THE CHAIRMAN: Let us begin the last session of quite a long day and welcome to our two witnesses, Air Chief Marshal Sir Brian Burridge and Lieutenant General Robin Brims as, in essence, commanders in the field during the invasion, if that's a fair summary of the roles.

I would like in a moment, if I may, to invite each of you just to describe exactly, for accuracy, what the role was. But by way of preamble, we have now heard a number of witnesses discussing the events which led up to the decision to take military action against Iraq in 2003, and the purpose of this session is essentially to hear about the invasion itself.

Operations against Iraq began on 20 March, and while this session covers a relatively brief period of the United Kingdom's total engagement up to around the middle of May 2003, it is of course a seminal event, even a central event in the course of our involvement.

So what we will like to do is to cover the planning and build-up to the invasion from your perspectives, then the invasion itself, which is widely regarded as having been a military success, and the transition once it was clear that the Saddam regime was gone, to what I think is technically known as Phase 4, aftermath operations.
We recognise, as we have throughout this Inquiry so far, that witnesses are giving evidence based on their recollection of events. We, of course, check what we hear against the voluminous stack of papers to which we have access and which are still coming in.

I remind every witness that they will later be asked to sign a transcript of their evidence to the effect that the evidence they have given a truthful, fair and accurate.

If, gentlemen, you would very kindly describe your roles at the material time, that would help.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I was, from February 2002 the Deputy Commander in Chief at Strike Command of the Royal Air Force. As such, one of the UK's three three-star commanders, operational commanders.

In April 2002, I was designated as the joint operational commander in waiting. I will explain.

From 9/11, the UK had positioned a three-star officer at CentCom, at Headquarters CentCom in Tampa. The first was the then Air Marshal Jock Stirrup, now the CDS, for three months until January 2002. The second was the then Lieutenant General Cedric Delves for three months until the beginning of April.

At that point Afghanistan had stabilised to the
extent that the UK took the view that they would put
a permanent two-star officer there, who you have already
taken evidence from, and in the eventuality of needing
greater horsepower there would be a three-star
warned-off in readiness. I was that three-star.

Then in October of 2002, I was designated by the
Chiefs of Staff's Committee as the UK's national
contingent commander for any operations that might take
place in Iraq.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. General Brims?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I was the general officer commanding
the First (UK) Armoured Division. I took up that appointment
in November 2000 and I would have, under normal
circumstances, handed it over at January/February 2003,
but I stayed on in post and handed over in the middle of
May 2003.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. With that preamble, I will ask
Sir Martin Gilbert to open the questions. Martin?

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Sir Brian, I wonder if you would tell
us about your relationship with General Franks, when it
began and when you first began to discuss Iraq planning
with him?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Okay. I first met
General Franks in this guise on 17 April 2002. I went
across to Tampa to conduct my handover from
General Delves and part of that was to meet the senior
staff at CentCom and General Franks himself.

We had a discussion of more than an hour ranging
particularly across Afghanistan, and I think four points
stick in my mind. The first was he was honest enough to
say that he had not been impressed by the quality of
joint warfare amongst the American armed forces in
Afghanistan post-9/11.

The second thing he said, and with which I agreed,
was that we had reached something of a plateau in
Afghanistan. Militarily we had secured the country and
with the help of Northern Alliance removed the Taliban.
But in terms of capacity building, in terms of the
restoration of the closest thing to normal life, we had
reached a plateau. I agreed with that, but then he said
we need some sort of interagency process to sort this
out.

That rather reverberated in my antennae. We, the US
and ourselves, had been through a number of operations
together in the Balkans since the early 1990s and
certainly the lessons from Bosnia was that any nation
that has been through the sort of disruption that
Afghanistan has been through would need the
reconstruction of institutions ranging from the
judiciary and a legal code right through to air traffic
control. So I was somewhat surprised by the statement as if this was something being discovered anew.

We moved on to Iraq only briefly. We were discussing in particular the No Fly Zones. You may recall that at that stage the Iraqis were being quite robust in seeking to entice coalition aircraft into what we regarded as SAM traps, surface-to-air missile traps, and we discussed that at some length. And then I said what are your thoughts about intervention in Iraq, and he said there is always an if, but it is true to say that the US armed forces, particularly the US air force, need about 18 months to reconstitute, rebuild weapons stocks, retrain, et cetera.

And subsequently I spent a fair amount of time in Tampa, I guess four or five occasions in 2002, getting to know him very well. And, of course, from over the period of late December we spent two weeks together in Qatar in Exercise Internal Look, the rehearsal exercise or simulation. Then subsequently we put our headquarters side by side from 7 February until I handed over command on 7 May.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Going back to the summer of 2002, when you began to talk about Iraq in some detail, what in particular did you feel the Americans wanted from us? Were there specific commitments that they would like us
to make? What level of commitment?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: General Franks came through London, as I recall, in mid May and he had an informal meeting with the Chiefs of Staff, at which I was present. And at that point he said something along the lines of in terms of Iraq, it is not if but when, and that was really the first time I had heard him say anything with that degree of certainty.

In terms – and he added that – in very non-specific terms, we very much hope the UK will be alongside us.

We then – it was probably late June – when we started at the operational headquarters of the single services, Land Command, Strike Command and Fleet. We created compartments of a very few people, ten people in the case of Strike Command, to begin options planning for Iraq.

At the Permanent Joint Headquarters likewise they -- or at least I only became aware of it when I was indoctrinated into that compartment in June. At that point the options being studied were relatively straightforward, in that there could be a role simply for the indigenous forces that we already had in theatre, bearing in mind Operation Resinate was running, which involved air forces and naval forces and potentially the addition of some special forces. There
could be an option which consisted of a medium- to
large-scale air component, then the third option would
be all of that plus a division.

Then - I suppose towards July/August it became clear
that the campaign plan that CentCom had in mind had
northern access from Turkey, southern access from
Kuwait. The southern access from Kuwait was familiar
territory to them. It was a contingency plan that they
had worked in detail. The access from the north was
less familiar.

I think it was explained to you that the boundary
between European Command and Central Command was,
indeed, the northern boundary between Turkey and Iraq.
So --

THE CHAIRMAN: Can I just interject? I'm sorry, you
mentioned Operation Resinate. That was what?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Policing the No Fly
Zones and sanctions monitoring.

THE CHAIRMAN: Including the embargo, as it were?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Correct. And that
was the UK name for it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Sorry to interrupt.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: So it became clear
that if there was to be a northern access, it would be
welcomed if the UK would provide the division to come
down from the north. The force mix that they had in mind at that stage was to use the marines from the south, which was a role that they had certainly planned and worked into alongside 5 Corps and then the 4 Infantry Division. And the "I" gives it a way, it is a light division -- from the north and then there was the need for a heavy UK division. So that was what formulated in their minds.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: When the division was being formulated, that concept, in terms of not if but when, were particular windows of opportunity being discussed and was there a sort of optimum timetable for action already under consideration?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: To the best I can recollect, the period of early 2002 was in their planning horizon. Again, this slightly surprised me because not three months before I had had a conversation with General Franks talking about 18 months to recuperate.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In early 2003?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Sorry, early 2003, yes, sorry.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Can you tell us something about the importance of the exercise that you mentioned, which was conducted with General Franks at CentCom just before
Christmas 2002?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Indeed. Bear in mind that at this stage all of our participation and planning was without commitment and that was made absolutely clear to General Franks, and he accepted that.

It wasn't a matter of him winking at me and saying, yes, but we know you will be there on the day. It was absolutely clear that the UK had a view about the process that needed to be gone through.

In December, we both deployed our headquarters to Qatar. He deployed a very large headquarters, part of his Tampa set-up, with its own specially built information technology, command and control system. I deployed the headquarters staff that I was given -- and I perhaps need to digress.

In UK doctrine, we hold as part of the Permanent Joint Headquarters a Joint Force Headquarters, normally led at one-star level, of 40 people who can move very quickly and go and work in Sierra Leone or anywhere else at small scale. For this large-scale operation they formed the core of my headquarters and I added to it with a significant number of augmentees. So I had a headquarters with life-support of about 240 people in Qatar.

We formed our headquarters ready for Exercise
Internal Look in December.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What were the respective American and British perspectives with regard to the exercise?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Sorry, what was the?

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Our different perspectives.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Right. If we were going to participate, our end state would have been --

was to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. The strategic end state for the US was to effect regime change. That may sound a neat point, but it is significant in gaining strategic alignment between two capitals.

But the exercise was created as a command post exercise to allow us to ensure our connectivity and our coherence one up, so to our national capitals, and one down, to our contingent and component commanders.

And the exercise was conducted using generic capabilities for the forces involved and three slices of activity were looked at in some detail. One I recall with clarity was early collapse. You may know that we were essentially looking at three possibilities:

A complete and early collapse of the regime; an almost sequential collapse like a pack of dominoes or pack of cards; or Fortress Baghdad, which would have led to something not unlike a Stalingrad or a Grozny probably
even better.

And we looked at three slices of activity along those sorts of scenarios to assess the effectiveness of the campaign plan as well as our ability to deploy decisions into our components. So it allowed us to look at the nature of the targeting, the degree of -- dreadful word -- kinetic activity that we were inspiring, the degree to which we would each meet our own objectives. And maybe I should just talk about UK objectives for a moment.

The overall mission that Franks saw for himself was to conduct offensive operations in Iraq to overthrow the Iraqi regime and -- the order is quite important -- then eliminate WMD capability and eliminate the regime's threat to the Iraqi people, and then eliminate Iraq's threat to the region and to the US. Then the last sentence: conduct follow-on operations to facilitate the transition from peace to war.

That would be effected by producing as many problems in time and space simultaneously for the regime to deal with, such that they couldn't comprehend them and couldn't react to them, hence the northern and southern axis and hence high manoeuvre warfare with a lot of embedded air power.

Fine. From the UK point of view, I recognised --
and most of my command colleagues recognised -- that there was in the circumstances without a second UNSCR -- and bear in mind we didn't know whether there would be a second -- there could be a set of circumstances in which the only participants in this would be Australia and the UK and the US. We were, therefore, major stakeholders in the end state of Phase 3 -- and I have no objection to talking about phases.

But the international community would judge their amenability to participate in Phase 4 by what had happened in Phase 3. So we wanted to be sure that we made it clear both that the Iraqi people were not the subject of our intent, but the regime; that we would be extremely careful with our targeting so as to avoid making reconstruction and the capacity building of the country more difficult; and set the tone, as it were, because in this case we are fighting amongst the people and the people will draw conclusions about this force that is in front of them from the nature of the violence that they commit. It is as simple as that.

So that was the test case for analysing the exercise.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Is that what you had in mind when you told the House of Commons Defence Select Committee in June 2003 that many of General Franks's staff -- the
words you used were:

"... would regard us as their conscience"?

What did that mean? Is that essentially what you have just been saying?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Yes, essentially that.

There are two aspects in that we use a different approach to targeting. We are absolutely doctrinally rigid. We use a template called strategy to task to target. So that we can show an audit trail, and are required to show an audit trail, from any target back to the strategy, thereby passing through all the aspects of the law of armed conflict such as discrimination, military necessity, et cetera. We are required to do that for our law officers in this country and we go through that process with every target.

US colleagues were new to that as a discipline and they did recognise the value of it because it made -- it made the dialogue with the international community a little easier.

Secondly, in being the conscience, as it were, quite often there will be nuances even amongst the same operational team on the front bench at CentCom. So someone who is able to say actually, to me, it looks a bit like this -- and I do remember on a couple of
occasions saying, "General, that may look okay in Washington, but let me just tell you how it might look in London or, more so, Berlin or Paris or wherever". It is not to say they needed reining in, it is just to get these nuances right they needed the input from someone perhaps whose perspective was a little different.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Did you find them receptive to your perspective?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: General Franks was gracious enough to say I had too many lawyers. On a few occasions I took the trouble to explain why I had deduced that which I had deduced over certain sorts of targets, the use of certain sorts of weapons, so I think it is fair to say that at least they took note.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you. Can I just ask now about -- and this refers also to General Brims -- when you knew that we would be having to give up the Turkish option, the northern option, and go to the south and how this affected our planning. How did it impact really on the preparations?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: If I can start and then General Robin will fill in a lot of detail.

First of all, logistically the lines of communication through Turkey were difficult -- 600, 700 kilometres, mountainous roads -- but it was an
aspect that NATO knew well the US would support in terms
of logistic movement. It was doable, but I saw it as
complicated.

The south logistically was easier but more crowded.
Basing for aircraft was going to be difficult because we
needed to move the focus to southern airfields and it is
not only ramp space, but things as prosaic as the
distribution of fuel. Prince Sultan Air Base in
Saudi Arabia was pumping 4.5 million litres of aviation
fuel a day. Even Cyprus was pumping 550,000. These are
big numbers. So there would be a complexity of
compression.

Also on the logistics side by the time the decision
had been made our logistic shipping, some of it had
sailed, so we needed to divert that. On the other hand,
coming in from the south gave us the prospects of a
defined area, the UK box. That had certain advantages
from the point of view of, again, logistics because it
wouldn't stretch our lines, it would give us a degree of
autonomy, which would allow us at least to be masters of
our own destiny in terms of setting the tone in that
part of Iraq.

It also in a sense provided a less complex problem
for Phase 4, but what it did mean is Phase 4 for the UK
would start the minute we crossed the start line. So
the minute we crossed into southern Iraq, the General's forces were in their box and that village that they just passed is now in Phase 4 and that's why some people find it difficult to talk about Phase 4. But, you know, that is a fact.

Now, they were the overriding complexities, but the General, no doubt, will give you the details on planning.

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I was first brought into the planning in September 2002, but for the northern option, as it was known, and I was then instructed that I should start making a plan for what became the southern option. I think it was 2 or 3 January 2003.

And from the analysis that had been made ahead of me, (inaudible) I was given the force of 7 Armoured Brigade, 16 Air Assault Brigade and 3 Commando Brigade -- 3 Commando Brigade, which was already, as described, somewhat involved in earlier planning. And we conducted the estimate on the first weekend in January 2003 and I did it with the divisional headquarters staff and, unusually, did it with the commanders and key staff of those brigades and, indeed, the joint helicopter force commander who was also allocated to me, and with the commander of 102 Logistic Brigade who was in fact a joint asset under the national
contingent commander but was in direct support of land
operations. And we conducted the estimate which I then
reported back to the Permanent Joint Headquarters and,
indeed, to the Commander-in-Chief Land, because I was
still at that stage under command of the
Commander-in-Chief Land.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were these the right forces for the
task which you had been set in the new area of
operations?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: Yes, they were. In the whole planning
process -- and you would have the description to you of
what ended up as a box where UK could have effect -- the
size of the box and the tasks associated with it were
being -- there was give and take between the forces
available and the tasks.

So I thought that was a wholly respectable way of
doing it, so, yes.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Finally, before I pass on to
Sir Lawrence, how did you describe the readiness of your
force at the moment the action was to begin?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: We were ready. Readiness was described
prior to the any date being given. It was decided by
myself with the UK chain of command, and then with the
US, that when two battle groups of 7 Brigade, who were
the last brigade to deploy into Kuwait -- when two
battle groups were ready, then the division would declare itself ready, because with the two other brigades, 3 Commando and 16 Air Assault Brigade, which were already ready, with the two battle groups of 7 Armoured Brigade, we had sufficient to be able to meet the mission and tasks set to us.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: From what date was that readiness clear to you?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I can't quite remember. I think readiness was declared some time around 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 March. I can't remember the precise date.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I was going to come to this later but you are in this at the moment. In terms of normal preparations for a battle or a war, but in terms of what you would have expected, would you have liked your forces to have spent more time in theatre before they actually had to go into battle?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: From the point of view -- are you asking the question from the point of view of having equipment ready or the point of view of having more planning time or mission rehearsal, or all three?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: All three.

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: All three? The answer is yes, I would. And I guess most military commanders would answer like
that.

On the one hand, the need to get on with the operation was quite clear to me and I think that was being described already from the coalition perspective -- secondly, we had a force building up very publicly in Kuwait and it was a very rich target for the use of a weapon of mass destruction which could then change over who had the initiative. And thirdly, the longer it was left, the hotter it would become and fighting combat operations in the heat of Iraqi summer potentially in full protective clothing was very unattractive.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Could you have done it?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: Yes, but I would have preferred not to have done it. I think -- I'm not sure that I would like to have done it in July and August. But if you had been --

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Maybe May and June.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I should just add something from the point of view of the other components.

The amphibious task group arrived in theatre in good order. It has its own indigenous logistics. It had worked up. It had done some practice landings in Kuwait and it was ready, and it was ready by the beginning
of March. And my concern was whether they would be able
to maintain that readiness.

Air forces roused in pretty much in the middle
of February and they had worked up. So they were ready,
and further time would not necessarily have generated
any greater military capability.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about in terms of things that
we have heard about, for example, the tracking system
and getting body armour to troops and things like this?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: We had broken the readiness and
preparation time which are the assumptions that we work
in under normal planning. We had done more and faster
to get ourselves ready to deploy. And in the process of
doing that there was an awful lot that had to be done in
a proper sequence. For example, we had to up armour on
tanks and that has to be done in a set sequence, and
then you need to be able to test fire them before you
can use them.

That all had to be done in a very short amount of
time. Additionally, we had to get into the -- into
Kuwait sufficient items of equipment, body armour being
perhaps one of the most publicly known about, and other
items of equipment. You then had to issue to the
troops, making sure that you had got the -- fitting tall
people, short people and so forth. And that is very
difficult to do and I was aware -- for example, of body
armour, I was fully aware that there was a problem with
the body armour and I ordered a redistribution of body
armour to those people most in need, and similarly some
other forms of equipment.

But to go back to your first question,
notwithstanding that, we were ready because I knew that
the troops understood the concept of operations that we
were going to conduct. That was very clear to me. And
although we had some shortcomings in equipment, the type
of operation that we planned to conduct and our
assessments of Iraqi armed forces and, indeed, their
likely courses of action led me to believe that we were
ready.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In a sense, this goes back to
something that we heard, I think, from Lord Boyce: that
the assumption was that the Iraqis would fight no better
than they had fought in 1991, possibly even less
effectively, and this gave us in a sense a margin that
we might not expect against other opponents. Is that
fair?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I think that's a fair assessment of his
conventional forces and certainly those in the south.

I think some of his specialist conventional forces
around Baghdad, we would probably assess to be able to
fight a bit more.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But we weren't expecting to be taking them on?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: No, but we did expect unconventional forces, we did anticipate the unconventional forces to show, which they did.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If the enemy had been more accomplished and with better equipment, you might not have been so comfortable to say --

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: Oh, indeed, absolutely.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If you don't mind going back to little bit to 2002, both of you taking over in the autumn of 2002, Sir Brian, you have mentioned the assumption of an armoured division coming in from the north and we have talked a bit about the north. But there were other packages that were being considered.

Were you aware that it was as likely, or certainly possible, that a much lesser package perhaps involving a brigade rather than a division was something that -- was all you might be able to offer to the Americans?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: In October of 2002, if you had asked me to lay money, I would have said package 2, just an air and indigenous naval and special forces.

We looked at the campaign design that might take
only one UK division -- one UK brigade latched on to 4 Infantry Division coming out of the north. There were two complexities there: one that the 4 Infantry Division was a digital division and plugging a non-digital brigade into it would have had complexities -- not impossible, but it would have had complexities. And secondly, given that the line of approach which is essentially one division plus, coming down from the north with the green line on the left, and four, potentially five, Republican Guard divisions on that green line, it left you --

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The green line, just explain?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: With Kurdistan -- would leave you very light on the flank, and that was an assessment of risk that I think I myself would have articulated strongly to my command chain. That was an aspect of risk which was beyond our proper appetite.

If we were going to do that, we needed to do it heavy.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And how much did CentCom understand that -- you said that they realised they may get nothing at all -- but that there were these different options being discussed in London?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Yes. I mean, they were reasonably -- I'm trying to recall the statement
that they received in August, but it made it clear that
they should -- there would be a menu of options which
we, the UK, would consider.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So though they had expressed -- you
suggest -- a preference for an armoured division coming
in from the north, they knew they couldn't rely on this?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Yes, absolutely.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: They were not taking it for granted?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: They were not taking
it for granted.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was it fair to say, or perhaps you
can just describe -- because you have given us one quite
interesting factor in discussing the attractions of the
different options to the UK -- to the United Kingdom,
the vulnerability that the brigade might have. What
were the other factors that were weighing in terms of
the preference for package 2 or package 3?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Risk and cost.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And package 3 would obviously be the
costly one.

    Can I ask -- perhaps this is more a question to
General Brims -- the logistics issue, we have had some
discussion of a reluctance to have overt logistical
preparations. How difficult did this make your task?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: As described, you have broken the
readiness planning assumption and you are not allowed to
do some ordering of equipment, it means that things are
going to be coming in at quite short notice to be
distributed in the manner I have described.

I think it is also reasonable to say over a period
of time before we even deployed, I was very aware, as
the commander of UK First Armoured Division, that our
logistic supply particularly for our armoured formations
was drawn very taut, and the sustainability of then
conducting operations was constrained by the amount of
logistics that we could flow in. So that was prior to
the actual deployment. That was a state that we have
been reporting in our normal life, and sometimes we
referred to it, sometimes as -- sometimes we were
hollowed out, and we had to do quite a lot of
backfilling in order to get ourselves to the readiness
we were at.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And you describe how in the start
of January you were given in a sense a new requirement
to come through the south. It seems very late in the
day, I mean, that the difficulties with the northern
option had so impressed themselves that you were now
asked to look at the south because, as far as we can
tell, the warnings that the Turks might not go along
with this were evident from quite early on.
AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I agree. I think we were complacent about the ease with which the new Turkish government -- and they were new in every sense of the word because many were brand new MPs -- I think we were complacent over the likelihood of their acquiescence.

If you remember the political situation at the time, the UK was advancing their case particularly strongly for EU membership. So whether that acted as a factor in our believing this was possible, but with the benefit of hindsight I think it would have been unlikely that they would have agreed in the timescale that we had in mind.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So this meant that you were given quite a challenge in early -- sorry, in early January to suddenly turn this round and think about quite a different operational concept?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: The operational concept was more or less the same. The start point and the direction was -- direction advanced was different, but the planning that we had done when we were thinking about the northern options was fairly generic. But it gave me the opportunity to really understand the overall plan from General Franks, to meet all the other commanders, and so it was -- yes, I felt that I was quite involved and, therefore, the switch to the south was okay.
I should point out that, as -- although I was the --
nationally I was the Land Component Commander, in the
tactical sense I was a two-down tactical commander
because I reported to the commander of 1 Marine
Expeditionary Force, Lieutenant General Jim Conway. He
reported to the coalition Land Component Commander,
Lieutenant General David McKiernan, and he then reported
to General Franks alongside which Brian was.

So I was in a slightly different position, certainly
relative to the Royal Navy, the Royal Air Force component commanders.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I would just make two
points on the complexity. The complexity of manoeuvre
was much less in the south because we were constrained
in a box, and although initially it's classic manoeuvre
warfare, it wasn't as though we were seeking to do it over
a very long axis.

The second, of course, the integration task
virtually went away because the General's integration
requirements with the Marine Expeditionary Force were
time bound, and so after three or four days then it was
an indigenous UK force.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the consequences of the move
to the south, at least as has been discussed in some of
the papers of 2002, was that it made it much more likely
that we would have a sector of our own to look after,
because the north was sort of autonomous in a way
already. And, therefore, it would give us more
responsibilities in that area.

Was that something you were cranking into your
planning?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I was aware, even right at the start in
the north -- I was not clear what the post-conflict
activity was going to be. And when I made my plan to
come from the south, I reported then that I still didn't
know what the post-conflict activity was going to be. I
didn't know what we were going to be called and to whom
we were going to report.

It seemed to me this was a void. I was told in
eyearly January, "Don't worry, there is a plan". Over
time it was clear to me that there wasn't, and
I continued to report it. In the end, we -- as I often
say to people, you have to play the hand you are dealt.
So we had to make the best plan that we could with what
we had for our bit of the Phase 4.

And at that stage, bearing in mind, as we came into
the Al Faw peninsula and into Umm Qasr and captured
them, both places with went straight into Phase 4. So
we had to make a plan and we had to get on with it. But
it was in isolation, I regret to have to say, of a wider
campaign, which was not present.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You were looking to the
United States for this wider plan or were you looking to
London for this wider plan?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I would look to both.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You would look to both.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: We essentially
devised a plan that would buy us time in the expectation
that the Phase 4 plan would catch up.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was that expectation realised?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: No, it wasn't.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We will come on to that again in
a moment. Can I just finish on the period up to
20 March?

The other consequence of going through the south was
that in a sense the Americans had to make room for you
in some sort of way. Was it also the case that the
Americans became more dependent for that reason,
I suppose, on our contribution?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Well, I'll just speak
from a campaign perspective and then the General again
will pick up the detail. But first of all, we provided
somewhere between 25/30 per cent of the armour coming
into Iraq.

It is true to say that we did not share 25 per cent
of the risk, but nevertheless that was a potent force
and the requirement in that part of the campaign was to
provide flank protection from the regular army
divisions, one of whom was actually an armoured division
and reasonably capable, who were lodged on the Iranian
border.

So as the Marine Expeditionary Force steamed north,
then there was a need to protect their flank and that
was the nature of the initial task.

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: Indeed, our principal task was to
protect the flank of the US forces as they advanced up
towards Baghdad. We did -- they did have to adjust
their plans to accommodate us in the south, they were
extremely generous in every respect in accommodating us
and they were responsive to some trading, as I said
earlier on, to make sure that the mission and the tasks
set to us matched the forces that we actually had.

So I think that was a very clear and very successful
part of it.

And, therefore, as well as the flank protection, we
also had to seize and protect the oil infrastructure,
and stopping the oil infrastructure being damaged,
willfully damaged, was a key concern.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: As it had been in 1991.

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: Yes, from the experience in 1991. And
we would have to be in the Al Faw because that's
actually the critical bit where the manifolds are that
take oil to tankers out to sea, and we had to capture
the port of Umm Qasr.
So with all that -- and there was a key bit of oil
infrastructure at Az Zubayr, which also had to be captured
and held.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: My final question for a moment. We
have heard from Lord Boyce, confirmed by Desmond Bowen,
that the United States, Central Command was waiting to
get the results of our Parliamentary vote and that our
actual participation was not confirmed until the last
moment, and he would have been quite ready to stand you
down.

I would be interested first, was that your
understanding, and secondly, given what we have just
heard, how would you explain this then to the Americans
and what would have been the effect on their ability to
move forward as quickly as they did?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: First of all, that
was absolutely the case. I was in no way convinced we
would do this until the last minute. If we were not
able to participate, they would have had to re-orientate
the air campaign to give more integration into their
manoeuvre from the air. Their advance would have been
slower and they would have -- as they did, bypass Baghdad, but one wonders when they would -- sorry, bypass Basra. One wonders when they would have got back to Basra.

So it would have been a difficult problem for them. But they had a plan, known as the Generated Start, in any event which saw the Marine Expeditionary Force coming up from the south and punching north and then being reinforced on a single axis by 5 Corps. So they did have a plan to fall back on, but it would have been difficult.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was there discussion between you and the Americans about the possibility that Britain might not, at the last moment, be able to participate?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Yes, I made it absolutely clear that the way things will be in the UK is this and there will be a House of Commons vote, the outcome of that will depend on whether the Prime Minister agrees that we should participate. And I have to say all I had in return was, "Yes, we understand your system, we absolutely understand your system".

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And they had made preparations, they understood that they could go ahead without us?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I mean, Mr Rumsfeld
put that in the public domain in a rather, dare I say, clumsy way, but nevertheless they did have a plan which was an existing plan away.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: If I could move on to Basra and to Phase 4. When you decided that you could take Basra and it was possible, what did you believe you would be responsible for inside Basra and how long did you think your resources would last to carry out that responsibility?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: You are talking about post-conflict mode. Of course, it would have been more than just Basra; Basra City, but it would have been Basra province, and indeed the other provinces which we were in, because we were sitting in this UK box, as the area of operations covered about three provinces.

We produced a generic plan and one of the first things I did when I realised that we had in fact got into Basra and we were controlling the city, is I got together through an individual I approached and asked him to form a provisional council from which we would then use the Iraqis to help us organise Basra, both city and, at that stage, province because we were sitting in there. And that's what I started doing.

I needed to have Iraqis who understood how Basra worked or didn't work in order to get it up and running.
because it was beyond our immediate competencies.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Is that what you meant or did you mean more when the concept of Basra being an exemplar --

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: It was never my words. I was told to make an exemplar. I was doing my best for it to be an exemplar.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What did you understand by it?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I understood what I needed to do was try and get the Iraqis to take control of their own city and their own province as fast as possible with our help, to demonstrate to them that we weren't coming to occupy them. Of course, de facto, we were under the law of armed conflict, but I wanted to give the impression that this was their country, which we were giving back to them, and we needed their help to rid them (inaudible) with them, weapons of mass destruction and get their oil working for them.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I think those who describe the prospect of Basra becoming an exemplar were seduced by a number of factors, such as Basra as a city, say, versus Baghdad, Basra as a city of 1.25 million, Baghdad, 6 or 7 million, racially reasonably homogeneous, Shia population, a population who had suffered significantly under Saddam throughout the Ba'athist regime, but particularly in 1991, good
indigenous resources, plenty of water and oil. So on the face of it, people might have thought this was relative straightforward. I didn't personally subscribe to that view, but that's how the exemplar came about.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What were the particular difficulties you found and how did you report them, as it were, back to London to deal with them?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: When we first got into Basra, it took about a day of combat activity to get in there on 6 April. By 7 April, with we were in and we were reasonably well with received. There was -- there was some looting. There was -- there was basic theft going on, thieving banks, for example, but it wasn't perhaps as bad as what I observed later on in Baghdad in that sense of the meeting. And there were bits of the -- not just the city, but the province and, indeed, just into the next province -- which had taken control of themselves, sometimes in a rather unattractive way and sometimes in a very acceptable way. So we had to balance out these things, and I found myself and my military staff and my -- I had an MOD policy adviser and an FCO policy adviser and they were crucial to me, helping me organise these things. But what I really needed was something much more
significant in terms of -- somebody who would be what we would call a consul general, did eventually call a consul general. I really needed that and I needed some people with experiences of running large cities.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: As well as all that, I think we were shocked by the state of the infrastructure: The quality of the water distribution system, the inadequacy of power distribution, the age of the power stations. One was powered completely on crude oil straight from the oilfield.

This was an aspect that we hadn't had a good handle on and it was somewhat bizarre to find us building a pipeline to ship water from Kuwait, the driest of the Gulf states, into Iraq. But that is exactly what we did.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How did London respond to these needs?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I perhaps just need to backtrack slightly.

Back in probably September/October, on one occasion when I was at Tampa we were briefed by the US State Department on 22, I think, work streams that they had been conducting. This struck me as reassuring. I can see some lessons of Bosnia here.

The teams they had put together consisted of people who delivered these same sort of services in the US and
this is everything from agriculture through power
distribution, et cetera. So they are experts who
actually do it. There are academics who understood the
differences in Iraq, there were government officials,
there were Iraqi emigres. So there was some work being
done. It was beyond conceptual. It was reassuring.

What there wasn't was any sort of chapeau sitting on
the top pulling these levers. Now, of course we then
find that responsibility moved from the State Department
to the Department of Defence in the period -- it is
difficult to define exactly when, but by the first week
of January it had moved at what I know to have been
Mr Rumsfeld's insistence.

What we didn't understand is that when it moved,
none of the ideas and none of the people moved with it.
So initially we were living under an illusion that this
body of knowledge that we had got to know about did not
exist. And London too were probably under the same
impression: that this body of knowledge that we had
talked about was no longer going to be deployed.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: A week into the war when irregular
forces started to make themselves felt -- and, again,
perhaps more with the Americans, but with us as well --
an American General famously observed, "This is not the
enemy we war-gamed against" -- were there many surprises
for you in the way that the campaign actually developed?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: You know that in
doing our mission analysis and campaign planning we come
up with courses of action that the enemy might take, we
then ascribe a most likely and a most dangerous. We
knew that his own emotional centre of gravity was
Baghdad. We knew that he would not simply let us drive
down the gates of Baghdad. So we knew he would slow us
down.

He had two -- given that his regular army was not
well configured for this, his Republican Guard had been
planned to form a ring around Baghdad. Beyond that, he
had two tools that he could use: one, weapons of mass
destruction; and the other, irregular warfare, in
a sense to try and draw us into urban warfare.

He had developed the view that western militaries
don't do urban warfare. He had also developed the view,
so I'm told, that the notion of large numbers of
civilian casualties -- he had a Grozny vision in his
mind -- would --

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Grozny being Chechnya.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: The idea that the
world's media would show this terrible destruction
which, in his rather warped perception, would put him on
the moral high ground. So he wanted, if he could, if he
can lure us into urban warfare using irregular forces,
making it as complex as possible not to be able to
deliver on our setting the tone to avoid significant
amounts of damage, never mind collateral damage, damage
at all, then that's what he did.

What we didn't know was to what extent he would
front load those southern cities, Basra in particular,
and we subsequently recognised he put small elements of
the Republican Guard in amongst the Ba'ath militia, the
Al Quds and people such as that, to do two things. One
is to make them militarily more effective and the other
is to put the frighteners on the 51 Division people who
had effectively melted away, and they were coerced into
getting back into their equipment.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So General Robin, when you are
talking or planning, as I understand it, initially
taking Basra possibly for some of these reasons was not
part of your plan?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: We would have to eventually take it,
but it wasn't a task to do at the outset because it
wasn't necessary to take Basra to achieve the flank
protection. But it would eventually be necessary for
the coalition forces to be in Basra, so to put it like
that.
But we did plan for Basra. I think in hindsight I would say that the conventional forces fought slightly less strongly than we might have expected, but we didn't expect very much and they were slightly less than that actually in the event, in the south. And we did expect irregular forces in their various ways and they probably fought more voluminously and venomously than we had anticipated, but certainly within our ability to deal with. And I was -- I think we were all very conscious of the assessment that you have just had described, what with we thought that Saddam Hussein would try and get us to do. Ringing in my ears was, from diplomats, British diplomats, "Don't trash Basra". It seemed to be very sound advice. So we held off and we didn't go, we didn't get sucked in first to Az Zubayr, which is a city of about 100,000, which was strongly held, and we conducted a focused operation and eventually got into it. And then on 6 April were able to go into Basra with as minimum amount of fighting as I think could possibly have taken place.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: One of the drivers in that decision-making was the -- to build the perception in the Iraqis -- the minds of Iraqi people that what they saw happening in Basra was the tone for the whole thing. So Basra in a sense conceptually was the
outskirts of Baghdad. So we wanted to set the tone in order to use it as part of our information operations campaign.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thanks very much. I'm very conscious of time, but I just want to have three quick questions.

The first is going back to this Phase 4 question. You have given us a very clear understanding the military view of Phase 4, it is part of your campaign and it is when civilian areas are in your control, the fighting has moved on elsewhere.

Was that understanding of Phase 4 shared or appreciated in London? Did they think it was something that happened when the war was over?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: No, I think they were sophisticated to understand well enough particularly once we had gone to a box, and it was quite clear that we were not going to advance beyond the northern boundary of the box, then they had to accept that there would be a time period when we were very much engaged in Phase 4 activity whilst there were still two corps steaming north to Baghdad.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If they understood that, were they giving you the support that you needed? Now, you really suggested not that you didn't have lot of civilian
support immediately with you. Is that fair?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I will ask

General Robin to talk about just one example, which is
finance. But the impression -- and I have to say I have
some sympathy for the Ministry of Defence. I just don't
think they could get strategic traction. I don't think
the machinery of government in London was in a shape,
phase or form that they could get traction.

I know that the nature of the way in which the US on
this occasion ran an operation was different from the
way they had run during Bosnia. In this case, the line
of command was very direct: It was President, to
Rumsfeld, to Franks and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were
very much out on one side, and that's perfectly
permissible. That's absolutely the way it is defined in
title 10 in US law. But it did mean that the normal
dialogue that we had endlessly through Bosnia -- and
I was the principal staff officer to the Chief of
Defence Staff at the time -- so the endless dialogue
that we could have with the joint staffs in the
Pentagon, which allowed us to grapple and influence on
these things was -- I perhaps wouldn't go so far as to
say it wasn't available, but it was made very much more
difficult.

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: As described, I had
a Ministry of Defence policy adviser, a Foreign and Commonwealth Office adviser. I also had a Department for International Development adviser who was an integral part of my headquarters and gave me assurance that the reporting was all being done. I saw some of the reports leaving my headquarters.

I didn't see a result coming back. I don't think -- and I could be wrong, but I don't think during my time in Basra I received any UK finance to help the reconstruction at that stage. I think that the initial finance to help the reconstruction all came from Baghdad, ie it was American or it was Iraqi money from Baghdad coming down, for example, to pay policemen.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about in terms of staff, for example, from DFID or --

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I had a different cell inside my headquarters.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And the final question: we have heard that you were able to plan for the operation you eventually conducted starting from January, that people were getting ready. You considered yourself ready, just as -- in a sense just in time. If the operation had been called a week before, you wouldn't have been able to claim readiness.

Can I get a sense of the risks that we were taking
at this stage? For example, if there had been
a chemical and biological weapons attack, if the enemy
had fought harder. We got away with it, but was this
good luck or good management?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I would like to say
of course it was good campaign management, but the --
just -- I mentioned that the other lever that Saddam had
at his disposal, to slow us down, was weapons of mass
destruction. Be under no illusion we believed that he
did have tactical battlefield weapons with chemical or
biological tips. He had used them previously both
against the civilian populations in Halabja and he had
used them against the Iranian army down on the Al Faw
peninsula.

So -- but what we did know was that this wasn't the
same as fighting through the central front in Warsaw
Pact days when the entire battle space would be drenched
in chemical agents. This was relatively limited. This
was the sort of capability that normally you would
choose to manoeuvre around, rather than have to consider
a complete change of tactic in the way that we did in
the days of the Cold War.

So -- and we were happy with the level of individual
protection, and I take from that not only suits, and it
is well recorded that had some of the suits were out of
their perceived shelf life. They had to be tested and
extended, and the same with canisters, inoculation
programmes and the taking of NAPS tablets. So we were
clear what we were up against, and we were contented
that we could deal with that element of risk.

As for routine combat power, it would have been very
difficult for those divisions to have been mis-assessed
in that we could with tell from reconnaissance that
their equipment was rusty, we could tell that they
hadn't trained, we could tell that there was a high
desertion rate and he had no air power.

So in terms of conducting all arms manoeuvre
warfare, he was pretty badly placed. So I would have
been surprised if we were surprised.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Does that mean it is rather
dangerous to draw any particular lessons from this
experience because you can't rely on such weak enemies
in the future?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: We can certainly draw
some lessons from it, and mostly they are lessons about
your own performance. But you couldn't -- you couldn't
derive your entire equipment programme, your doctrine
and, therefore, your tactics on the basis of what we saw
out of the Iraqi army.

The Republican Guard was a different matter. They
fought in the Karbala Gap, they fought with great motivation, and in fact commanders did actually command to the point where one of the battle group commanders was rotating round his forces in a beaten up Peugeot because that was all he had available. But they got the best out of them.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: General Robin, do you have any sense of lessons learned.

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: There are two bits I would just add. One is because we thought that his weapons of mass destruction, he was trying to hide them up to the last moment, he would have to then assemble them to use them. Therefore, the quicker we did it, the less likely -- which meant that we went with ground forces ahead of an air campaign and most people were anticipating a rather longer air campaign. We also did that so that we could seize the oil infrastructure, because if there had been a long air campaign, he might have taken the initiative and destroyed them.

So for those two reasons that you have worked out -- the campaign plan has started taking account of these things in a wholly respectable way, and therefore -- I think you asked me the question earlier on, were we ready, yes, we were in the circumstances we assessed at the time.
I wouldn't necessarily say we were ready if it was a different set of circumstances. Some risk has been taken then, but also in terms of the readiness and preparation time that we need to set and the sustainability that we need to set of our forces before we even start on a campaign, wherever it might be.

That needs to be, I think, factored in.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I would like to add to that, otherwise I don't think you will end up with a complete picture.

One of the values of the Internal Look military exercises in December was that we were able to assess the degree to which we were inviting ourselves to be strategically exposed.

There were a number of facets to that. Obviously weapons of mass destruction was one; obviously the oil fields from the point of view of a military encumbrance, an economic regeneration issue and an ecological disaster was another. The SCUD missiles, surface-to-surface missiles, in the western desert which he had used in 1991 against Saudi Arabia and Israel were another very significant aspect. Also, there was the extent to which international opinion may -- what would it be from December, what would it be in March with or without a second resolution. And the campaign that we
test had five days of ambiguous preparation and force flow, 11 days of unambiguous force flow, 16 days of an air campaign and then 125 days of full-up manoeuvre warfare.

In doing that exercise, certainly I and my team and the team of mentors, US mentors, all came to the same conclusion that that was an area of high risk in terms of strategic exposure. And from the end of that exercise onwards, we gradually compressed activity, and ultimately, as you know, we launched a precision attack on a regime target in Baghdad, then began the ground campaign, and then began the air campaign in order to be able to deal with those vectors of strategic exposure all at once.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Last questions, Usha?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Roderic?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just one, I think, from General Brims. Sir Brian said earlier on that from the moment we crossed the start line we were effectively going into Phase 4, and we heard earlier from Dominick Chilcott that in his perception, our responsibility, the UK's responsibility, for managing civil affairs in the southern region of Iraq evolved as an unintended
consequence of the fact that we were in charge of this
military box, which was part of the reason why the
capability to fill that void, to handle that task,
simply wasn't there. And one has seen that meetings to
discuss how we should address this were only happening
after the invasion, some of them about the time that you
were about to take Basra.

Recruiting really only got going in May for civilian
volunteers to come out and do what was needed. You had
these small cells. Your DFID cell, I think you said
consisted of one person. By 9 May there were
34 volunteers under training, the first batch of 22 were
only going to go out on 13 May.

So none of this had been prepared for in advance in
a proper kind of way. What is the lesson to be learnt
from this in terms of the way that decisions are
integrated between a military operation and the
post-conflict civilian tasks?

LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: The reporting of the lack of the plan
and, therefore, the resources to conduct that plan were
made for the south when I produced the estimate in the
first week in January. What thereafter happened with
that, we I don't know. But in the UK -- and I think one
would have to follow up that to learn the lessons, but
I am afraid I don't know.
SIR RODERIC LYNE: You identified it in January, but the
decisions clearly had not been taken by April
effectively?
AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Correct, and the
reason was that there wasn't a cohesive leadership or
machinery of government that would address that problem.
SIR RODERIC LYNE: But there should be.
AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Of course, and that's
what the doctrine of the comprehensive approach seeks to
do. It should not be a matter of either opinion or mood
of the moment as to whether government departments
participate in a military operation or not, they have
a duty to. We are putting our forces on the line, we
are given a task endorsed in a democratic political way
and there can be no shying away from that.
SIR RODERIC LYNE: So in an ideal world, as your forces
rolled forward through Iraq, you would have had civil
contingents rolling at a safe distance, but pretty close
behind them, ready to take over the task that you found
yourselves having to do yourself weeks and months
afterwards?
LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: In an ideal world, I think I should
have been planning alongside a senior civilian
representative at ambassador level. It might have been
a consul general, because of being in Basra and not in
the capital, who would have been part of the planning with me ab initio.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: But we were not alone. We should remember that the NGOs were operating very soon after the General's forces crossed the start line and bits of southern Iraq were declared permissive. The NGOs were in there, but they were configured principally in case there was a humanitarian disaster and, of course, there wasn't a particularly difficult humanitarian problem.

Nevertheless, we should respect the fact the NGOs were there on the day.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I just ask a question.

Sir Brian, you said earlier that there was a direct line of command in the United States, you know, and that made things better for them, is that what you are suggesting?

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: No, I think it probably made things worse for them. They will argue perhaps, based on their own experience, better or worse from an US point of view, from a London point of view it made things much worse. It was much more difficult to get the dialogue at the military strategic and grand strategic level that we had begun to take for granted in our experience through Bosnia when working with the Americans.
1 THE CHAIRMAN: We have heard and learned a quite a lot this afternoon. We realise there is more military testimony that we need to hear and will be hearing. I wonder, are there any final comments either of you would like to make for this afternoon? If not, it would always be acceptable and welcome to have any final thoughts on paper if you have them on reflection. But if not now, then we shall be hearing a number of other military witnesses over the next days and weeks, and so I think what I will do is thank both of you very much indeed, and trail the fact that we shall tomorrow be pursuing the same themes, in particular on law, order and security in the aftermath, with both military and diplomatic/political witnesses, which, as it were, brings together your final observations, I think.

So with that, thanks to yourselves and to those who have been here this afternoon in the room. I will close this session now.

Thank you.

(5.15 pm)

(The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am the following day)