putting it was that if Saddam had been cleverer, he could have done things which would have made it almost impossible to go to war, but he was not as clever as he was made out to be.

So when the inspectors went in, the fervent hope, I think, on the American side, was that they would actually act as a trip-wire for war. They would find something or they would say there was a pattern of non-cooperation; whereas others hoped that the result of the efforts of the inspectors would be such that Saddam was effectively disarmed and there was no further mystery or obfuscation about what he had and what he didn't have.

The real problem -- the real problem, the core of the problem, which I did draw several times to the attention of London, was that the contingency military timetable had been decided before the UN inspectors went in under Hans Blix. So you found yourself in a situation in the autumn of 2002 where you couldn't synchronise the military timetable with the inspection timetable, because there was -- the American military
had been given instructions to prepare for war.

Initially, it was "We want you ready by January".

There was a lot of confusion inside the American military establishment about the size of the force and where they should come from. They wanted to bring an army down from Germany and pass it through Turkey and the Turks said no. So January was never realistic, and in the end it went back to March.

All that said, when you looked at the timetable for the inspections, it was impossible to see how Blix could bring the inspection process to a conclusion for better or for worse by March.

So the result of that -- the result of that was to turn Resolution 1441 on its head, because 1441 had been a challenge to Saddam Hussein, agreed unanimously to prove his innocence, but, because you couldn't synchronise the programmes, somehow or other, the programme of preparation for inspections, you had to short-circuit the inspection process by finding the notorious smoking gun.

Suddenly, because of that, the unforgiving nature of the military timetable, we found ourselves scrabbling for the smoking gun, which was another way of saying: it is not that Saddam now has to prove he is innocent, we have now got to try and prove he is guilty.
We have never -- we, the Americans, the British --
we have never recovered from that because, of course,
there was no smoking gun.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So the military timetable meant that we
simply did not allow enough time for the inspectors to
do the job they had been asked to do, and
by January 2003, when, once again, the President is
giving the State of the Union address, in your
estimation, at that point, he has closed down any option
of not going to war.

Again, if I quote from your book on that speech, and
he spent about half of his speech on Iraq in, I think,
what you also described as Messianic terms, very, very
strong language. You said:

"If the President had left himself any space to step
back from war, he closed it down early in 2003 with his
State of the Union speech on 29 January."

Now, that's fully six weeks before the timetable
finally ran out and the inspectors were pulled out, but
it was still at a very early stage of the inspections
process. They had only been at it for a couple of
months up to then.

So the window they were given to operate in was so
small, was it a window at all?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: That's an extremely good question.
I warned London, after Bush announced, shortly before Tony Blair's visit to Camp David on 7 September 2002 -- I said in a briefing telegram -- again, which I can't find in the archives, which is a pity, I promise you it existed -- I said in a briefing telegram that, in principle, the British and American sides are agreed that we should exhaust the UN processes, which includes getting inspectors in, and my warning was what the Americans understand by exhausting the UN process and what we understand by exhausting the UN process may prove not to be the same, and there is a very great risk that this will lead to a complete fracturing of the Security Council, which I have to say is what happened.

On the American side, there was a very brief hope, and, for some, disappointment, that after the passage of 1441, that war might be avoided because the pressure now on Saddam was extreme. He was now faced by an apparently united Security Council. Of course, that unity was more apparent than real because it concealed through ambiguity all kinds of differences of national interest, which then exploded later on.

Then came Saddam's weapons declaration, the thousands of pages delivered on, I think, December 7. The Americans -- the reaction after that, across the whole American administration, including the
State Department, was, "That's it. He's b*******ing us. Unless he is removed by force, unless he's toppled, this is it".

So when, a few weeks later, Bush gave his State of the Union speech, for me, it was quite clearly a summons to war. America, the chosen people, all that stuff which is very common in American oratory, which is very alien to Europeans. I thought, "There is no way the President can wind back from this, unless, through some event, Saddam Hussein is removed", which he wasn't.

So you are right, it is a very short period, but the Americans were getting more and more impatient with this process of inspection. They got very excited when Blix made his first report to the Security Council on January 29, or it might have been January 27, where he seemed to be pretty negative about the pattern of Iraqi cooperation.

That pattern of Iraqi cooperation was for us, the Brits, a very important sign of whether he was in material breach or not and whether this would be a casus belli. The Americans got quite excited about that and, as a result, Colin Powell was sent off to New York on February 5 to deliver his famous speech, with all the evidence, which later turned out to be inadequate and incorrect, of Iraqi malfeasance. This
was precisely to convince people that there was no point in going on much longer.

Unfortunately, Blix then delivers another report after Colin Powell has done his. I can't remember the date exactly, mid-February or late February, in which he sort of reins back a bit. Of course, in Washington, the hope and expectation was that Blix, having been fairly negative in January, would be even more negative in February. It didn't happen. But by then, all that was too late.

THE CHAIRMAN: We are coming up in a moment or two to a break, but, before we do that, I would like to ask my other colleagues if they would like to pick up any points from the session so far.

Baroness Prashar?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

Sir Christopher, I want to take you back to the time when John Sawers and Jonathan Powell came and you said the question of regime change was discussed and there were legal objections which were raised, but were they at that time thinking of regime change in terms of military invasion or was it about topping Saddam through the dissidents? I mean, was that ever an option that was considered?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I never heard it, Baroness Prashar.
I never heard, except from Paul Wolfowitz -- I talked
about this earlier on, and this was in a conversation
long before he came into the US Administration -- who
liked this idea of occupying southern Iraq and probably
argued for it at that meeting in Camp David over the
weekend following 9/11.

But the context, as I recall it, in that set of
meetings with the administration in waiting, the context
for violence, if you like, was arming and financing
dissident groups, which is provided for explicitly in
the Iraq Liberation Act. It actually lists the
dissident groups of which the INC is one.

That's a long answer, but the short answer to your
question is: no, I didn't hear regime change discussed
in any of those meetings in terms of invasion.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: By that time, regime change had come
to mean military invasion?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: No, no, no. Sorry, have I been
unclear? Regime change -- the official US policy was,
in practice and in discussion at that time, sharpening
sanctions and try to sort of beef up, stiffen up the
resistance groups.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: No, what I'm talking about, by the
time John Sawers and Jonathan Powell came to the
United States for that meeting, by that time regime
change had come to mean military invasion?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: No, it hadn't come to mean military invasion. In January 2001, even if there were individuals scattered around the administration in waiting, who would have liked to have done that, the framework in which Sawers and Powell and I discussed Iraq with Condoleezza Rice was: (a) she said, "We are going to review Iraq policy", and it never came to any conclusion; (b) "Colin, we will get him to do sharpening sanctions and, by the way, we shouldn't remove the military option from the table and we need to encourage and equip the Iraqi opposition".

I didn't hear, in those exchanges with Sawers and Powell, any reference, at all, to a land invasion, because I think that was never seriously on the table until 9/11 and the absolutely traumatic impact that had on the US administration.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I thought you were talking about a meeting that took place between January and March 2002. That's the time I'm referring to.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: If I have caused confusion with the Committee, then I'm in trouble here, because the Sawers/Powell visit was a visit to the administration in waiting before the inauguration at the end of January 2001. This was an early exchange which
foreshadowed the policy that was then pursued between inauguration and, for argument's sake, 9/11.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: By early 2002, regime change had come to mean military invasion?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Yes, effectively, or -- it is still the fomenting of a rebellion, getting another Sunni general of milder disposition coming forward to remove Saddam. That was around, but, at that time, the American armed forces -- Donald Rumsfeld was tasked with making contingency planning about a possible invasion of Iraq. I hope that's clear. I'm sorry if I have been confusing that.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just ask, again this post-9/11 period, one of the lines being pursued quite actively, and particularly by Paul Wolfowitz, was the idea that somehow or other Saddam Hussein might have had some responsibility for 9/11 or some links with Al-Qaeda. There was a book that he had endorsed which suggested the World Trade Centre attack in 1993 had been the work of Iraq. Did you have conversations with him or other members of the Administration on that? Was this a line that you found yourself --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I had conversations with him in particular. He was quite convinced that there was
a connection, strong connection, between Saddam Hussein
and Al-Qaeda. There was a constant reference to the
fact that Mohammed Atta, one of those responsible for
9/11, who was on one of the planes, had met Iraqi
intelligence agents in Prague. Apparently, that's not
true. Apparently, it is rubbish. But you couldn't dig
it out of the bloodstream of certain influential members
of the US administration.

Then there was another thing which would be cited
from time to time, which was somewhere up in northern
Iraq -- I think on the border with Iran, or it might be
on the border with Turkey, but I think it was on the
border with Iran -- there was an Al-Qaeda camp which
Saddam was allowing to happen. To do things.
Apparently, that's not true either. There was some kind
of camp up there of insurgent figures, but they weren't
an Al-Qaeda operation.

In the end, as you, Sir Lawrence, probably know, the
Defense Department became so irritated with the
perceived bias of the CIA against the intelligence which
they, the Department of Defense, wanted to believe, that
they created their own in-house intelligence operation,
which ran as a rival to and a replacement of the CIA.
This is all part -- the background to all of this -- God
knows what was going on in London so far as interagency
disputes were taking place, but in Washington there was not simply Colin Powell against Cheney and Rumsfeld, you had the Defense Department who, to a degree, in the Vice-President's office, simply didn't believe what they were being told by the CIA, and the CIA, on these matters, appeared to be very much in the camp of the State Department.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: My next question is about November 2001, which relates to some conversations we had with the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence on Tuesday.

Bush had a press conference in late November 2001, where he was asked about Iraq and said that the inspectors should go back, and, if they don't, he will find out what will happen next. There was quite a lot of discussion in American media about this, more interviews with Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz and so on.

This didn't seem to have got back to the Foreign Office. Did you report this as perhaps one of the first signs of Iraq coming into view?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I'm sure we did. I do not have the reporting telegram in front of me, but we were watching this stuff like hawks. I mean, to a degree you had got almost too close to the coalface. I mean, there was no doubting -- I mean, there was no doubting the appetite
of Number 10 MoD and Foreign Office for this kind of reporting.

Actually, I remember that press conference pretty well. Of course we did. I say that without actually having in front of me -- I cannot believe that I didn't record that. So the Foreign Office I don't think can claim that they were ignorant of the way in which the wind was blowing. We made it extremely plain, extremely plain. In fact, I sent a dispatch -- the kind of thing which ambassadors don't do much nowadays, because I think they have been banned or something like that -- on 5 November to Jack Straw, which I couldn't find in the archives, which actually tried to pull all these threads together, laid all this out.

So there was -- the embassy staff and I were, I think, maybe even overly assiduous in reporting this stuff.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think this is the moment to take a break both on behalf of the witness and, indeed, the Committee. We will come back in ten minutes.

Members of the public need to leave the room.

That's fine, but do, please, come back within ten minutes, otherwise the doors will be shut and that will be it for the morning. Thank you very much. In ten minutes.
(11.21 am)

(Short break)

(11.35 am)

THE CHAIRMAN: Let us resume, if we may, and I'll turn to Sir Roderic Lyne to continue the questions.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sir Christopher, we talked earlier about the spats, essentially the conditions that the United Kingdom was attaching to joining the Americans in their policy, heading towards military action.

What were these conditions?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I only found out about these conditions -- no, let me start again. There are two separate things here.

The conditions were that the violence between Israel and the Palestinians should be wound down in some way. That was something which Tony Blair and the British Government generally repeated very, very frequently as a necessary pre-condition for taking any action against Saddam Hussein: the construction of a coalition and the exhaustion of the UN process and the re-entry of weapons inspectors. But I only saw these three conditions formally listed as a result of the Crawford meeting through a leak, when a Cabinet Office paper -- a Cabinet Office note, I think it was of July 2002 set them out. I mean, they were part of
the diplomacy that we were pursuing, the coalition, the UN, do something about the terrible bloodshed between Israel and the Palestinians, but it was never clear to me to what extent these were things that we would like to have or whether they were actual conditions of going further on Iraq, and I think, as time went by, they didn't look much like iron conditions and the "buts" were a bit feeble.

In fact, I was told by a senior American official not long after Crawford that our "yes, but" approach, as it were, from Crawford -- and the "yes" was greedily devoured by the American administration, but the "buts" had kind of faded away.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was legality, the British view of what was required to satisfy international law, part of these conditions?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Well, if you say -- I mean, they weren't formulated. It wasn't formulated like that, but if you were going to go through the UN in the hope of getting an agreed UN position, by definition the issue of legality would fall away.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's what we did?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: When you look at the conditions now, the so-called conditions, we failed miserably on one, which was trying to wind down the Arab/Israel dispute,
where, almost, things went into reverse rather than
going forward. On --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just on that --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Do you want me to take each
condition one by one?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes, let's take that one first. Didn't
the Americans in the end agree to publish the route map?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Yes, but it led to b****r all at the
time, let's be frank about it.

The high point of British influence on the
Arab/Israel dispute was the American statement of
4 April in which at a time when the Israeli defence
force was in West Bank towns creating some damage and
casualties, the Americans called for Israel's early
withdrawal from the West Bank towns. That made life
infinitely easier for Tony Blair when he came to
Crawford and had to do a joint press conference with
President Bush, because, if nothing had happened on
that, I think it could have revealed a rather large
split between Blair and Bush.

I say that was a high point of British influence,
because, no sooner had that statement come out demanding
the early withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the
West Bank, than a major political operation was launched
in Washington the following week to reverse the nature
of that call.

Colin Powell had been sent to the region, as I said before, and when he came back, he was strongly of the view that he had been consistently undermined by his enemies, while he was away, in the Administration, in the US Congress and by someone who is now the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, coming to Washington and effectively working against him.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So we got some progress on the Middle East, but not, in your opinion, nearly enough --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: No, sorry, let me just finish this point.

The definitive American statement was then one made in June which rowed back a long way from what they had said on 4 April, and effectively said in a practical sense that, "We will leave the Middle East on a care and maintenance basis and, by the way, we are not going to do anything until the Palestinians democratise themselves", and what that means is getting rid of Yasser Arafat, which he didn't do until he died.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, going through the UN was another condition; going for a Security Council resolution; going for a second Security Council resolution; allowing the inspectors enough time to do their job properly; gearing at least British policy towards disarming
Saddam Hussein rather than regime change.

Was that the second bundle of conditions?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: We had more success with the second bundle of conditions. The UN thing -- although, as ever, the devil is in the detail.

Exhausting UN processes, which included the reintroduction of weapons inspectors into Iraq, it was good as far as it went, but, as I have said earlier this session, the definition of exhausting UN processes was far from clear, and I was concerned, from very early on, that what the Americans thought that meant and what we thought that meant could be very different.

You could say that we overcame -- we, the British, overcame a series of major obstacles to get what we wanted in the UN which reached its climax with Resolution 1441.

Just to explain what I mean by getting rid of obstacles. First of all, the US Administration had to be persuaded that, in principle, the UN had a role. Then it had to be persuaded that if the UN were to have a role, there needed to be a Security Council resolution to reflect this. There was a massive battle inside the US Administration before President Bush gave his speech to the UN General Assembly on -- I think it was on 14 September 2002.
We didn't know until the last minute -- by God, we were lobbying hard -- whether he would even refer to the resolution. In the end he referred to "resolutions". To this day, we are not sure whether that was deliberate or whether he meant to say "resolution" in the singular but his -- what's it called?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: His teleprompter.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Thank you. His teleprompter broke down.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's a sort of area of detail.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Well, the devil is in the detail here, Sir Roderic, and the detail is important.

Then we had a huge battle about what the trigger for war would be. One needs to know these things. That is why 1441 was fatally undermined by the ambiguities necessary to get the consensus.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Let's turn to the third point you mentioned, being part of a wider coalition. How did we do on that one? The answer is fairly self-evident, it can be rather brief.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: If you add up all the people who went to Iraq, it actually comes up to quite a respectable number. I think it was 30 or 40 nations were there, I don't know, in some small numbers, but who was absent of course was -- whose absence in the
Security Council, both politically and militarily, were, of course, a majority of its members.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So why were we not able to exercise more traction? You say in your book that the United Kingdom -- you realised at a certain point the UK had become American’s, the indispensable ally. Now, if we were the indispensable ally, couldn't we have had more traction?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: With the Americans or with our colleagues in the Security Council?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: No, no, no, with the Americans to get a better overall result on these conditions, on the "yes, buts".

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: My view is -- and I think I said this in the book as early as 2004 -- that, given the nature of the relationship between Britain and America and the closeness between George W Bush and Tony Blair, we could have achieved more by playing a tougher role.

For example -- and this is not the first time I have said it -- if we had made it a condition, a condition, of our participation in any military operation that indeed a major effort should have been made with the Arab/Israel dispute and that indeed we should have done detailed planning for what would happen if and when we removed Saddam Hussein, there could have been a very
different outcome, but that did not happen.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So in the end, we were left with the choice: do we either continue to go along with the United States, which was taking us into some uncomfortable areas, or should we part company with the United States with all the downsides that that would entail.

What would have been the consequences for the United Kingdom of parting company with the United States?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: It would have depended on when it was done and it wouldn't necessarily have meant parting company. If, for example -- and I'm -- I wasn't there but I'm pretty sure it didn't happen. If, for example, at Crawford Tony Blair had said, "I want to help you, George, on this, but I have to say to you in all honesty that I will not be able to take part in any military operation unless we have palpable progress on the Middle East process and we have absolutely clarity about what happens in Iraq if it comes to removing Saddam Hussein".

I think that would have changed the nature -- it wouldn't have led to a rupture, but it would have changed the nature of American planning. I think he could have said that even in the September meeting at
Camp David, and that would have had an impact.

By the time you get nearer the end of the year, it is probably too late, because too many things have been decided and are in train, and don't forget, Sir Roderic, that in January or February 2003, before the government in London had the crucial debate in the House of Commons, George Bush picked up a phone and said, "If it is going to be politically difficult for you, Tony. You can sit out the war", and Rumsfeld said at some stage in answer to a question to a journalist, "Well, if push comes to shove, we don't need the Brits".

SIR RODERIC LYNE: If we had sat out the war, would it have damaged British interests in the United States if that's what they were saying to us?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: It is impossible to say, it is impossible to say. We had a very high reputation at the time inside the United States. There was no great popular surge, as far as we could tell, in favour of going to war. Polls weren't particularly encouraging for the administration. I was travelling a lot around the United States at the time. I didn't come across anybody except an oil man in Houston who was keen on invading. I doubt it would have done a lot of damage.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: In order to be seen as a good ally and reap whatever benefits that produced, was it necessary
for us to go in the strength that we did with a very
large land contingent, or could we have made a smaller
contribution to the operation?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I'm sure we could have made
a smaller contribution to the operation. I don't know,
because I wasn't in the heart of military planning along
the spectrum of military assistance what made us fix on
the very large land force, by our standards anyway, that
we sent in.

I remember being told by a member of the
administration quite early in 2002 that we were
apparently planning to send more or less what we did
send.

I always have to say, "if it came to war", because
the operational decision had not been taken then. But
I think anything that we contributed, apart from -- in
addition to political support, would have been
gratefully received and would have done no damage to our
reputation either inside the administration or among the
American people at large.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Apart from the applause factor that you
mentioned earlier, what benefits to British interests
did we gain, did we advance, by the role that we took?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: That's a great question, and it is
one that much pre-occupied me.
As the months went by in 2002, every now and again I got in touch with Downing Street and the Foreign Office saying -- and I think I said this in my annual review in 2001. I said, "It is great to bathe in all this popularity. It is wonderful stuff being applauded wherever you go and having your lights up on the scoreboard at a big baseball match in New York, 'Welcome to the British ambassador!', you know, the crowd cheering. I almost felt that I needed somebody sitting behind me whispering in my ear, "Remember you are mortal".

I said to London, "The key thing now, quite apart from Iraq, is to translate this popularity into real achievements which benefit the national interest", and we failed. We failed, and I'll tell you where we failed.

We failed on persuading the United States administration to liberalise air services across the Atlantic, a very big British interest, such that British Airways and other British airlines could enter into co-sharing agreements with their airline opposite numbers in the United States. Richard Branson had been trying to fly and carry passengers point to point in the US since the beginning of time. It was a major British interest and I kept on saying, "Let's try and use this
capital to get that”.

The other thing which was profoundly irritating was that almost on the day that 45 Commando arrived in Afghanistan to help with the war, the Americans slapped tariffs on exports from the UK of what they called speciality steel.

I remember saying to Karl Rove, "What in Christ's name do you think you are doing on something like this?”, and basically the answer was, "Well, the steel industry is in terrible trouble. It is in states that are important to the President's re-election effort in" — when was it? 2004 — "and it is just politics. But what we will try to do is we will pass this tariff thing and we will try and mitigate the consequences for you afterwards”.

This involved the most incredibly painful diplomacy, and my view is that there the British Government could have, and should have, made a bigger effort to get what we wanted on those points in return for the assistance we were giving them.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just to make sure that I have properly understood this. To summarise what you have just said, it wasn't essential for the defence of British interests that we actually played the part that we did choose to play in Iraq. It wasn't essential, for reasons of
British/American relations, that we did so. On the one hand, there wouldn't have been necessarily massive damage if we had not done so, and, on the other hand, we failed to secure specific benefits and in some cases areas you have identified, steel and air services, that we should have done, other than to become popular by doing what we did.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Well, I don't want to sort of chop logic here, but if you accepted -- and I was in favour of moving Saddam Hussein, let me -- can I declare an interest here, Chairman? I thought -- just so you can understand where I'm coming from on this -- that you didn't even need 9/11, you didn't even need weapons of mass destruction as a clear and present danger.

There was a very strong argument, there was a very strong UN argument for confronting Saddam Hussein, (a) because he had not lived up to the commitments in Resolution 687, which was the one which enshrined the ceasefire of the 1991 war. He had chucked out the inspectors effectively, UNSCOM, at the end of 1998, and we knew, and we still do know, because you have got this from the Iraq Survey Group, that he had the means and the will to concoct weapons of mass destruction at a later date, even if he didn't have them at the time.
I think, putting all this together, there is
a British interest in confronting him through the UN,
and we should have done it in 1999, and we couldn't do
it because, apart from anything else, the French and the
Russians wouldn't allow the Security Council to do it.
So that's where I was coming from.

It wouldn't have damaged the British interest if we
had gone to Iraq in fewer numbers. It would have
damaged our relations in the United States if we had
actively opposed what the Americans were planning. No
doubt about that, I think, and we could have done more
on issues which some in London may have regarded as
minor, but were very important to us. I'm not sure if,
in saying all that, I have said anything more than
I said the first time round.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you very much. I just wanted to
make sure I had got it straight. I have one more
question that I want to ask you, which is about the
aftermath planning, but, before I do so, perhaps I can
check whether any of my colleagues want to come in on
any of these points.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Could I just come in on this
question of whether we had an option to walk away. What
would have happened, for instance -- you, I presume, did
think of this -- if, in that speech at the
United Nations, with or without the help of teleprompter, Bush had not mentioned bringing Iraq back to the United Nations, back to the Security Council? Would we then have been able to take it any further?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I think that might have resulted in an impasse. It wasn't only we who were pushing for the UN. Putative allies, like the Spaniards, like the Italians, like the Australians, were all doing it. So the likelihood of actually that ever happening was very, very slim, but it is a hypothesis which is worth considering.

I think if Bush had decided to repudiate the UN altogether and simply to plough ahead, say, with a coalition of the willing -- something like the Kosovo operation, I suspect that would have produced a crisis for us, because I'm not at all sure that the Prime Minister would have been able to have got the thing through the House of Commons.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So it was an absolutely critical moment in this whole --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I thought it was a critical moment that Bush should agree to refer to the UN -- to refer to resolutions, and there was a period between the meeting in Camp David on 7 September and Bush's speech at the UN, which was a week later, I think actually on the
14th, where the needle swung back and forth inside the administration from one day to the next, from one morning to one afternoon to the next, you didn't know which draft of the speech was going to prevail.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When you were trying to influence where the needle stopped, were you warning that, without a reference to the Security Council, the British role in this enterprise would almost inevitably diminish?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: The way I put it was, if we don't get the UN in this speech, and we don't make a serious effort to go down the UN path, the first instance of regime change will take place in London.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That would be assuming that the Prime Minister continued with the support --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- for the policy. Perhaps he could do that. People often cite the analogy with Harold Wilson and Vietnam. Wilson didn't go to Vietnam in terms of sending British troops, but he took an awful lot of political stick for supporting the Americans in Vietnam.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Forgive me Sir Lawrence, it was a bad period in UK/US relations. Apart from anything else, President Johnson didn't like the fact that Harold Wilson smoked a pipe in the Oval Office, which
offended some canon or protocol there. But the thing
about the Anglo-American relationship, the so-called
special relationship, if you look at it since 1945, it
is not characterised by its stability, it is
characterised by its volatility, its extraordinary ups
and its extraordinary downs over that period.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I wasn't trying to get into the
historical --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: No, that's quite interesting. I'm
sorry -- no, no, all right.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is an extremely interesting
question. As a historian, I'd love to go into it, but
I'm mainly interested in the analogy of a policy of
giving support, political support, which in itself can
carry a domestic political price, and actually sending
forces.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: No, I understand that but I cannot
conceive that Prime Minister Blair, given what he had
said about Saddam Hussein back in 1998, given where he
was coming from, would have ever done a Harold Wilson,
if I can put it like that.

I think Sir Roderic's point about, you know, what
level of military support might have been an alternative
to, what was it, sending a armoured brigade, that
I think is more to the point, and I cannot envisage in
the circumstances post-9/11 that Tony Blair would have ever, in the way that Harold Wilson did, put distance between himself and the White House.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But can you imagine him pursuing the military option for the United Kingdom without reference to the United Nations, without going through the UN route?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: He had a precedent in Kosovo, which was a successful operation, which did not benefit from a Security Council resolution, but it had the informal support, effectively, of the Security Council and, subject to Sir Roderic's views, the acquiescence of the Russians. Iraq wasn't like that. So I think the short answer to your question is, it might have been mission impossible to send 50,000 British troops to Iraq without benefit of some kind of process in the Security Council. Of course, it all broke down on the question of the second resolution. So in the end we did go to Iraq without benefit of a Security Council Resolution. But there had at least been an effort.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Sir Christopher, was there a perception in the USA that the UK's participation would be inevitable? In other words, was it taken for granted?
SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Yes, it reached a stage where it was taken -- well, I was told by one -- who was a very regular contact -- it was somebody very senior in the State Department, and also I had echoes of this from the White House -- that is to say, from the National Security Council -- and I warned London about this in the middle of summer, June or July -- that we were, I thought, being taken for granted. Our support was assumed partly because we were engaged in the contingency planning on the military side, partly, I assume, from what Tony Blair had said in private to Bush at Crawford and what he had said in public the day after at College Station in his speech.

So there was an assumption that, whatever happens, the Brits are going to be there. So this goes back to the British interest point that Sir Roderic made. So I did say to London that we are being taken for granted, I have been warned by a couple of very good American contacts, and, by the way, what about air services and steel tariffs?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So what you are suggesting is that we did not use any influence that we had as positively as we could have done?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: If I can put it charitably, we underestimated the leverage at our disposal.
BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Earlier you said that you were travelling around the country a lot and there wasn't much support for the war.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: It wasn't that there was building opposition to the war, it was simply that it was quite -- and I went to four or five, maybe more, cities in six months -- there would usually be one or two a month -- and you didn't get a sort of -- a great sort of patriotic surge of people punching the air and, "Let's go get Saddam." You didn't get that, and people were quite anxious about it, anxious and cautious about it.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was that conveyed to the government here by yourself and others?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Yes, absolutely.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: And what was the reaction?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: There was no reaction. I am afraid it is in the nature of the bureaucracy that telegrams and reports sent back to headquarters do not always elicit a response.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I understand that but what I meant by "reaction" was, did anything change in practice?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Not that I could see, no.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Roderic?
SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sir Christopher, I want to go briefly into the aftermath. It is an important subject. But I know that Sir Martin has got a couple more questions that he wants to ask you before we finish.

Talking of the period in the autumn of 2002, you said in your book that post-war Iraq was a blind spot in Washington:

"The White House appeared to have bought fully into the neo-con idea that, with the overthrow of Saddam, all would be sweetness and light in Iraq with automatic benefits elsewhere in the Middle East."

Did that continue to be their view as we moved closer to the conflict? Was participation in planning for the aftermath and having a coherent plan and assessing what was likely to happen in the aftermath one of the conditions that we were trying to set -- perhaps it would be better to call them one of our desiderata -- and what actually happened in the period up to the time you left Washington?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Right. A repeated theme of Washington Embassy reporting throughout 2002 was indeed, not just at my level but other members of the staff in the embassy, telling London variously that, after Saddam, planning was a blind spot, black hole, whatever you like to say, and even in January/February 2003 it was
possible for a member of the US administration, quite
a senior guy, to say to me, "We don't even yet agree on
the concepts for the aftermath," and the most
authoritative thing I can tell you is -- and it is in
the book -- that I found myself at a dinner in
Washington sitting next to Vice-President Cheney, and we
hadn't yet had the crucial vote in the House of Commons,
and he asked me what all this meant and I said, "The
Prime Minister has significant political difficulties in
London and it is going to be difficult to get over
them," and his reaction was quite dismissive, "Well,
once you get by your political problem and we get to
Baghdad, then we will be greeted with cheers and flowers
or whatever by the population and all this will be
history, it will be past history, and you and the
President will get the credit which you deserve."

There was a significant chunk of the administration
that was not particularly concerned about the aftermath
because they thought it would come out all right on the
night. Condoleezza Rice said to me once, when we were
having a conversation about the difficulties that might
emerge after the toppling of Saddam, that the trouble
with the Europeans, that we were too snippy, too --
what's the word? -- condescending about the Iraqi
people, who were perfectly capable of running
a democratic system and we should allow them to do so, as if, you know, you remove Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party and, you know, a thousand Burkes, as it were, emerge. I was going to say something else -- but, basically, to answer your question, nothing really changed on that score.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So they remained very optimistic --
SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Sorry, can I just --
SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- and we didn't get into a lot of planning with them?
SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Well, we tried.
SIR RODERIC LYNE: I know we tried but did we succeed?
SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: No, we didn't succeed because they hadn't got their house in order. We would send teams over --
SIR RODERIC LYNE: So it never really happened?
SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Hang on, let me finish this point. It sort of happened but it wasn't enough. In the autumn and winter of 2002 teams came over from London, interagency teams, to engage the Americans on afterwards, and what they found was a fragmented American interagency reaction. We knew the State Department had been working on post-Saddam for ages. They had all kinds of terrific plans and some good people, who in the end Rumsfeld wouldn't accept on
his team. Then, of course, if you went to the
Department of Defence, you got a different story.

The problem about engaging with the Americans on
aftermath was that they themselves didn't create their
ORHA -- Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian
Assistance? -- thank you -- until February 2003.

So it wasn't for lack of trying by British
officials. I wasn't present in the meeting between
Tony Blair and George Bush, which was a very
tightly-held one in Washington on January 31 2003, when
we know from a leaked record of that meeting, which
I believe to be authentic, that the British team did say
to the President, "What about the aftermath?" to which
the response was, "Oh, it's all in hand," and that was
it; that was the full nature of the exchange. I'm not
sort of giving any scoops here because this has been out
in the public domain for at least a couple of years.

So officials did try to engage but the heart of the
matter was, at the political level we didn't insist
enough and on the American side they didn't get their
act together until very late in the day and it then
turned out the act wasn't good enough anyway, as
John Sawers and Jeremy Greenstock will, I think,
confirm.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Roderic. Sir Martin?
SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I have one last question.

To go back to the question of British influence on the administration, do you feel that, because of whatever commitment may have been made at Crawford or in the summer after Crawford, that Britain's ability, say through the Foreign Secretary, to influence the United States policy was fatally undermined or would you say that Bush's commitment to the UN route in his Security Council speech was in fact the maximum and essential acceptance of the conditions which we had laid down?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I thought the Bush speech was a very good result for us, the United Kingdom, as far as it went. It was extraordinarily emollient about the UN as a whole. It announced, incredibly enough -- this really blindsided me -- re-entry of the United States into UNESCO, which I thought was staggering.

It was a very, very good result -- and I'm in danger of repeating myself now but -- and it was the result of a lot of influences playing on the White House, including Jack Straw with Colin Powell -- though Colin Powell needed no convincing -- and a number of others.

So it was a kind of high tide, and we managed to keep the tide pretty high until the resolution itself
emerged two months after the President's speech. It
must be said that Resolution 1441 was a significant
diplomatic achievement, but it had the seeds of its own
destruction in its ambiguity, and its ambiguity was on
the crucial point of what would be the trigger for war.
The Americans interpreted it one way and everybody else
interpreted it the other way and we were kind of stuck
in the middle.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: But our input, including that of
Downing Street, on the speech of the Security Council
was really our position being accepted and --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: It was our position being accepted
but I would not say that our lobbying was decisive.
I think the meeting -- the August 5 meeting which Powell
and Rice had with the President, that was decisive, and
in fairness I must say that one of the arguments that
Colin Powell used was, "Our indispensable allies need
this." It was part of the baggage of arguments that he
presented to the President. As far as I could see, from
what I have heard, he didn't need a lot of convincing.

THE CHAIRMAN: Anything else? No? Lawrence?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just carrying on a little bit with
this question of influence, you have set out the
conditions that were sort of made at Crawford, but they
were never, sort of, red lines, in the sense that they
were announced to Parliament as such. So these were rather informal conditions. Is that fair?

Were these the best conditions that we could have set under the circumstances? I think it would have been rather difficult to lay down as a condition support for Virgin Airlines. That was something that --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Richard Branson would have liked.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I'm sure he would. So just really within the ambit of policy on Iraq, was there a way that we might have formulated the policy then so that, in a sense, by putting ourselves in a corner, it would have been understood that it was harder for the Prime Minister to move away from these conditions?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I think a key condition that should have been a red line but wasn't was that the military processes and decision-taking should be subordinate to a coherent political and diplomatic strategy.

Part of the difficulties that emerged was that, as I have said earlier on, a provisional timetable, a contingency timetable, for possible military action was set for early 2003, which was, in reality, if you were going to go through the UN, to set the cart before the horse.

So, with the benefit of hindsight -- and hindsight plays quite a big role in all of this -- I think what we
should have said was, "Let's try it through the UN, let us exhaust the UN processes, including the reintroduction of inspectors, and then, depending on what Saddam Hussein does, decide what, if anything, we are going to do militarily."

Now, of course, you can't just do it neatly like that, you have got to have some contingency planning, but I think -- and I go back to what I wrote at the time -- that it wouldn't necessarily have been a panacea, it wouldn't necessarily have solved all the contradictions and problems that arose. But if you actually planned for military action in the cool autumnal season of 2003, rather than the cool spring season of 2003, a lot of things might have been able to be unwound. But the key problem was to let the military strategy wag the political and diplomatic strategy; it should have been the other way round.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When did you become aware that the military strategy -- the timetable was so firmly in place, because it did move a bit during the course of 2002?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Yes, what you've got, what you started to hear quite soon was, "All our contingency planning is premised on doing Iraq in -- " The month January kept popping up. Then, after the summer
break of 2002 -- and I stress this was contingency. I am not somebody who believes that an operational decision was taken in April 2002 or September of 2002. And then I began to hear in October of 2002, suitably at the Trafalgar Night dinner in the embassy, when masses of American military turn up -- I began to hear that January doesn't work because we are not ready and we've got this problem with the Turks. So the thing started to go back -- February -- and in the end it turned out to be March.

So it was a sliding scale but it was on a sliding scale within a very narrow bracket actually.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And how much understanding was there between Britain and the United States that this was an effective deadline? Were the British able to say, "It would help if you could push it back at least until late April?" Was there any discussions of that sort?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: One of the most signal discussions, I think, was when Tony Blair came to Washington on January 31 2003, and he was seeking delay because I think we weren't militarily ready, and he wanted his time for a second Security Council Resolution, which at that time didn't look unachievable, and I remember sending a telegram the night before, saying, "On these two points you haven't won the argument yet. You are
going to have to say to the President, 'I need a delay and I need a second Security Council Resolution.'"

And to be fair, he got the Americans to make an attempt at a second Security Council Resolution but again the Americans were being pressed by Aznar, the Spanish Prime Minister, by Berlusconi, by John Howard down in Australia, and there was a delay, until March 20th, but the delay was not because we argued for it, it was because the American military said, "Hell, we can't do this thing actually until March 20."

But, strategically speaking, it didn't matter whether it was in January or in March. If you believe, as I do, that it should have been wrapped into a coherent political and diplomatic strategy, he would have gone for the autumn.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to conclude this, in a way maybe he got the worst of both worlds: he got a return to the Security Council but without the time to work it all through, under this constant pressure and an awareness that the military build-up was taking place.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I think that is what happened and it goes back to what I said earlier, that it turned Resolution 1441 on its head and we found ourselves -- instead of trying to get Saddam Hussein to prove his innocence, we found ourselves in the intolerable
position of having to try to prove his guilt by finding
weapons of mass destruction before the military
deadline, which proved impossible.
SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: My very final point: at this meeting
in January 31 -- you have mentioned already that the
aftermath issue came up there. We have had a lot of
discussion of the worst case on the weapons of mass
destruction, which turned out to be completely wrong.
You've also now indicated a best case on what would
happen after the war.
Was there any sense, any concept at all, of just how
awful it could be, or do you think this was just
outside of everybody's --
SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Sorry, how awful what --
SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just how awful the aftermath could
be in the discussions in Washington or around at the
time?
SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I think the worry at the time was
that there would be some kind of humanitarian disaster,
and the initial work of the ORHA under General
Jay Garner was very much focused on that: refugees and
stuff like that. No, this argument about were there or
weren't there weapons of mass destruction will go
backwards and forwards, I suspect, until the end of
time, but American and British troops wouldn't have been
equipped with anti-chemical weapons defences if there
hadn't been a very strong fear, however ill-founded,
that Saddam could respond with these weapons.

What just disappeared from the calculations was the
understanding that, after Saddam was toppled, you were
going to have to maintain law and order and guarantee
the continuity of the central services; otherwise, you
would lose the Iraqi population very rapidly, and that
was discussed. But when it happened, when the invasion
happened, when Baghdad was captured, the division, the
US army division that was there, didn't do that because
it didn't have any orders to do that, and, you know,
there are other witnesses who will be coming before you
who are much better informed on this than I am. I only
know what I have read about that because I retired at
the end of February.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thanks very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have just got a few wrap-up points,
Sir Christopher, rather all over the space that we have
been occupying this morning. But the first one comes
from what has just been discussed, and that's whether,
looking at the timing decision by the United States to
go in early 2003, whether it is January or March or
whatever, military momentum is clearly a major component
of that broad timing decision, and we will hear a lot
more from other witnesses about that.
There are, however, some signs, aren't there, that
the American military or people within the American
military at a responsible level believed they could
fight a summer war, if indeed it wasn't held over until
the autumn. It wasn't an absolutely no-no that you had
to go at the end of March or not go. But is that your
understanding?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: It is my understanding, and the
reason why I have said autumn is because in the
following year, in 2004, there would be a presidential
election campaign.

THE CHAIRMAN: You have brought me exactly to the question
I was going to put.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: And I thought, hang on, if one is
trying to buy time in all of this, how much time can you
buy. So I went to the great guru, a chap known as the
president's brain, Karl Rove, and I said, "How far can
this be put back?" And he said, "End of 2003, latest."
He might have said January 2004. "Otherwise," he said,
"We will get embroiled in the presidential election
campaign and the President will be accused of using the
war to win an election."

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. But the decision on early 2003 is not
driven by the domestic US political timetable.
SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I don't think so. Actually I don't know where it came from, to be perfectly frank with you. It may have been a purely military planning operation.

THE CHAIRMAN: Or just the inertia of military preparation.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Yes, it could be, I don't know.

THE CHAIRMAN: Right, okay.

Two other points, one partly connected with the post-war planning. But you said that in effect the British Prime Minister had more leverage than the British Government exerted in effect, both before and indeed in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion, and Sir Lawrence raised this enticing question as to whether, had the British Prime Minister been more explicit about his conditions, would that, as it were, have made it easier to enforce them or to exact a price?

The other, though, is timing, and I think I took from what you were saying that really the persuasive, the influential, effect in 2002 came in too late, if you are looking at, for example, much more careful and detailed aftermath planning, that the British influence on it would have had to be exerted by the summer of 2002 at the latest to get something really serious up and running. Is that right?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Yes. I can't give a categorical answer to that. I don't believe that it would have been
impossible if we started this in the autumn. But had we
an interlocutor who had got their act together -- I think if
the Americans had their act together in
September/October and we did likewise, then you could
have done it. I'm not trying to make a party political
point here whatsoever but quite often, when I think
about this, I think: what would Margaret Thatcher have
done? She would have insisted on a clear -- I take her
name in vain, for Pete's sake, I may be hit with
a thunderbolt, but I think she would have insisted on
a clear, coherent political/diplomatic strategy and
I think she would have demanded the greatest clarity
about what the heck happened if and when we removed
Saddam Hussein.

THE CHAIRMAN: On the aftermath planning, looking into the
content or the substance of it, is it right to suppose
that the de-ba'athification element of it, which had
itself, arguably, catastrophic consequences, was really
a reaction in April by Bremer to the breakdown in
security rather than the precipitating cause. Can you
comment on that at all?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: It is slightly beyond my time.

THE CHAIRMAN: If it is outside, then --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: It is outside my -- I have a view

but I left the service on February 28th. That's my
THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, but you were there in the run-up. So if you have a view, let us know.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: A number of parallels were thrown into the discussion. One was MacArthur in Japan, the other was what we did in Germany after 1945. People were looking for parallels, and I remember somebody from the NSC saying to me in January, "Clearly, we are going to have to get rid of the top people, Saddam's henchmen, but we can't de-ba'athify completely, otherwise there will be no administration in Iraq and no school teachers and no nothing and we are going to need some of these people."

THE CHAIRMAN: That's important to hear, thank you, because there was awareness then, at least in some parts --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Yes, but the argument was lost.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay, okay.

Moving back to something quite different, you said earlier this morning that in your view the declared formal United Kingdom policy on a containment was in effect over by spring/summer of 2002. We have had other witness testimony to argue that it was and remained the policy, at least until late in 2002. Looking back at it, where do you think that line should be drawn?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I can't do that. The trouble is,
I can't -- I think this in itself is a comment on the importance, the salience, of that issue: I can't really remember ever in 2002 going in to see somebody senior in the administration and still arguing about containment. I think its death twitches may have lasted quite a long time but I don't remember ever doing this.

THE CHAIRMAN: But basically it is not a time point, it is just an evolution?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Yes. Nowhere in the briefing that I remember sending to Tony Blair before the Crawford meeting.

THE CHAIRMAN: Right. A quite different point, but you gave us evidence earlier about the relationship between interlocutors on either side of the Atlantic. There is an asymmetry, of course, in the situation, but as I understand it, the Number 10 foreign affairs adviser relationship with the head of the National Security Council had worked through different personalities and times.

In the Bush administration the great influence of Vice-President Cheney did not lend itself to a natural bilateral relationship with either the Foreign Secretary or the Prime Minister. So how was that going to be managed? How was it managed?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Well, the answer is -- I say this in
all due modesty: the answer is me really, not -- sorry, let me back up a bit. You are absolutely right, institutionally, if you have got a very powerful Vice-President --

THE CHAIRMAN: Which is hugely unusual.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: -- which is unusual. I remember saying to London quite early on in the administration, "This may be the most powerful Vice-President ever." I mean, his institutional opposite number was the Deputy Prime Minister. This -- how can I put it? -- was an unbalanced relationship and probably didn't reap the dividends that institutionally we might have hoped and expected.

What we did instead -- Jack Straw used to see Cheney.

THE CHAIRMAN: You mentioned --

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Whenever he came to Washington, he saw Cheney. The Prime Minister saw Cheney on the first visit in February 2001, and Cheney, most importantly, was at the Camp David meeting on 7 September 2002.

For the rest, in between I would see the Vice-President from time to time. But a very good contact was his Chief of Staff, Scooter Libby, and my staff in the embassy had very close contacts with the next layer down, particularly a chap called John Hannah,
and Eric Edelman, who were strong neo-con hawks. That's the way we put our fix into the Vice-President's office and took stuff out.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That's helpful. So there was a conduit of communication?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Oh, absolutely.

THE CHAIRMAN: Right.

I have got a couple of final remarks after we close the evidence, but just before I do that, are there any particular points that you had wanted to put in evidence this morning that there has not been an opportunity to do?

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I don't think so. My mind is slightly mushy at the moment.

THE CHAIRMAN: It has been a long morning.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: I just think I would like to go back to something which I asked if I could say, which is to remind people that on the matter of Iraq, on the whole question of unilateralism versus multilateralism, which is the sort of philosophical discussion one has about the British/American relationship sometimes or the Americans' role in the world, there is more of a continuum here with previous administrations before George W than maybe the Democratic Party and the Republican Party would be willing to admit.
There was a lot of continuity with some of the stuff that Clinton did. Clinton and Bush, very, very different, but I just think that it would be wrong to see the Bush administration simply as an unusual and atypical aberration that suddenly appeared on the scene. It is not like that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

That brings this session to a close.

Sir Christopher referred to a number of telegrams or other communications not made available to him from the FCO archive. Just to say, we shall, of course, be pursuing that, to ensure that, assuming that there is a documentary survival, we shall have those in the vast amount of information we have already got and to which is still being added.

That concludes the first of our sessions on the Anglo/US dimension, and tomorrow we pursue the same theme with Sir Jeremy Greenstock as our witness in the morning, both, of course, on the United States and the interlocking, interrelated United Nations aspect.

With that, I thank everybody who has spent time here this morning and our witness. Thank you.

SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER: Thank you very much.

(12.33 pm)

(The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am the following day)