Tuesday, 22 June 2010

(2.00 pm)

JAMES TANSLEY, LINDY CAMERON, SIMON COLLIS and TIM FOY

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's start. Can I offer a warm welcome to our witnesses this afternoon, to Lindy Cameron, Simon Collis, James Tansley and Tim Foy.

Now, this is the second time we have had the opportunity to hear from consuls general from Basra. We have heard from Nigel Hayward already, but it's the first time we have heard from heads of DFID in Baghdad.

We are going to be hearing later and in public from Mark Etherington, who was head of the PRT in the south in 2006/2007, and as he's asked to be heard in public. We are also hearing from a number of Basra Consul Generals, deputy heads of mission in Baghdad and DFID heads of Baghdad and Basra from 2007/2009 later in the week. This is, in rugby terms, a sort of rolling maul, I think.

We are very much looking forward to hearing your perspectives, as FCO and DFID representatives, on the ground in Iraq. We've heard quite a lot of headquarter evidence. This is our on the ground evidence.

You were all of you, in different ways and at different times, being asked to deliver UK strategy objectives in

extremely challenging situations.

Now, the session today is being held in private, simply because we recognise that at the time you served in Iraq, you were not yet members of the senior civil service, and that's our Protocol.

SIMON COLLIS: As a correction, actually I was.

THE CHAIRMAN: You were at the time?

JAMES TANSLEY: So was I.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll try and forget that. But we expect that most of today's evidence won't be covered by our sensitivity Protocol, for example when there are international relations grounds or secret intelligence or classified documents at issue. So we are proceeding on the basis that the transcript of this hearing should be capable of being published in full. But if we wander off into sensitive territory, we will try and note it as we go along.

Where it is sensitive, if at all, we'll apply the Protocol between our Inquiry and HMG regarding documents and written and other electronic information to decide how we can draw on and explain in our report or otherwise and how we use the evidence.

Now, we recognise on every occasion that witnesses are giving evidence based on recollection of events, and

recollection is an uncertain thing. We cross-check what we hear against papers to which we have access, or which we still get, and I remind every witness on each occasion that we're going to ask you to sign a transcript of evidence to the effect that the evidence given is truthful, fair and accurate. There's no particular urgency about that process, but we would be grateful if you could do that.

Given we are in this rolling maul of overlapping postings and underlaps, we have tried to design our questions roughly to fall inside your different periods of responsibility. If we get it wrong or if we step outside it, just say. That may not necessarily mean you don't have anything to offer, but we ought to know that.

I wonder if we could start before the questions, if we could hear from each of you in turn briefly what posts you held, where were you and for what period.

So perhaps starting with you.

LINDY CAMERON: I was the deputy head of Baghdad from January 2004 until November 2004, and I took over as the head of DFID Baghdad and the head of Iraq, because we merged in terms of Baghdad and Basra teams from that period until August 2005. I then did six months in London as the Senior Programme Manager for Iraq from September 2005 to March 2006.

THE CHAIRMAN: Right. Thanks a lot. Simon?

SIMON COLLIS: I was Consul General in Basra from the beginning of July 2004 -- so at the end of CPA -- until the end of February/early March 2005.

THE CHAIRMAN: Quite a long tour.

SIMON COLLIS: Yes.

JAMES TANSLEY: I'm James Tansley, I was Consul General in Basra from the end of September 2005 until April 2006.

TIM FOY: Two stints for me. Head of DFID Iraq, straight after Lindy from August 2005 through to August 2006, and then a second stint immediately after Mark Etherington, in the spirit of the rolling maul, in the Basra PRT.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine. Thank you very much for that. Let's get to the questions and I'll start with Sir Martin Gilbert.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: If I could first ask each of you in turn to tell us what was it you were asked to deliver during your posting in Iraq, and how was this communicated to you?

LINDY CAMERON: I was asked to deliver the DFID Interim Country Assistance Plan, which had just been completed when I started as deputy head of DFID Baghdad. To be honest, that endured as probably the key document for me during most of the time I was in Baghdad.

THE CHAIRMAN: Before you go on, we have got four voices and one stenographer. We need, if we can, to keep the pace down and only one voice at a time.

LINDY CAMERON: Sure. No problem, I'll have a go. I'm not great at keeping the pace down, I have to say.

But then of course that was also then, in a sense, capped by various versions of Iraq strategy documents that were produced on a Whitehall basis.

SIMON COLLIS: I was asked to open a consulate general in Basra with the demise of CPA South and on the transition of sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government, and the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the UK and Iraq.

Within that, the consulate was due to offer support to DFID, the DFID team in Basra, oversight of DFID activities in the four southern governorates, oversight of the civil policing operation, conducting political relations with Iraqis across the four southern provinces, and ensuring the delivery of security and life support to everybody in the consulate, and liaison with the British military with MND South East, primarily the British military, but also the other components of MND South East at that time.

JAMES TANSLEY: I was tasked to provide political support to

the various HMG programmes in southern Iraq, first and foremost to assist in the move to strategic, operational and then tactical overwatch for MND South East, to provide support to other programmes, principally the civilian police component, although I should say shortly after I arrived principal responsibility for civilian policing was shifted from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Ministry of Defence. So although I was managerially in charge of a sizeable police team, overall responsibility for delivering their objectives was in the Ministry of Defence.

TIM FOY: First stint for me in Baghdad was essentially much as Lindy said, the DFID interim country programme, both from Baghdad and Basra, with particular emphasis on ensuring security of our staff, delivering the most effect we could at a difficult time, and also ensuring that DFID's reputation in terms of its role in Whitehall was in hand, particularly its role within a mission which was becoming more of a single mission.

Tasked for that largely by Martin Dinham, the --

THE CHAIRMAN: We have taken evidence from him.

TIM FOY: Over lunch one day, which was actually quite a good way to receive it.

The second stint for me was at Margaret's behest, was to

go back to Basra when I was working for the then PCRU) unit to do two things: to examine why things weren't working to well in the PRT at that time, with a view to refreshing the arrangement, view to refreshing the better Basra action plan, which I think James' successor, Robin Lamb, had initiated.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How were you able to measure success with regard to delivery of your objectives?

LINDY CAMERON: Well, I think in some ways it was reasonably easy to measure, for example, the infrastructure progress. Some of the objectives were a little harder to measure in terms of, for example, capacity building. But actually, given how limited the capacity we started with was in Baghdad -- for example, there wasn't a Prime Minister's office -- actually it was surprisingly easy to measure tangible progress in some of those outputs as well.

[1]I'm sorry. I'll try. It doesn't come naturally.

MARGARET ALDRED: Pretend it's simultaneous translation.

LINDY CAMERON: Twenty years of feedback in this one has still not fully sunk in.

So in a sense I think you could fairly easily see whether some of those project level outputs had been achieved or

[1] Witness was asked to slow down.

not. I think what was harder to measure in a sense was the contribution of those outputs to the overall strategy, in a sense, and that was challenging, partly because the nature of the situation changed fairly dramatically over the course of the time I was there, and to some extent the nature of what the international community thought its mission was, I think, probably changed, because I was there firstly for the last six months of the CPA, then through into the interim government, and then supporting the transitional government. So in a sense the nature of the Iraqi government we were supporting changed fairly rapidly, and indeed what they wanted from us shifted in that period.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: If I could just, before we go to the same question, did you feel that departmental strategy was ever pulling in different directions to the overall strategy? Were there conflicts there?

LINDY CAMERON: Between different departments? I don't think they was much pulling in different directions. I think the bigger question was whether all the departmental strategies added up to an HMG strategy which was sufficient to be the right UK contribution to the international strategy.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What was your conclusion on that?

LINDY CAMERON: To be honest, it was pretty hard to define what the right contribution was. I mean, the UK was a player that had 5 per cent of the troops, 2 per cent of the funding, but was still effectively the second biggest partner. So we were, to a large extent, at the mercy of a CPA, and then a US machine that was defining what the strategy should be, which we were then trying to influence and trying to engage. It was, particularly from a Baghdad perspective, where we very much were that second player, working with quite an unusual range of counterparts, where, for example, we had expected both the World Bank and the UN to engage much more significantly, when after the Canal Hotel bombing they obviously didn't return as fast as we might have hoped.

So you had a rather strange series of donors to work with, that meant it was a rather odd development environment, in particular, to be part of.

SIMON COLLIS: The aim was to get from the end of CPA to successful elections, originally due at the end of 2004, and which were postponed into early 2005, and then, within that, supporting that overall political objective.

On the development side, I think the picture in the south, we had in theory more autonomy about what we did and how we chose to do things, and more opportunities to engage

directly with Iraqis and Iraqi organisations. But we were very aware that there was no point in going down roads that were going to reduce, rather than enhance, the connectivity between what was happening in the south of Iraq and what was happening at the national level.

I think that was a particular issue in relation to the police training, for example. There was no point in building a British bobby community policing model if it didn't dock into a national Police Service, and I think because of the security situation in the south, at least initially, we found that we were encountering some of these issues before the Americans and others in Baghdad had had to deal with them because the situation there was less evolved in terms of the transition to normal governance.

So we were checking ourselves. We had to keep checking back in terms of where we were going, to see were we still docking into national level plans, including the American influence on those plans in the way that Lindy described.

THE CHAIRMAN: Your main interlocutor on that line would be the CPA and various bits within the CPA?

SIMON COLLIS: No, CPA was over. We had replaced it.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is the transitional government.

SIMON COLLIS: Yes. So what we were looking to do was to

establish, if you like, a distinctively British, to coin a phrase, approach in the south because we were able to exercise more control over what we were doing locally, but it still had to work in terms of docking in nationally.

My boss was Edward Chaplin. As Consul General in Basra we tried to run what would be a normal country structure. I had previously been Consul General in Dubai, working to a boss who was an ambassador in the capital city in Abu Dhabi. And actually the post in Dubai wasn't -- there were some similarities in terms of -- Dubai was a place where we had a kind of bigger presence in some cases than the equivalent structure in the capital, which nonetheless remained sovereign. So I looked to Edward Chaplin as my boss, and we tried to make sure through that, and through the different connections between the different sections of the embassy and the consulate, that we were joined up.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were you told that distinctively British was meant to be exemplary?

SIMON COLLIS: No. It's an out of time comment actually. "Distinctively British" is the present Foreign Secretary's phrase for our policy. It's William Hague's sound bite.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But at the time you were there, you were coming in after a period in which ministers had, at the

outset of the campaign, and indeed just before it, declared that we were going to try to perform an exemplary job in the southern region. Had that evaporated by the time you arrived a year later?

SIMON COLLIS: I don't remember anybody using the word "exemplary" to me. "Normal" was the word that we took as a watchword. The environment we were trying to help create was normal.

When we opened the consulate we had a small flag raising ceremony. I gave an opening talk, and one of the points I tried to make there was to encourage people who had worked in other diplomatic missions to ask themselves what "normal" was, and if it was safe to do it, then that's how they should behave. I was trying to get away from the CPA culture of us telling people what to do, and get towards a culture where we would engage with a host authority, even if it was in many ways a weak and incapable set of authorities, but nonetheless they were our interlocutors, they were the people we engaged with, and we did it on the basis of normal diplomatic practice.

LINDY CAMERON: If I might perhaps just add to that, I think it's hard to describe how strange the CPA was. So in a sense this period in June/July 2004 when we were transitioning from the CPA to, in a sense, bilateral

relationships of a kind with an Iraqi government that was then sovereign, was a real transition because it is difficult to imagine how strange it was to be in a building of thousands and thousands of foreign officials effectively running a country, and then a very rapid transition from that to an Iraqi Government which had some of the structures it needed, but then didn't have some of the others. As I say, it, for example, didn't have a Prime Minister's office simply because that function hadn't existed under Saddam Hussein, and certainly anybody who had been performing anything that resembled it wasn't there any longer.

THE CHAIRMAN: I did want to ask a postscript to Simon. How far your relationships with the sovereign government was essentially at the province level, or was it to capital?

SIMON COLLIS: My relationships were exercised at the province level with the governor and the members of the provincial council of Basra governorate and of the three other southern provinces for which I was responsible. I used to travel to Baghdad about monthly, every four to six weeks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Not easy, I think.

SIMON COLLIS: No, flying. And would engage with Lindy and

her colleagues on some of the development points, although that was mostly happening between DFID professionals. I would engage with Edward and with Dominic Asquith, who was the DA Chairman at that time, on the political issues, and usually I would try and time my visits to have some kind of impact on the Americans in Baghdad, particularly try and get PCA funding moving, to get it happening in the first place at all, and to get some of it at least directed to be spent in the south. Also, with Petraeus' team on CPATT, the programme for equipping and training up Iraqi security forces, including police.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: If I can turn now to you, again on this question of objectives and success.

JAMES TANSLEY: Before going out to Basra, in the ten days or so of briefing I received before going out, the overriding strategic objective was to prepare the ground to allow handover of responsibility and power for security in the four provinces in southern Iraq to the Iraqis. There was a considerable pressure, particularly from the MOD, to make an early move in both Muthanna and Maysan provinces, to free up troops to go to Afghanistan.

Between the start of my briefing in London and going out to Iraq, we had the incident at Jameat Police Station on 19 September, which tended to change the environment quite

considerably.

Underneath that broad strategic objective, we had specific objectives bringing up police training in terms of maintaining security in the provinces. We were then expected to comply with US wishes to put in place a provincial reconstruction team. This involved somewhat complicated planning, but which we managed to come up with an arrangement which we hoped satisfied all the necessary stakeholders within Iraq.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I will have a few questions about the United States dimension in a moment.

TIM FOY: In terms of the DFID program, normal kinds of some programme projects were there and fairly well laid out objectives were stipulated in programme documentation. I have to say that most of those failed to survive first encounter with Iraq, in terms of the degree to which we were optimistic at understanding the pace at which we could deliver.

Certainly in terms of Baghdad, the key thing for me was the amount of access that both myself, the team and consultants could gain to important interlocutors to push forward key points where we felt that reforms were necessary or improvements were necessary, and that's a pretty good measure of how successful we were.

Could we continue to gain good access into the Prime Minister's office? Could we maintain our access into the Ministry of Finance and the very good and special relationship we had with the Ministry of Finance? How were we doing with the Americans? How were we doing in terms of trying to bring in the multilateral institutions?

So it's very much about how much access we got as a relatively small donor who was trying to leverage other players and moves within policy and practice by the Iraqi government, which, certainly to me and to others, was the real thing we needed to change.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Again, if I could go across the board, what role did the London team -- so DFID and FCO -- play in terms of the work you were doing and your objectives and, again, the overall strategy? What was the input from London?

LINDY CAMERON: It was quite significant. The majority of DFID staff were in London. It was a team structure to have effectively a minimum staffing in Iraq, rather than a maximum staffing. In a sense, different to the normal approach where you would normally have quite a full staff in country, rather than back in head office.

That was obviously partly for security reasons, because clearly we couldn't justify having more staff at risk than

necessary. It was also partly for policy reasons in the sense that much of the debate on a policy front in the UK was going on in the UK in Whitehall. So they provided essentially the programme management function -- so dealing with the finances and a lot of the technical oversight of consultants -- but they also really designed the strategy. So the DFID interim country assistance had been written by a London based team with a number of visits to country consulting within the country.

That remained the case, I think, for most of the time I was there, which is why in a sense it involved a small team, and why it was relatively junior.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What particular policy shifts were there during your time?

LINDY CAMERON: Well, I think the big policy shifts effectively were driven by the different Iraqi political events, as in the sense of shifting from support to the CPA to then support to the Iraqi government.

Towards the end of my time then, I think we began the debate about PRTs and about the way we were going to provide support in Basra, because essentially at the end of the CPA, not just the UK, but also the US made a very clear decision to close down the various Coalition offices in each of the provinces, and actually to move to a more diplomatic model.

So essentially the US decided to go to a diplomatic model that only had, I think, three or four hubs across the country, not an office in each province. It was only much later, about a year later, that they then reverted to proposing a model, a team model, which would have an office in each of those provinces.

But the fundamentals of the strategy in terms of the pillars, supporting civil service capacity building, Ministry of Finance capacity building, support to political engagement and support to infrastructure remained the same through the period.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Again in terms of the London input?

SIMON COLLIS: Yes. Again, across -- it was considerable. Some of it was direct, Basra to London. But mostly we would join up through Baghdad as being, again, the normal and appropriate way to do things, as long as it was efficient to do that.

From the London end, we were in regular touch with the whole team in the Iraq directorate about the political evolution, and our political reporting was directed back to them. That we did tend to send directly, so that people had a first-hand sense of the rhythm.

On the development side, again we were guided by the country assistance programme. On the policing side, it was

the GCPP paper, which was probably the weakest of the strategy documents, looking back on it now. I think at the time it seemed quite fluffy too.

I think, from what I can recall, in sitting in Basra at the time we didn't feel that there were issues to challenge as far as the strategic direction went. It was clear. What was the complicated bit was applying that to ground conditions, and there was a limit to how useful it was to keep going back to people in London about that. Really you were the team on the spot, and it was quite difficult to explain to people sometimes what your operating conditions were, and what you could and couldn't do. Sometimes you could actually do a bit more than people thought you could. Other times, often, it would be less.

So you just did what you could. There was no disagreement with the general direction of travel. Perhaps some people, at least initially, in London felt that things would be more comprehensive or cleaner, neater, than was actually possible.

So it was a question of if you had your bearings from the strategic documents and you were happy with them, and I was, you would then try and work out how much ground you could cover, how quickly, and not worry if something went faster while other things were blocked, because it's not as if

there was an alternative option that you would follow. You would just move as opportunistically and as flexibly as you could, and not bother people in London with every detail of that.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was that affected mostly by the security situation?

SIMON COLLIS: Yes, that was the main -- the main constraint was the security situation.

The other constraint, which was one that could be fed back in a rational way to London, was the extent to which the capacity of the Iraqi government at every level, and its connectivity, or lack of it, at every level, was much, much less than we had -- than anyone had supposed, I think. You assume that a dictatorship has got at least some lines of command and control, and actually they didn't. It was quite -- particularly in the south, which Saddam had in effect banished for the previous ten years. So there wasn't any connectivity between Iraqi ministries at the national level and their representatives on the ground in the provinces for which I was responsible.

At first, you know, we assumed that was perhaps a Baghdad south problem, but as time went on, you realised increasingly that actually it was a Baghdad periphery problem. So a lot of the work that DFID was doing to build

capacity in the ministries that they had selected -- finance and some of the infrastructure ones, I think -- that was precisely what was needed to join up the dots.

On other occasions you needed to help make the connections. Nobody in the south of Iraq could communicate with anybody in Baghdad, except through our own communications, for example. We had secure communications, but Iraqi officials didn't. Even if they knew people, they didn't have their phone numbers. Mobile phones didn't work across those borders. People couldn't travel. Even Iraqi leaders couldn't travel, and they didn't know each other. The governor of Basra had been to Baghdad once in his life.

THE CHAIRMAN: Was that Wa'ili?

SIMON COLLIS: That was Hassan Rashid. I think Wa'ali was maybe a bit more cosmopolitan, but Hassan Rashid had been to Baghdad once in his life.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It just struck me, we have had a lot of discussions about people communicating between Basra and Baghdad. What about the rest of Iraq? Did anybody in Basra know much about what was going on in the Kurdish areas?

SIMON COLLIS: In Basra we didn't have an operational need to know, but we were on the distribution for egrams. I saw Noel Guckian's reporting.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It's not just about us. It's a sense of how the country was working in the network.

JAMES TANSLEY: Perhaps I could add to what Simon has said. Down in the south, you found that the southern provinces took little interest in what went on further north than Najaf. The organisation of the Martyr Sadr did have very good contacts with Muqtada al-Sadr in Najaf, better than further north, and than with the general Shia population with Sistani.

Kurdistan could have been another country, so far as people in southern Iraq were concerned. Indeed, anything north of Maysan and Muthanna could have been another country.

In terms of communication between the Coalition, we were aware that there were other MNFI units in provinces to the north of our region, but, so far as I'm aware, actual contact with those was pretty minimal. This came across both from the military and on a political basis.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That reinforces the sense of a very centralised --

JAMES TANSLEY: Very centralised community.

LINDY CAMERON: If I can perhaps answer, this comes back to the point I made about the closure of the CPA offices,

because in fact the CPA had a quite good situational awareness because it had an office in each of the provinces, and that was why at the point at which those were closed, the understanding of what the situation was became quite asymmetric and fell quite dramatically, precisely because the Iraqi Government hadn't build the capacity to do that for itself, and in a sense each Coalition partner was dependent on its own bilateral relationships at that point.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Interesting.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Again, if I could ask you about the London --

JAMES TANSLEY: Yes. During my time I think there was an extension of what happened in Simon's time. It was, I felt, very much as if London had a strategy and we were there to push it forward.

Also, I think, during my time, the powers-that-be in London were more focused on national issues, rather than what was going on in the south. We had a referendum on the constitution. We had the first elections. We had the negotiation on the formation of a new government, all of which tended to take up most of our political attention back in London, and as a consequence, relatively little effort or attention was focused on some of the aspects of day-to-day

policy in southern Iraq. I think on occasions it did come as a bit of surprise to ministers, when they came out to find out just what the situation was.

THE CHAIRMAN: I was going to ask you, James, exactly that question, about the stream of London visitors that you all had, and how far ground truth and situational understanding was awakened in them, both at ministerial level and at senior official level.

JAMES TANSLEY: In terms of the number of ministerial visitors during my time, it was very high. I think we had the Prime Minister once, the Secretary of State for Defence twice, the Foreign Secretary twice, the Secretary of State for International Development once, as well as a junior Foreign Office minister.

I would also say that for the most part, those visits, with the exception of those of the Secretary of State for Defence, were short, indeed very short on occasions, and it was more as if we were tagged on to the end of a broader programme. There would be two days in Baghdad, and then there would be a couple of hours down in Basra. It was a chance to show your face, say that you had been, and then to get out.

THE CHAIRMAN: And not engage at all with local politicians

or leaders?

JAMES TANSLEY: We got the Foreign Secretary to meet local leaders on both the occasions that he visited. On the first occasion Governor Wa'ili was absent from the country. He was in France. On the second occasion, the Foreign Secretary did meet Al-Wa'ili, as well as other leaders.

The Prime Minister, we were told quite bluntly, was not interested in discussing the situation in the south because it was just after the elections. He came out at Christmas 2005, and it was a combination of meet the troops and talk about new government formation. The one 40-minute meeting that he had was with Ambassador Khalilzad, General Casey, the GOC, John Cooper, and myself in Basra, talking about what we do in terms of Coalition formation.

With hindsight, I would say, because I got a call shortly afterwards from Governor Al-Wa'ili, it was a missed opportunity to develop relations.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

TIM FOY: I very much agree what everybody has said. Essentially London gave the sense of direction, the sense of overall strategy, and the DFID perspective overall programme management in terms of nuts and bolts and contract.

What that did leave us with was a great deal of latitude in terms of the personal relationships, to make the programmes deliver, to make the relationships stick. That was where I think I derived the majority of my pleasure.

In terms of the things that drove the shift in policy, quite clearly the sort of stochastic nature of Iraqi politics had a huge impact. The period of time leading up to the referendum, then, as James said, the election that didn't deliver a government for three months or something like that, and the difficulties that that meant in terms of: did you have a minister to talk to? Who should be making your relationships with?

The other big driving event during my time, I think, was the arrival of US Ambassador Khalilzad, who certainly came with a different perspective, and was to going to fix Iraq in a matter of months/years, bringing all of his relevant experience from Afghanistan, which resulted in the focus on some good things, maybe not terribly well executed, like central government capacity building, the emergence of the PRTs that people have mentioned here as well.

So that was quite a significant event that was actually making sure that we watched which way the American wind was blowing.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: That brings me to the American side,

quite a lot of questions. Perhaps, again, I can go through.

First of all, how far was our strategy co-ordinated with that of the United States? And did you feel able to influence American strategy from where you were?

LINDY CAMERON: I think it was co-ordinated because in a sense one had no choice, because they were so clearly the dominant partner that it would have been pointless doing anything else.

I would say that we were able to get access, and that was what distinguished us from quite a lot of the other Coalition partners, who had significant trouble getting access. We could get access to the highest levels. So I was able to interact with, in a sense, my opposite numbers who would be managing much more significant budgets and numbers of people than me.

Whether we were able to influence it, I think, is much more of a moot point. I would say we would influence it on certain specific issues. So, for example, policy on how to build capacity in certain ministries. We also, I think, did a reasonable job in terms of trying to bring some sort of good development practice. So things like, for example, good practice in general co-ordination, being able to engage with a wider range of players, the World Bank and the UN, such as they were, other donors. But also actually some

good budget management practice. So during the last six months of the CPA, for example, we helped to do a level of supervision of how some of the funding was spent that had come from the Iraqi oil revenues, and then there were pretty basic issues of asking what objectives there were for programme funding, asking how they were going to be measured, asking how it was going to be contracted, that were very basic levels.

So we had some influence, but much more at the tactical level than at the strategic level, I would say.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How much of that was coming from London, and how much was it your initiative on seeing what you saw on the ground?

LINDY CAMERON: The things I'm talking about are really about sort of best practice in terms of what you can do on the ground.

Clearly there was a whole different dialogue going on in terms of influencing US strategy from the London and indeed multinational perspective. But that -- my job was very much to try and deliver best practice.

It was a clear DFID objective to try and ensure the donor community was as effective as possible, and that good development practice was used as much as possible. So, for example, the way that DFID engaged at the various donor

conferences, the sort of example we set through putting money through the various trust funds, were intended not just to have an effect, but also to sort of demonstrate good practice to others.

So, in a sense, that was very much a joined-up London and in-country approach of both setting the right policy and then delivering it effectively in practice.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And on the in-country approach you found you were able to really be quite influential and listened to?

LINDY CAMERON: Yes. Well, we were able to -- yes, as I say, at a tactical level, in a sense. In a sense, what I was saying is we were able to be very influential with everybody else, except for the Americans. We were able to have some influence with the US, partly by being as co-ordinated as possible a group of development players, in a sense. But it was pretty limited, if I'm frank.

SIMON COLLIS: There was only one American senior official in Basra who didn't have secure communications to Baghdad, and I'm not sure that they paid a lot of attention --

THE CHAIRMAN: Was that a political officer?

SIMON COLLIS: Yes, this was the political officer. There were other agencies there, but in terms of providing

political advice to Baghdad, I think it was quite a junior role. As Lindy said, they had reduced their footprint around the country. So it's not as if he had a lot of other people putting back information.

The Americans got their information about what was going on in Iraq, my impression was, primarily through the military, because their military were out in most places, and even where they weren't, the nature of the MND structure was that the different components, including MND South East, had structures which did work through which they could feed up information.

So I felt that my best opportunities to influence Americans were often with American military personnel, senior military personnel, when they visited -- so Casey, Metz(?) -- and going to Baghdad to in effect lobby -- I can't remember the name of the admiral, the American admiral who ran PCO -- people like that. And Petraeus, when he visited on CPATT.

THE CHAIRMAN: Something I ought to know, but don't. Was there an American military presence anywhere in the chain of command in MND South East?

SIMON COLLIS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Or a liaison?

SIMON COLLIS: There was a liaison function, yes. There was a liaison. [redacted][2]

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: On what sort of issues did you feel the need to lobby?

SIMON COLLIS: Well, it was -- on security sector reform, it was about equipping the police and the CPATT money. It was about money, basically. And on the development side, there was a kind of PCO-shaped hole in the infrastructure programme. The DFID programme was aimed at capacity building, poverty reduction, employment generation, and then some of the softer political engagement activities designed to help create a conducive environment for the elections, and wider participation in the elections, some media work and so on.

But the main infrastructure that the Iraqis themselves were hoping for, concrete -- bridges, prisons and schools and so on -- that was supposed to come from PCO, and I think there was a lack of clarity through most of my tour really about what would happen and when. There was very little flexibility in that programme, as far as one could see, because it had been mandated line by line by Congress. Then, as the security situation across the country

[2] Redacted on grounds of national security

deteriorated, the Americans, unsurprisingly, I think, were focusing what money they could pump through at their point of greatest need. So they weren't prioritising the funding that had been intended for the south.

THE CHAIRMAN: Was there also an expectation that the UK would fund the south?

SIMON COLLIS: I think there was, and I think they were being quite polite about it actually. There was a sense that if this really mattered to us so much, then maybe we should find the money, which is fair enough actually.

LINDY CAMERON: There was also an issue that quite a lot of the funding we put into the trust fund, into the World Bank trust fund, wasn't being disbursed as fast as we wanted it to be. So there was a significant contribution made to the World Bank trust fund, precisely because they had the expertise in doing some of that larger infrastructure, which did not disburse at the speed we wanted it to.

SIMON COLLIS: This was the -- it's a bit away from the US bit, but as far as the UN goes, this seemed the biggest concern, I think, about our own money, DFID's money, because the intent behind making these major contributions to the trust fund was sound. It was to set a good example, to help bring in others in the international community to fund,

including people who hadn't been part of the initial project, and who had been stand-offish about funding. So putting it under a UN hat would make it less controversial.

So there were all sorts of good reasons in principle for channeling that money through the UN. But once the money -- once the cheques had been written and the money was sitting in a bank account in New York or somewhere, it wasn't being spent, and yet it was being reported to Parliament as having been spent because it had left DFID. But it was sitting uselessly in a trust fund because the UN weren't in Iraq.

THE CHAIRMAN: There is a 2010 question, which is probably not for yourselves or this afternoon. Did it eventually flow through into the big programme for projects?

JAMES TANSLEY: By the time I got to Basra, the US presence had grown quite considerably. There was a regional embassy office in Basra Palace which was, in terms of personnel, of comparable size, I would guess, to what we had in Basra palace. So getting on for 200 to 250 staff. And this composed, as well as a reconstruction element, prison teams, and police liaison officers. [redacted][3] So in terms of political reporting and secure communications, I think those issues had been resolved by the time I got there.

[3] Redacted on grounds of national security and international relations

SIMON COLLIS: Some of those -- some of the police and other people were there. I was just talking about the political reporting.

JAMES TANSLEY: That's right. Going back to the political side, as I said, there was a political team within the regional embassy office.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry, I'm desperate to intervene. Which you could exploit and use?

JAMES TANSLEY: Which we did exploit and use. We kept very close -- certainly I kept very close -- to the head of the REO, as did the brigade commander in Basra. The head of the REO was regularly invited to meetings at quite a high classification within the brigade, and so far as we could, we were as open as possible with the Americans.

I think in some areas we were able to influence the Americans quite considerably. I think if you look at the way the PRT ended up, it was far closer to what we wanted, rather than what the Americans had originally wanted. That was largely through working closely with the team in Baghdad, with the US team in Baghdad, to get the points across. We had a visit by the relevant officials to Basra to convince them of that.

In other areas, I think the communication was good-

certainly we were communicating on the ground. Whether it was going to the highest echelons was debatable.

In particular, going back to the point about proposals for handing over control of the provinces to the Iraqis, I can remember in February, or possibly early March 2006, General Casey coming to Basra. While it was an amicable meeting, he was clearly surprised that movement towards tactical overwatch was so advanced in Muthanna and Maysan provinces. So he was clearly not fully briefed on that until he came down.

On the other side of the coin, I think I was taken by surprise that he was under the impression that MND South East was guarding the border with Iran, which wasn't part of its mandate, and also providing security to Route Tampa. Both of these were raised as reasons why we should not be moving to provincial Iraqi control in Muthanna and Maysan provinces as quickly as we had intended.

So somewhere along the line the message wasn't getting through to the US military at the highest level.

THE CHAIRMAN: And he was getting advice from somewhere that you could actually police the border between Maysan and Iran?

JAMES TANSLEY: He had it in his mind that it was possible. This was the time when I think Iranian infiltration was

higher than perhaps it had been six months earlier. But certainly he thought that that must be a role of MND South East, even though we had a battle group in Al Amarah with insufficient troops really even to carry on what it was trying to do there. So it was a bit of a surprise. As I said, it was an amicable meeting, and I think frank as well, but there were clear misconceptions about what our intentions and our role were, or what MND South East's intentions were.

THE CHAIRMAN: And capability?

JAMES TANSLEY: And capability.

A separate issue was the question of perception, and I think this dogged discussions with the Americans throughout. I think the view was that there should have been a more aggressive policy, and that was one of the issues which came up as well. Certainly when the Jaish Al Mahdi were getting out of control, the view was we should have been doing more.

THE CHAIRMAN: Discussions about our relationships with the Americans are a private matter within the Protocols of this Inquiry.

Did things change with General Petraeus arriving on the screen? Was that in your time.

JAMES TANSLEY: That wasn't in my time, so I can't comment.

SIMON COLLIS: Just on Petraeus, he didn't have Casey's job during my time, but he had a distinct role. [redacted][4] He clearly had a deep understanding of the situation. He hadn't yet developed the new counter insurgency doctrine, but I think it was while he was at CPATT, he must have been thinking about it.

TIM FOY: In terms of the Americans, they were clearly the factor to influence, [redacted][5]

I was always impressed by the amount of access we got. I must pay tribute to the FCO, particularly William Patey, who would always make a point of inviting us to go along and see Khalilzad and other senior players that I couldn't hope to have got in otherwise.

I think there's a couple of things that were interesting about the influence. One, I was amazed at how and why they had left us to our own devices in certain areas, where I thought they would have had a major interest and influence in, or a desire to be involved in. The Prime Minister's office was one, which gave us fantastic access to the

[4] Redacted on grounds of international relations

[5] Redacted on grounds of international relations

agencies as well, it must be said.

Secondly, on the Ministry of Finance, where they allowed us some hugely important access in very, very significant areas, particularly around things like oil revenues and the rest of it, that I thought they would have wanted to take for themselves.

The second thing is the way in which the American machine works, the multifaceted dimensions to it. You know, to talk about the US is very difficult -- were you are talking about MO; were you talking about USAID; were you talking about DOD --

[redacted][6]

[6] Redacted on grounds of international relations

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I have a question, just jumping back a bit. I'm still curious about your meeting with Casey and Iran. What followed from that? Did he go away and say something ought to be done about Iran, and you should do it?

JAMES TANSLEY: My understanding -- it was shortly before the end of my time, about a month or a month and a half before the end of my time. In that six weeks I didn't see anything visible happen. We continued our preparations and indeed, just after I left, May/June time, I think we did withdraw from Muthanna province, and then later in the autumn from Maysan.

I think the argument was put to him, perhaps slightly more coherently or slightly more emphatically than we had done in Basra, that, as Sir John said, the border with Iran was unpoliceable, and had been during Saddam's time, and was still then, and required a completely different order of commitment than we were able to give.

I assume -- it's after my time -- that those arguments were accepted because we did move ahead, and we pulled out of the two provinces.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was this the first dawning realisation?

JAMES TANSLEY: Dawning realisation -- on Route Tampa,

I think something we tended to forget and wasn't advertised, the Americans had 6,000 troops in Nasiriyah, at the airbase in Nasiriyah, primarily protecting Route Tampa. Now, if you think we had 8,000 troops as part of MND South East, it highlighted quite the differences of commitment that we were under.

In fact the Route Tampa point, I think, was of less concern. I think it would have been more concern if we had pulled out more prematurely from Basra. But certainly the Route Tampa point was able to be addressed with US resources, and I assume it was finessed and Casey realised the argument.

TIM FOY: I think what was driving Casey at that time in particular was the arrival of particular pieces of Iranian military technology. And I think the conversations I was having -- slightly perhaps after you had left -- were a realisation on his part that, frankly in terms of the relationship with Iran, bad though it was, that police by Multinational Forces was maybe not the best border, and that it should be one of the key focuses of -- a revitalised Iraqi border police service was a much more appropriate force to do that work.

SIMON COLLIS: Just on the Iranian border, I think this was an issue quite early on as well. Certainly from the early

period of my arrival there, we were seeing Iranian IED technology coming across the border. It became clear quite quickly, I think, that although the plans to build up the DBE, the border service, weren't really going to have much of an impact on this problem, for reasons of lack of capacity and infiltration, and we certainly didn't have the troops to do it, [redacted][7]

But there was also, I think, again, even from, you know, the beginning of my time there, a realisation that this was ultimately a political problem and that there wasn't going to be a military solution to the problem of Iranian interference in Iraqi politics. I can remember quite early on travelling with a British general, visiting from the UK, to Nasiriyah, with MND South East as well, including the GOC, and sitting with the Governor of Nasiriyah, who said, [redacted][8]

[7] Redacted on grounds of national security

[8] Redacted on grounds of international relations (private conversation with the Governor of Nasiryah

So even where you had Iraqi political leaders who were not under Iranian control, and the Iranians were making systematic efforts to back every horse ahead of the February elections -- but even where you had people who were not at Iranian beck and call, they were still wary, quite understandably, because they knew that the Coalition was moving towards the door, it was looking for an exit, and that once we had exited, Iran would be left as the permanent factor on their border.

So in terms of the relationships they developed, I don't think many of them trusted the Iranians at all. There wasn't a lot of love or ideology there, but there was an understanding of some brutal truths about who would still be there when the rest of us had gone home, and that clearly influenced the thinking of people, senior people from SCIRI and the Badr organisation, many of whom had spent many years, whilst in opposition to Saddam, living Iran. [redacted][9] But they knew that they couldn't be ignored.

THE CHAIRMAN: And SCIRI morphs, we are told, into

[9] Redacted on grounds of international relations

an essentially Iraqi orientated organisation, rather than an Iranian connected one.

SIMON COLLIS: Exactly. But the existence of some connections didn't necessarily mean that you were an Iranian pawn. It simply meant that as a local political leader -- and some of these people were really quite parochial -- you were having to navigate your little universe and pay attention to who had the power.

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't want to oversimplify it, and it's a hugely complex area, I know, but essentially you are saying that the answer to the Iranian problem was (a) political, but (b) it was actually Iraqi politicians who would have to settle and answer it.

SIMON COLLIS: Absolutely, yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: You talked earlier about the constraints in actually delivering your objectives, and security obviously was very high among them.

Firstly, to what extent did security considerations make it very difficult or even impossible for you to do what London was asking you to do? Secondly, what other constraints were standing in your way?

Again, perhaps we can go across the board on this.

LINDY CAMERON: Sure. Security was a huge factor in

delivery, and the biggest single factor by a significant margin in two ways. One, because you had to just predict what security would be like in the design of projects and take it into consideration and remain flexible to a rapidly changing security environment, but in a sense the absolute level of security itself obviously was a bigger factor there than I think it probably has been anywhere else I've worked.

Specifically in Baghdad, the way it affected us in terms of any of the capacity building programmes was that anything that required movement outside the Green Zone meant that you had to be careful in terms of the predictability of travel, you had to be careful in terms of the number of hours you could spend in a particular location, and obviously you had to be very careful about giving advance notice of our movements.

None of these things make it very easy to deliver a capacity building programme, where the ideal situation is that your consultants are sitting from Monday to Friday, or indeed Saturday to Thursday, side by side with their Iraqi partners, coaching them through the jobs they are supposed to be doing. So it's inherently very difficult to do that.

Similarly, on the other hand, security of course for Iraqis themselves was quite a challenge, and as security in Baghdad deteriorated, it made it harder for Iraqis to move

to and from both the Green Zone, but also to and from ministries, for example, which were themselves points of attention for, for example, bombers. So a huge challenge.

Obviously then on the infrastructure side more broadly, clearly -- I mean, I remember the drama over trying to move large pieces of kit around the country which were sometimes quite delicate in engineering terms, meaning that if they were damaged in any way in fact, you basically had to start all over again.

So a massive issue. As I say, I think that the first.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can you just pause on that? Have we got our sequencing wrong? Was there any point in trying to do infrastructure before security had got sorted out to a more acceptable level?

LINDY CAMERON: Well, remember, I think, that we in a sense actually had not expected that we would be doing so much of it in that post-CPA period. So we had delivered, as part of the CPA, a significant level of infrastructure, and the Emergency Infrastructure Programme, I think, was reasonably successful, particularly in the south, in the period when security wasn't as bad. I remember back in 2004 we didn't expect security to deteriorate as much in the south as it then did subsequently.

We were expecting some more of that to be done both by

the Iraqis themselves, and then by a range of other agencies.

So I think it's quite hard -- infrastructure projects essentially require quite a long period of time. I think partly it's that we didn't anticipate a deterioration to the extent that we saw. Partly it's that in a sense we were pulled back into doing something that we were doing because of the issues you raised earlier, I think, PCO not delivering as fast as it expected to in the south, and the need to demonstrate some visible progress.

In terms of the capacity building work, I think actually we were reasonably successful in terms of flexing what we had to deal with some of the constraints. For example, we pulled consultants into the Green Zone, found alternative offices for them to work in. One of the reasons the Prime Minister's office work was so successful was that the Prime Minister's office was in the Green Zone. So it was actually possible for our team to spend every day of the week there with them, build capacity full time. It did impose, obviously, a security constraint on the Iraqis themselves who had to travel, but a number of those key officials themselves lived inside the Green Zone. So biggest single issue.

In terms of other constraints, clearly there was an issue

in terms of expertise. I think that the limited range of donor partners I referred to earlier meant that you got a slightly more limited pool of expertise in some areas. Recruiting for jobs was not always very easy. Certain technical specialties, again, quite challenging.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: This is international expertise?

LINDY CAMERON: International and Iraqi in a sense, because in some areas the Iraqis had retained more expertise than in others. They had proved to be extremely good at patching things up, but less good, for example, as I think again you referred to earlier, on, for example, some of the connections between the centre and the periphery, in terms of financial management connections, for example.

I think the predictability issue was really key, actually, just being able to take a view in 2004 on what things were going to look like in 2006/2007/2008, in a sense, and design a strategy that was an enduring one on that basis.

I think to some extent the nature of the problem changed quite significantly. Obviously back in the first half of 2004, it was only becoming clear the extent of the sort of insurgency that was going to be faced, and the fact that the strategy that was needed was going to be more of a counter insurgency strategy and less of simply a rapid capacity

building for government strategy. I think we probably were too slow to recognise the nature of that change, and to respond to that as effectively as possible, and I think that's where the complexity of the issue I referred to earlier, of whether what we had added up to the right strategy, was a particular challenge.

SIMON COLLIS: Yes. Security was the most important factor, and by several orders of magnitude more significant than any other single constraint, because it made it much more difficult to tackle any of the other constraints.

In Basra, the Basra Palace perimeter was small, unlike the Green Zone. I remember every time you went to Baghdad at that time, it was surprising, the kind of different perceptions you had. The perception in Baghdad, where people were under the cosh in terms of levels of violence, was that we were much more relaxed in Basra, and that was partly, I think, also an American impression. But in terms of staff, in the Green Zone you could travel around in soft skin vehicles. You didn't have to carry body armour at that time. People were travelling around on their own at night. It was quite remarkable.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: When you wanted to get out, could you get the protection that you needed from the military, or were they reluctant to be diverted from their primary objectives

into providing protection for civilian parts of the operation? How joined up were you on that?

SIMON COLLIS: We were very joined up. The military understood that they couldn't achieve their objective without the civilian side making progress on its objectives, and the division of labour was a sensible one.

The military controlled the overall security environment in Basra. We hadn't had the handover at that stage. There was a company of troops based at the Basra Palace compound who did the forward defence, the stuff which private contractors can't do because it involves going out into Iraq with guns. And that deterred many of the standoff attacks by making it more risky for the attackers.

What we did with the consulate was that we had a team of about 200 CRG personnel who were responsible for the transport. They had the --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: CRG being a private security company --

SIMON COLLIS: Control Risks Group, sorry. They were good people. They were professional. They were well organised. Many of them had been in Iraq during the CPA period. They were virtually all ex-British military. So their links to the British military in Basra were good, and outside Basra, when we were travelling to Muthanna or to Nasiriyah, because

of the CPA experience it included personnel who knew their way around the streets there. My team found their way around the streets of Nasiriyah better than the Italians could, although that was their home patch.

So that was good, and we had a -- that was about 200 people. We had about 70 Gurkhas who were doing perimeter defence, and they did their job.

The security threats were -- first of all, there was the standoff attack thread. I think during my time there there was something like three dozen occasions when there were standoff attacks by mortar and rocket on the consulate or on the wider Basra Palace site. You couldn't always distinguish between the consulate area and the other areas. Each of those occasions could include a number of mortars or rockets, but there were about three dozen, as I recall.

That was dealt with by hardening our accommodation and offices where we could, and putting in place physical security that wasn't fully in place at the time of the handover. So that was a major concern, at least during the initial period, just hardening up your mission, getting anti-shatter film on glasses, and there was a risk of -- I think from a lessons learned perspective, the problem was that we had been planning for something that was going to be particularly strong and well defended, even if it was going

to take six months for BR glass to be procured from Germany, which is no good if you are operating for the people who are there for that six-month period. You need to find immediate solutions. So you need to make sure that the best doesn't become the enemy of the good, something the military understand intimately, and which we took a little while to learn, I think, in hardening up.

For travel out, the most important decision I took every day was whether we went out that day or not, and there was a process which we put in place to manage that. We were never the first out. The military were always the first out. That was the most dangerous time because IEDs could have been laid overnight down any route. We would never have our civilian vehicles as the first down any particular route in the day.

There was an intelligence feed from the MND South East overnight stocktake. The squadron leader who was the liaison officer at the consulate would tune into that, as would the officer commanding the company that was responsible for our protection. They would then relay that to me at the morning meeting. [redacted][10] and there was a liaison mechanism between the company, which also provided the quick reaction

[10] Redacted on grounds of national security

force for that part of Basra, the force that would go out in the event of an incident and provide back-up. They had a link, as a kind of operation say, with the CRG link, which was separate, but they kept in close touch.

So I felt that in terms of making sure we had the best possible information before we went out, we could take stock. We would then take a decision about whether to go out, and if so, where and how. When we did go out, we would go out in a way that was appropriate to the level of threat we felt at the day. [redacted][11]

So we tried to be flexible within a system that maximised the amount of information we had, and knowing that that was the only way you could deliver everything else you had to deliver. As Lindy said, you couldn't -- I couldn't see the governor unless I could get out. He would come into Basra Palace sometimes, but you couldn't just operate on the basis that people would come and see, you. Of course some of them wouldn't come in as a matter of principle. You had to go

[11] Redacted on grounds of national security

and see them. Some of the senior religious figures, you had to go and see them. Some of the OMS people, Asat Al-Basri and so on, you had to go and see him. He would never come into the consulate.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Obviously this is the massive part of your life, dealing with security, dealing with the threat. You have a huge infrastructure, huge numbers of people looking after it.

Did you feel, you and indeed James, that you were able to do enough of a worthwhile job in your respective periods in Basra to justify all of that, or was it just disproportionate, the profit and loss account?

SIMON COLLIS: Well, it's not as if you had another option.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Well, did we have to be in Basra?

SIMON COLLIS: I think we did.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: To fly the flag? What product were we actually getting, other than saying we are here, and keeping ourselves alive?

SIMON COLLIS: Once the decision had been -- this is kind of not just about local delivery of Basra. This is a wider political point. But once the strategic decisions had been taken to do what we did, you then acquire a set of

responsibilities for what happens next, not least legally as an occupying power initially. Then with the transfer of sovereignty there is, if not a legal, then a moral obligation that remains.

There was also the practical matter that British forces were in that area, and you needed to -- you couldn't just leave it to the J9 teams to do local painting schools type engagement to deliver development. And you did need a political engagement that went beyond what the military could do. They had their own lines, and they were politically astute people, but they approached it from a certain perspective, and Iraqis understand that. They needed civilian interlocutors.

There is a profit and loss account, and the balance tipped in the other governorates actually. We were going to have, under the original country assistance plan, what would have been a prototype PRT almost, although I don't know exactly what a PRT looks like. That came after me. But there were plans to have teams in the governorates that would do capacity building and that would replicate in Nasiriyah and Maysan what we were doing in Basra. It became clear that the infrastructure and the security, primarily the security because you needed the communications, you needed the cars, you needed the personnel, and that all

stacked up, so that what you could hope to achieve compared with the cost no longer made sense and we didn't do it.

In Basra I think it did make sense, but it meant that -- I realise my original answer to this question about the security was a long one. But that's because security took up probably 60 or 70 per cent of my day, because if you didn't do that, you couldn't do anything else. You didn't start your day job until you had factored all of that into it.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you had a 30 to 40 per cent of the day in which you could do other things?

SIMON COLLIS: Exactly.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: James, what was it like in your period?

JAMES TANSLEY: Although we haven't got the Consul General between Simon and myself here, I think the period in late summer 2005 saw a significant deterioration in the security situation in Basra. There was more widespread use of explosively formed projectile IEDs, and one of those killed two of our CRG team in early August 2005. But they were being used on a more regular basis, and I think, following that incident, there was a major clampdown on what we could and what we could not do in terms of road movements within southern Iraq and within Basra itself. So you could not

drive from Basra Palace in the south of Basra up to the airport in the north of Basra because the roads were deemed to be too unsafe, even with armoured vehicles travelling with all the precautions outlined.

Travel in northern Basra was limited, to all intents and purposes, to travel within Warrior vehicles, even though they're not invulnerable to attack by EFPs, as we found out, as one carrying two members of the consulate staff was hit during my time, although thankfully no one was seriously hurt. So there were very real constraints on movement.

We also had a stepping up of attacks on Basra Palace compound. It went in waves. Immediately after the Jameat incident, which was just before I arrived, there was a significant increase in terms of mortar and Katousha attacks on the compound. They fell away during much of the autumn, picked up again in the New Year, and increased after that until the time I left.

In my last few days I was asking the same question as you did to Simon. Was the continued presence of civilian personnel justified, given the amount of work they were doing? And we drew down quite severely on staff within Basra Palace at that time, because effectively there was very little useful work which was being done by a large number of staff.

Now, it wasn't just the security aspects. I would actually say that in my time far more significant were the political constraints. The Jameat incident effectively destroyed working relationships between ourselves and Basra Council and the governorate. Although we patched things up, there was still an underlying suspicion, and it was difficult to build, I would say, particularly constructive relations with the officialdom or the government in Basra province throughout my time.

Whatever we might have thought of Al Wa'ili, he was the governor and he took a very firm stance in response to the Jameat incident.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And you couldn't pray Baghdad in aid because the country just didn't work like that.

JAMES TANSLEY: That's correct. We have heard earlier there was very little communication between Baghdad and Basra. I think, in terms of arrangements, we had a very federal structure within Iraq. The lines of responsibility were blurred in some incidences. Who had responsibility for various matters was often a matter of discussion, and governors and provincial councils pushed it as hard as they could. I think Basra was bad, but Maysan, for example, was almost a semi-independent state in southern Iraq in terms of how it worked with Baghdad.

The other point was that Baghdad had its own problems. We have talked about the importance of the national debate. There wasn't the time to get involved in disputes down in southern Iraq which, compared with the disputes in Al-Anbar or wherever, particularly in northern Iraq in the Sunni areas, were relatively minor.

Another point is that both the provincial government and the interim administration from the elections, the formation of the main government, was predominantly Shia, or at least -- and there was a difference -- there were political factors. You didn't take a hard line against politicians from parties who were likely to be your allies in the next government, and we saw that very much after the elections with the politicking in Baghdad. You couldn't get a firm line against what we saw as very recalcitrant politicians down in southern Iraq.

So I would say actually the biggest --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The profit and loss account, therefore, at your period, the profit element in it was slimmer than in Simon's?

JAMES TANSLEY: I would have said so.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: We had to hang in there because --

JAMES TANSLEY: We had to hang in there, and we hoped for

things would improve.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you couldn't do much other than hunker down, and --

JAMES TANSLEY: We could carry on with the DFID programmes. We did continue with a very effective prisons programme. We did carry on with the police training within Basra, and as I said, our strategic objective was to prepare for handing over to Iraqi control, and you could move ahead with that in some ways. In the other provinces, Muthanna and Nasiriyah in particular, it was relatively easy to deal with the local politicians.

The trouble came when you did have disputes. It was clear that we had very little leverage to get local politicians to adopt a co-operative line. And I think the Jameat incident was a key incident, both in my time and looking after September 2005. The atmosphere of trust within Basra was destroyed, and when you came to it, we could never build up that same degree of trust again.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: We are going to take a short tea break in a minute. Just before we do, one last question, which I will direct on Tim, but the others may wish to comment on briefly.

We have heard in earlier sessions and public sessions,

particularly from military witnesses but not only, that there were quite a lot of tensions between MND South East and DFID, partly because the military and DFID had very different ideas about what we should be spending money on.

Now, you were there not in the initial period, but in 2005 and 2006. Had we overcome that? Some of the later witnesses, witnesses from later periods, said that by the end we had got through this and out, but you are in the middle period. What was it like, and do you want to comment on any of these other issues?

TIM FOY: I'll answer that question first and then come back, because I think there have been some interesting things said.

Yes. There was a lot more tension than people would publicly utter, and what always amazed me --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: In that case it was really bad?

TIM FOY: It was bad, to be perfectly honest. Unfortunately it replicated itself in Afghanistan, which I know we are not talking about, but some of the planning carried through.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Well, we want to make some comparisons on that, actually.

TIM FOY: And I think it comes from initial beliefs that

DFID wasn't interested in Iraq and was dragged kicking and screaming into doing some stuff in Iraq, and then trying to do the minimum, and it was precious in terms of its new development goals, its international development act, all of which precluded it from doing things. But I think at the time I was thinking this as well, so it's not an after hours thought, if you like, or a 2010 thought.

For me, many of the problems stemmed from a couple of issues. The first is that -- I'll be careful how I say it -- additional resourcing and reorganisation and restructuring of the way in which civil effect was organised could not make up for poor strategic decision, could not make up for the problems which existed in Iraq, which was that Iraq in 2003 was a far more broken country than we had thought it was. It wasn't simply somewhere that was amenable to reconstruction. It was somewhere which had had its political heart, if you like, destroyed through 30-odd years of Ba'athism and the emergence, by taking the lid off in 2003, of a nascent civil war.

Administratively, it had largely ceased to exist. The interlocutors that Lindy and myself worked with were either under the age of 25 and educated overseas or over the age of 60 and invariably educated in Manchester. There wasn't a great deal in between.

So I think there was this belief. The second part of the belief, I think, was that somehow the application of large amounts of development money would suddenly result in peace breaking out. The only thing that was missing was development.

It comes back to your question about sequencing, about was the situation right for infrastructural development. Again, I see the same issues in Afghanistan today, and that is that if only you can bring development, consent will happen and people will start to get on with each other, and all of the underlying political, ethnic and tribal dimensions which are underpinning the insecurity we face -- and remember that that insecurity is a manifestation of a deep-lying conflict in that country. It's not just violence directed at us. That just wasn't really grasped in the first day.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: We have had one witness arguing to us very cogently that the most important part of reconstruction is not reconstructing buildings and infrastructure; it's reconstructing the institutions first of all, the systems. So you get, in a sense, a sequence there of security, i.e. get an acceptable measure of law and order, institutions, a system of government and administration that works under law, and then at that point you can start investing in

concrete bricks and mortar.

Now, I don't want to impose that view on you. I'm just seeking your comments on it.

TIM FOY: I would agree. I think particularly -- if I can name names, my own particular encounters in Basra with General Shirreff and now Brigadier Cowan around Operation SINBAD, and just how good SINBAD was and the civilian side had failed to deliver on that. There was this confusion, I think, between consent building activities, which had a very narrow focus, and this belief that employing military age males would somehow stop people planting IEDs, which I think is a little bit simplistic, to be honest; stabilisation, which you have described, rebuilding those institutions that are necessary to build a basis for a more sustainable political settlement; and longer term development, which, to be successful, really has to come once you stabilise a situation and you've got a direction in terms of progressive politics moving forward. I think we never really understood the difference and where we were in that spectrum.

I can understand why, when soldiers are having stones thrown at them, people are saying, if you only fixed the electricity -- well, I'm sorry, it was a 20-year problem and a $10 billion problem. It wasn't a £50 million generator

problem.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think at that point we had probably better pause for a break, but we will come back after the interval. There are obviously quite a lot of lessons we need to learn.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Thank you Rod. Let's come back in five minutes.

(3.24 pm)

(A short break)

(3.30 pm)

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's restart.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Listening to you earlier, it seems to me you probably didn't have sufficient resources. It would just be important to hear from all of you whether you felt you had sufficient resources to deliver what you were asked to deliver.

TIM FOY: Money and people. I would always start with people first, because that's the key.

I personally would have liked to have seen -- and it's partly related to security, and one of the issues of security, on the results of security was, as Lindy has mentioned, we had a very forward diplomatic operation and a much bigger sort of back to office function, with advisory

capacity in London, and I think that was a shame. It would have been much nicer had we had the advisory capacity up front. So I think some redistribution of resources would have been useful, but the security created the problem there.

In terms of the quality of consultants which we were able to engage to work for us in terms of the machinery of the centre of government, the Prime Minister's office, to work within the finance department, I think we would be hard pushed to have got better people. They were people that gave us fantastic leverage with the Americans, and where we punched genuinely above our weight, it was the quality of expertise that we were able to bring in.

The Americans might have outnumbered us, but in terms of quality, I think there was a great deal of difference, and that brought us an awful lot of kudos. It brought us that access that I spoke about, the ability to engage at the highest level. I am amazed that it was the UK that basically got the standby agreement with the IMF, resolves Iraq's debt problems. It wasn't the United States. It was about half a dozen UK consultants that did it.

THE CHAIRMAN: And that is a very big thing, in terms of the numbers and significance.

TIM FOY: It was a big thing, and we should be quite proud

of that.

In terms of money, more money would have been nice. Would it have had effect? It's interesting that you talk about the balance. All issues are at the margin.

Well, I think two things, really. When you are the 2 per cent shareholder, doubling it up to 4 per cent isn't really going to make an awful lot of difference relative to what you can do. It's what you do with the money.

The two big things in Iraq were obviously to try to get -- well, three big things. First and foremost, to try to get the Iraqis to finance more of this stuff themselves, because that's the effect that we needed the Iraqis to see, was that their own state was taking control of their own resources and building a credible state. And a state that managed to spend two-thirds of its budget on subsidiaries, about half of that turning an oil producing country into the only country with a petrol queue 5 miles along, was a serious issue that we needed to get the Iraqis to be doing it, and to get the Americans to use the resources which they had better, and to bring others in in terms of that long-term duration.

So in terms of people, yes, it would have been nice had we, for security reasons, been able to have a few more, but I think the areas we were working in were right.

In terms of money, at the margin maybe it might have made a little bit of a difference, but we were such a smaller minority player, and were always going to be in that role, that even a very significant increase in the budget I don't think would have had a huge overall impact.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you get the staff you wanted in time? When you made the request was there a time lag? Were there delays?

TIM FOY: Generally speaking, I think we did reasonably well in terms of acquiring core staff from DFID, certainly in the early years. I think it's got progressively harder as the engagement has progressed because the lustre of going has gone there. The opportunities to be more favourably considered for promotion have maybe rubbed off if you find everybody has been there. I have no grudge.

I think that has got progressively harder, but I think we were. And I think the important thing about it, and the important thing about using consultants, was that we were able to open up to a wider pool. The thing about the consultants was that many of them were doing it, not because of the financial gains, although we did pay well, and I think it is important to recognise you need to pay well to get good people, and the costs of paying them relative to the security costs is relatively small anyway. So you want

your best value for money at the margin. People were doing it because they genuinely found the work challenging and exciting. [redacted][12] So we were getting top quality people who were enjoying the work that they were --

THE CHAIRMAN: Mainly finishing in the UK pool of consultants?

TIM FOY: No, we were quite happy to work internationally.

LINDY CAMERON: One of our top consultants was Canadian.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: And that gave you a lot more flexibility?

TIM FOY: A lot more flexibility, and that's one of the great things about having untied aid.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How about you, in terms of resources and people?

JAMES TANSLEY: It's a difficult question to answer because there are expectations about what we were trying to achieve and what was realistic to achieve, and I think it depends where you were sitting.

I think if the objective, which I think Sir Rod

[12] Redacted on grounds of international relations

mentioned, is that southern Iraq should be an exemplar, in Tony Blair's words, it was very difficult to see how we were going to do that with the level of resources that we had to commit within southern Iraq.

When I got to Iraq there were obvious political difficulties, security difficulties, and I think I wrote fairly early on that, given the level of resources that we have to devote to the problem, we should be looking to withdraw with honour, rather than to talk about legacies.

I think in terms of staff, the consulates, I think we had -- it was an odd team[13]. We had a very large police team, we had contract police officers, we had a prisons team, we had a large DFID team. From memory I think two were career DFID and the remainder contractors. We had a very large CRG presence, an armoured group presence, and a small MOD presence. It was an odd conglomeration.

I think the problem I would have said was that, certainly post the Jameat incident, a number of people in my political section -- I think two out of four -- wanted to leave early, and did. It was very difficult to get anyone to volunteer to come to Basra in such circumstances. I think we did not have another permanent staff member, as opposed to a temporary staff member, for a number of months on the

[13] Witness clarified afterwards that “by FCO standards” it was “an untypical arrangements”.

political side to those who were not in place.

It was not seen as an attractive option, either for personal reasons. As Simon has said, the lifestyle was significantly different from what it was in Baghdad with the Green Zone. You were encased within a relatively small perimeter for much of your time. I was luckier than most that I had freedom to travel a bit more than most personnel in Basra in my time and could get out of the compound, albeit in highly protected convoys or by helicopter.

Also, I think there was a view, in purely career terms that the high profile work -- I wouldn't say interesting work, but the high profile work -- was being done up in Baghdad, liaising with ministers, most of whom spoke English and were all western educated and quite smooth, suave and sophisticated, compared with the politicians we had to deal with down in Basra.

So in many ways it was a certain sort of person who would have enjoyed his time or her time in Basra. I think there were those who did. I think I would have liked it if the Foreign Office could have come up with another Arabist.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you didn't -- Arabist --

JAMES TANSLEY: Arabic speaker.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You had nobody speaking Arabic?

JAMES TANSLEY: Apart from myself. That was it.

I would have also said that, comparing terms and conditions of service between the FCO and the political advisers who were attached to MND South East, I would have preferred perhaps an arrangement that the Pol Ads had, which I thought was more effective than what the FCO was doing, both in terms of the level on health and safety reasons, what they could and could not do, in terms of how often they had their decompression breaks.

So there were a number of reasons. I don't say it's necessarily anyone's fault. As I said, I think we could have had more impact in terms of personnel if we had people who were a bit more specialist in the region and who spoke Arabic, and if we could have got people to come at the time when I most needed them.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What do you think could have been done to improve the situation?

JAMES TANSLEY: I haven't got a clue. Under our current terms and conditions of service you can't tell someone in the Foreign Office to go to Basra. It's a voluntary thing, and that was the Foreign Office's policy. No matter how you present it, being told you are going to be sitting in a fortified camp, being mortared every evening and probably not seeing daylight for a number of -- not so much daylight,

but not seeing the outside world for six weeks at a time, is not a particularly good sell, particularly if you feel that no one in London appreciates what you are doing.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So what you are saying is that there you were, wanting to be an exemplar, but you didn't really have the right team. You had this odd collection of people --

JAMES TANSLEY: The incentives weren't there.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: There was a mismatch.

JAMES TANSLEY: As Tim said, September 2005, I think --

TIM FOY: The gloss was coming off.

JAMES TANSLEY: The gloss was coming off Iraq, even if it have been a bit more attractive.

One other thing, talking about money. The thing that dominated our lives, was not money and people. It was helicopters.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Of course. Simon?

SIMON COLLIS: We had good people. The difficulty was being able to deploy them, in the way that James mentioned, helicopters. We were locked down for all of August 2004. We were locked down again for almost a month later in 2004.

The constraints that that imposed limited impact, and you

had to bear in mind just -- if I might just loop back to immediately before the tea break, the security situation went in waves, as somebody else said. But it was also different for different people at the same time. There might be periods where we felt really under the cosh in the consulate in Basra, or the military too, but our Iraqi interlocutors were feeling very comfortable because their lives were safe. They weren't in a period where people were being assassinated or killed or where there was tribal conflict.

Then there would be other periods -- there was one period in particular when there was a strong tribal conflict in northern Basra that was clearly having an impact on not just the communities involved, but it was preventing Basrawis getting out of Basra on the road north because it was just impassable. We weren't travelling that road anyway. We were flying over it. So we hadn't noticed until the Iraqis told us.

So perceptions could matter a lot, and doing things like getting Iraqi politicians to Baghdad for the national convention when they couldn't travel by road, you had to deploy a C130. Getting the criminal justice system to get off zero, and you talk about the independence of the judiciary. One of the things you had to do was to give

judges body armour and ensure that they had Iraqi bodyguards who could at least give them a modicum of protection.

I would like to pay tribute to the people we did have, the junior staff who didn't leave their offices or their pods, half a container or a soft skinned Nissan hut for a bar, which was out of bounds whenever we were under regular standoff fire, and who, as James was saying, would stay there for six weeks at a time. These were people who weren't able to leave. They didn't have exciting jobs in many cases, and our duty of care to them was no different than if they'd been working in a library in East Sussex in terms of the legal duty of care or the risk that they were nominally supposed to be undertaking. I don't think we were very honest about that at the time or subsequently.

Michael Jay, as PUS at the time, gave me my standard duty of care brief as part of my predeparture briefing before I left. But the reality just didn't correspond to -- if I had applied that strictly, nobody would have gone out at all. In fact we would closed the consulate if you had applied East Sussex library duties of care to a civil servant.

Of course this was part of the tension with the military because they were taking risks. They could understand that we weren't taking the same risks, but it did impact on how

we were able to get out.

So that was the constraint on people, not the quality of the individuals.

The possible exception to that was on the policing side, where there were some excellent people, mostly people who had taken early retirement from the RUC as part of the reshaping of that force, which had taken place just a year or so before, I think. You had a number of people who were very mature, very capable, very highly trained, who had got the Patten retirement package, but weren't quite ready to spend the rest of their lives playing golf. They were people who knew how to work with the British military, who were well integrated, and who understood that whole nexus of clannish politics and violence and terrorism and mafia incentives quite well. People who had never been in the Middle East who had an astonishing understanding of the dynamics, really, of the situations at a tactical level and who were resilient.

But there weren't enough of them, and we didn't get senior police from other police forces. My understanding, although I'm not entirely sure of the reasons, was that ACPO had a downer on the whole project. The then Commissioner of the Met had basically said he wasn't going to release any of his people. So that deprived us of -- you could only get

people who had retired. It's a different sort of person then.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would the English model, as opposed to the Northern Ireland model, have been appropriate anyway?

SIMON COLLIS: Exactly. That's the other key point. You needed, in some ways, the Italian carabinieri. That gendarmerie style of policing was more appropriate to the environment in which we were trying to operate.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's useful to pursue this theme, if we may. We have heard some evidence that there was almost a sequence you need to go through. You need first of all to establish security, which is essentially military, but then you also need civil security and build out from that a justice system that starts to work. Only after that can you slowly approach the notion of, as it were, community policing with some degree of trust between the local community and the Police Service, and that you can't do it all in one package or just on one model. Does that make sense?

SIMON COLLIS: It does, but I'm not sure it's a sequencing thing. Some things have to come first, because otherwise you can't do the others. But I started off thinking that we should focus our police training very much on public order issues, and then you learn very quickly that actually if you

approach every problem as a public order issue rather than a criminal issue, then at most you will just be treading water. You are not really going to advance. You need a working robust criminal justice system.

THE CHAIRMAN: If you arrest someone, you've got to do something with them.

SIMON COLLIS: Exactly. Then there are other factors that come into play there. Because of the position that the British Government took about not transferring people into the Iraqi criminal justice system if they were liable to face the death penalty, it meant that the people who posed the greatest security threat, to not just Coalition forces but also to Iraqi people and Iraqi society, were being detained and then released, rather than being processed through criminal justice system. Moves were made to adapt by -- as enough Iraqi police were trained up, and you had these kind of almost like a vetted unit, a tactical support unit in Iraq, where Iraqi police officers would go with people and make the arrests. So people who were arrested were not entering British custody at any point. They entered the Iraqi criminal justice system. Then you could begin to make progress, but it's very slow.

Building a forensic capability, surprisingly, I think, was very important there because, again, if you want to get

away from interrogation techniques that are always going to lead to abuse, you need to develop a forensic capability, and Iraqis themselves understood that actually.

JAMES TANSLEY: Perhaps I can carry on from one point. When you are looking at security sector reform, it is important not to forget the developments or the reform of the judicial system, and I think that was an issue which kept on coming up. The judicial process was not working. Certainly it was not working in southern Iraq and, as Simon said, it had problems because people were being released.

It had other problems in terms of political consent because our detention policy was a singular bone of contention with local politicians. If we could have demonstrated that we could hand them over to a satisfactory judicial process, it would have made all our lives a lot easier. We put a lot of resources into policing. We put a lot of resources into the prison system. Yet we didn't put the same amount of resources in reforming or building up the judicial process and placing the emphasis on that. Ultimately, if a society is going to work, it's going to work under the rule of law, and we perhaps didn't place as much emphasis on that as we should have done.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Lindy, I want to come to you about issues of resources and money and your experience and your

views on some of the issues that we have been discussing.

LINDY CAMERON: Okay. I think, to start with, in, in a sense, late 2003 before I got there and early 2004, it was quite hard for us to get the right people. It's important not to underestimate the impact that the bombing of the Canal Hotel had on willingness of staff to come and work in Iraq at that time, and it was a hugely difficult and traumatic event for the whole community. I recall having to brief staff before they arrived that they had to be aware that friends and family would be quite aggressive with them about why it was they wanted to put themselves at risk to do something that many people considered to be something which was a mistake.

It meant it was quite challenging to get the staff, and certainly early on that was an issue. It became easier, I think, as the sense that there was a possibility to get things done, that there were professionally rewarding jobs to be done, particularly in Baghdad, I think, became clear. And I think late 2004/2005 we were in a stage where we had a good consultancy team. I don't wish that I had more people. I wish that they'd been able to get out more. So I wish I could have had utilisation of the staff I had there because probably we were running at 30 to 40 per cent max of what they could have done in an entirely open security

environment.

I think we did have slightly more trouble staffing the office in Basra, again because of some of the challenges that have been highlighted, and I think that, again in retrospect, given the importance that Basra had, particularly towards the later period, I think that was something we should probably have put more effort into at the time. And I think that goes back to this issue of the way that the whole CPA transitioned in a sense in the south.

In terms of money, the US supplemental was 18.something billion. I don't think at the margins it was going to make that big a difference. I think there's an issue about how resources were allocated, how Iraqi funds from spent. I don't think that more money was a binding constraint. I think it was what you could do with it.

I agree that transport was a key factor. I remember being asked for advice on -- I can't remember where it was. I think it was either Najaf or Nasiriyah. No, it was Najaf, actually, being asked for advice on it, and the simple answer was we couldn't get somebody there. It was just not possible with the security constraints, given the need for close protection and given the ability to actually get -- it was not possible to get a civilian there to observe, and certainly they couldn't have got out of the military base if

they had.

The other people I regret in a sense missing were the other partners. So what I would have liked more of were more people from the UN and the World Bank. You know, the fact we were missing for quite a long time a World Bank presence on the ground, and in a sense then faked it by paying somebody to be the World Bank representative, was a really key gap.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I ask a question of all four of you? Were there any challenges in working with the local Iraqi people, and challenges for them, because in a way were they seen to be traitors in working with you? How did that pan out?

The other thing I want to ask you, at least Tim and you, Lindy, you have both served in Afghanistan. This is an ongoing lessons served. Are there things you've applied and lessons you want to draw from that?

Those two areas, if you can just comment.

LINDY CAMERON: Sure. I think in terms of local staff, absolutely. I understand there's an ongoing legal case, so we're limited in what we are able to say. But certainly people, staff who worked for us did so willingly, but at some personal risk. And I think that it was a constant challenge. Much as colleagues have described the challenge

of managing security for international staff, it was an equally significant part of my day to ensure that we were constantly thinking through the way we behaved in order to maximise security for our local staff, and indeed for our interlocutors, for Iraqi officials we worked with and who took huge risks.

In terms of lessons from Iraq to Afghanistan, I think there's no doubt we're in a totally different place to where we were in 2003. I think we've moved on hugely in terms of what we were learned about stabilisation, what we have learned in terms of the way we make, in a sense, a cross-HMG operation work. I'm head of the PRT in Helmand, and clearly an awful lot of the lessons the Stabilisation Unit has been able to learn and transmit, the way we prepare staff, the way we recruit staff, the way we work as a cross-Government team, are built on things that didn't work as well as they could have done in Iraq or things that we have understood better.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: It's actually real; it's not just something that you talk about.

LINDY CAMERON: It's absolutely real. I head a team of effectively 250 people in civil and military across Helmand in the PRT from a raft of different Government departments. I currently work for the Foreign Office, but my parent

department is DFID. We are applying a huge amount of what we learned through the whole Iraq experience, I think, not just the early stage, but also the later experience of the PRT, to Afghanistan, and actually the PRT in Afghanistan -- the Helmand PRT is recognised to be the best in Afghanistan by most of our interlocutors, including a large number of the US interlocutors. So I think we have come a long way.

To go back a little to the point you made earlier about the relationships, the Civ/Mil relationships, again I think it's important not to underestimate the impact of, in a sense, the political debate in 2003, and the perception that that was an institutional or a personal or staff debate between departments rather than, in a sense, a debate between Cabinet ministers. I think that we spent a lot of time trying to recover from that perception, because much of the military in particular assumed that the whole of DFID had personal views which reflected some of that debate. Now, some of them did, but I think, frankly, those who were working in Iraq wouldn't have been there if they had, and certainly took a very pragmatic approach to recognising we were in the situation we were in, and we had to do the best job we could in the circumstances.

But given the number of people involved and the sort of ratio DFID staff in country to military in country, I had

fantastically good personal relationships with General Brims and General Kiszely . But convincing people one by one just wasn't going to go an awfully long way.

It took, I think, until the military themselves believed that there had been an institutional change and started to communicate it to each other, and until actually some of the work the Stabilisation Unit did in terms of getting people on to military courses, you know, working and training together much more up front -- I myself did the Higher Command and Staff Course at Shrivenham, which is the military's senior staff course, after I came back from Afghanistan the first time round. I think that kind of training together meant that people realised that actually there was a real intention on DFID's part to actually make this work collectively.

So I think we have come a long way. I think they are still both very unique cases in a sense, and I think we have to be careful (a) not to generalise from Iraq to Afghanistan, but (b) not to assume that Afghanistan is somehow in itself an example which will translate necessarily to other places.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Tim, you have done an interesting report on all of this.

TIM FOY: To add an interesting twist, I suppose, we had

some very, very good locally engaged staff. We also had some fantastic national counterparts who took genuine risks. I'm thinking of the famous Dr Faik in the Ministry of Finance, who must have had half a dozen assassination attempts on him, one way or another, but still kept on coming in. Some of them were very much driven by this sense of nationalism, which was very strong, this release of genuine Iraqi spirit after 2003. So I think we were blessed on that score.

In terms of lessons learned, for sure it's got better in terms of -- I'm trying not use the term -- the comprehensive approach, and it's got better at lots of different levels.

The first is, I think, in the way in which the centre operates and organises. It's got a lot slicker. Margaret is here, so I have to say this. No, I would say it anyway.

I think the ability to get DOP(I), which then became NSID, which then became NSC, and the recognition that those issues need to be taken on board at a Cabinet level, is quite clearly enshrined now and understood. I think it's very important that the International Development Secretary is there because he has a view, not simply on development issues or aid issues, but because he's an important player. So I think at the centre it's got better.

In terms of the stabilisation unit, although I still

think we're having difficulty working out what the stabilisation unit really should do, whether it should simply generate resources or take responsibility to deliver outcomes, I think we have got the notion of stabilisation tasks and capability development a lot better.

I think the relationship with the military is a lot better. I'm going to say something that's slightly contradictory to what I said before, and that is that most military officers know they will deploy alongside civilians, and so -- and not least because of their experience in Ireland -- they are actually a little bit better at working under civil authority than many civilians who will only ever work alongside the military in unusual situations. So I think that's got better.

But there are still some major rankles that we still haven't fixed, and the biggest one, I think, is financing of conflict issues and conflict stabilisation situations, where it's quite plausible --

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Because it's cross-cutting departments?

TIM FOY: Cross-cutting departments, and the fact that the military can still access the reserve. We recognise that the civil component is fundamental to success in expeditionary activities. Yet we don't allow civilian

departments to access the complementary funding that's necessary to realise a return on the military expenditure because the Treasury won't allow that access to the reserve. I think that's something that hopefully the Strategic Defence Review will look at, because that is a major rankle, and many of the problems that happened in Iraq in 2003 about resourcing, and indeed in Afghanistan in 2006/2007, came from the fact that the departments had to stop doing what they wanted to do in other places in order to finance an expeditionary need which had not been envisaged.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Relating back to things being slicker at the top, is it personalities or is it now institutional thinking that that's how it needs to happen? How entrenched is it?

TIM FOY: I think it is entrenched. It's the way of doing business. Undoubtedly a lot of the personalities are the same, but the personalities are rotating in and out, and new personalities are coming in. The way of doing business, particularly in NSC, with a National Security Adviser who looks at foreign and defence policy issues in the same breath, I think has made a big difference.

So I think it is institutionally more accepted now. Institutions around concepts of the stablisation unit, the fact that the Strategic Defence Review is looking at

conflict issues as a core theme, recognising that UK defence capability will need to look at the threats which the national security strategy identifies as coming from fragile and failing states, the UK's national security all attribute to that, and they're all points in the same direction. So we are much better.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Simon, are you wanting to come in?

SIMON COLLIS: Yes, it was really just to pick up on that point. Coming in to Basra literally the day after CPA South folded, you discovered that there were a bunch of talented individuals, but who weren't really a team. Maybe what's changed now -- I don't have any direct experience of Afghanistan, but at the time what was striking was the contrast between the military, who train as units and deploy as units and are used to working with each other, and the ability that that gives them to sustain themselves in environments where stuff isn't available and to work with each other, contrasted at the beginning with the relative inability of civilians to do that because they hadn't trained, and they hadn't prepared, and they hadn't got life support and all of this other stuff ready and got used to using it.

There is now, I think, a very significant cadre of people who, as a result of the years in Iraq, and now the years in

Afghanistan, have acquired those experiences one way or another, as well as in the process being used to working with each other and across organisations.

So I think that is really significant and helps speed things up potentially, because so many of these issues are time sensitive, and if you don't front-load it, if you don't have real impact early on, then you lose the initiative and you lose momentum.

It maybe helps get away from the old debate about buying consent. I think many of these questions about sequencing, actually, unless you have consent, however you get it, you can't do anything else. So you just need to do it. Infrastructure won't really happen until the end, but if you need to build up your local interlocutors, in the case of Basra to build up Iraqi politicians as being people who can demonstrate that they are delivering results because they are making things happen for their people -- I take the point that, you know, paying young men to sweep the streets isn't actually going to reduce the ability of other young men to blow up weapons, but it does create a political dynamic that can turn then into an environment where people will see their future not in terms of joining a militia, but seeing their future in terms of joining some kind of political process.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: We need to move on.

THE CHAIRMAN: We do. There's a long conversation to have about militias, but sadly not this afternoon.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I want to concentrate on the PRTs. But just before that, there was a mention before about the police, and there was earlier mention of the need from Foreign Office to MOD responsibility. Did that make any difference at all to the way the problem was handled?

JAMES TANSLEY: Short answer: relatively little. I think it was was seen as an issue no one wanted to deal with, and I think it was decided back in London that this was something the Foreign Office was well shot of.

MND South East had their own police contingent, and effectively it did provide a way of getting better co-ordination.

There were drawbacks. I know that, unlike in Simon's time, we did have some good English as well as Northern Irish police officers in our team, and the head of the police team in Basra in my time was, I think, particularly resentful at perhaps some heavy handed military supervision of his role. I think he viewed that as a professional, he was being directed by amateurs.

But I think in terms of the overall strategy, it did not

change radically. We still had a number of performance indicators which at times felt a bit as if it was a tick box exercise.

THE CHAIRMAN: In terms of numbers trained?

JAMES TANSLEY: Numbers trained at certain levels. It was if as if once you got up to 100 per cent, yes, we have done our job and we can go home, which I don't think was, given everything else going on in Basra at the time within the police services, necessarily the best model.

I think, to answer your question, no, there wasn't a significant change in strategy.

TIM FOY: Could I add to that? I think even at the time, and certainly looking back at it, and even more so looking at Afghanistan, our role in policing was one of the most incoherent and poorly thought through. Were we focusing on building a central capacity in Baghdad, or were we focusing on building a force in Basra to allow us to transition? Where should the balance of emphasis be? Could we do both? What was our relationship like in terms of the big driving force of force and equip, which was the Americans? Were we trying to influence that with a civil policing function? The answer was probably not. All the military officers I know working for Petraeus and CPATT felt themselves

reporting to see CPATT and certainly were not going to listen to me or any other Brit who was involved in it.

JAMES TANSLEY: I think the reality on the ground was that the police forces in each of the individual provinces were more or less autonomous, and it very much depended upon the personality of the Chief of Police in the province concerned. We had, for most of my time, a very weak Chief of Police in Basra, which probably explains why we had so many problems. There was a very strong, but very partisan Chief of Police in Maysan province, who was a Badrist, in more or less civil war with the Sadrist civilian administration.

THE CHAIRMAN: Was his name Maliki?

JAMES TANSLEY: No, Maliki was the governor in my time. His name was -- you are putting me on the spot now. Forgive me, I can't remember. I can check on that.

In Al-Muthanna they got round the problem by appointing a former Ba'athist who had been head of the police in Saddam's time because the tribes said that security was more important, and they kept it very quiet from Baghdad, and effectively Al-Muthanna was peace and stability compared with the rest of Iraq.

It comes back to the decision whether the security

services, or whether it was the police or the army, should have been the standard. In Al-Muthanna you had evidence that actually being a good policeman was more important than whatever your former political affiliations. I hope that answers your question.

LINDY CAMERON: Can I just add, I think, in a sense, this shouldn't have been a huge surprise. In any development context we have ever worked in, security is the prime function of the state in order for it to have legitimacy, but the rule of law sector is the most difficult to achieve an effective and competent joined-up process, where our policemen are able to find the right individuals and provide security at local level and get people through an effective justice system that provides what people perceive to be a fair result. So it was always going to be one of the most challenging sectors, I think.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We have had quite a bit of evidence on that, and you are confirming the lines that we have had before.

PRTs. That seems to me quite an interesting story because -- correct me if I am wrong -- the concept comes were Afghanistan.

LINDY CAMERON: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It's largely pushed by the Americans.

LINDY CAMERON: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Applied in Iraq. We sort of decide to influence it, rather than do something different. We are obliged to go along with it, seem to make it work, now being applied back in Afghanistan.

Because this is such an important part of the story, I would be interested in your assessment of how it happened and how it worked.

JAMES TANSLEY: I think -- I wouldn't say PRTs were dropped upon us by surprise, but certainly it was quite clear, I think in October 2005, that the Americans wanted PRTs in every governorate province in Iraq.

I think there were considerable concerns, both from DFID colleagues and MND South East. MND South East was worried that, because of the need to protect these PRTs, that if you had PRTs in Muthanna, Nasiriyah[14], Maysan ultimately, it would be very difficult for them to exist without MND South East remaining there, and i.e. British forces remaining longer than had been intended. So there were concerns from a military point of view.

[14] Witness has since clarified it was Dhi Qar.

From a DFID perspective, I think the view was that the American model tended to ignore a lot of the good work on the governance side which DFID and others, including our Danish allies and others, had been doing in southern Iraq up until then, and was effectively trying to impose a model, which was a bit dissimilar to what we had been doing up until then, on us, and would effectively negate a lot of the good work that had been done in southern Iraq.

There were also problems with the methodology, I think. Looking at it, the original plan which had come out, we did have significant issues with what the Americans were proposing. It did read at times as if whoever had drafted the sort of standard template had never been out of Washington, let alone visited Iraq, in terms of the number of the performance indicators. It was just unrealistic, and I think that the initial American line was: if you do not set up PRTs, we will set them up. I think another point was if we were going to do anything in southern Iraq, we wanted it to have a Union Jack on it. So we wanted to try to meet all these needs.

THE CHAIRMAN: Was the American insistence anything to do with Congressional conditions for the release of funding, or was it simply doctrinal?

LINDY CAMERON: I think it was actually something Tim

referred to earlier, which is in a sense that Ambassador Khalilzad had come from Afghanistan with a construct that had helped him deliver at provincial level, and was re-imposing the model on Iraq.

The issue is, as I sort of mentioned earlier, that in a sense this was a diametrically opposed strategy to the one that they had applied a year before, where they had closed down all the CPA offices, which frankly looked quite a lot like PRTs and could easily have been turned into PRTs at that stage, and went for a model of regional embassy offices with a much more State Department focus, rather than a cross-departmental approach within the US side.

So I think one of our concerns was this was a 180-degree turn in terms of reversing what US policy had been, but also, very importantly, was potentially quite a reversal in terms of Iraqi sovereignty, because we had spent the entire time since June 2004 trying to build up an Iraqi perception that they were in the lead and that we were supporting them.

Imposing PRTs, which were designed for Afghanistan, a much more fragile, much less capable state, with much lower levels of income, risked that you were actually going to take things backwards, rather than forwards, in addition to the concerns colleagues have highlighted.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So how did you handle all of these

concerns and reshape the concept?

JAMES TANSLEY: Well, to start off with, we quickly came to the conclusion that if we could persuade the Americans that we should have a PRT in Basra without offices in the other provinces, that was a way of getting around the problem about British withdrawal from those provinces.

We satisfied the consent issue by going round -- I went round at Christmas, speaking to all the governors and heads of council in the four provinces concerned, all of whom, when I said, "Actually there's going to be no more money", were not the slightest bit interested. It's a typical Iraqi reaction.

We put other proposals to the Americans, and the official in the embassy in Baghdad came down from Baghdad to Basra, I think in February. He was happy with the model that we had come up with. He liked in particular the way that we had used the concepts of the PRT to unify and co-ordinate the various governance and other efforts which were going on in Basra and elsewhere.

We brought in the US aid people. We brought in the Danish effort. We tried to get the UN in, have a UN presence in Basra, and held it up as a multinational PRT which would have the capability of outreach from Basra to the other three provinces, even if there was no specific

Coalition military presence in those three provinces.

Although the Americans were preaching that there were other PRTs up and running elsewhere in Iraq at that time, I think our impression from rumour was that the actual American model -- that there were a lot of flaws in it. There were clear disputes between DOD and State about how this should be evolved.

LINDY CAMERON: It was also partly, in a sense, an implied DOD criticism of the model State had been using for the previous year as well.

JAMES TANSLEY: So there were issues on the American side. So I think to get anything up -- and I think in some ways, to finesse all these problems, I think the State Department representative who came down was quite glad that we had something.

We had also committed resources to it. We were able to secure £15 million from the FCO and indeed DFID budgets to set one up, and we had created the necessary infrastructure within Basra Palace to allow it to be set up at a relatively short notice. I think we had it up -- we had it in a position to be up and running by mid-April, which was when I left, even though it didn't start at that time.

TIM FOY: I think it was a wonderful bit of sleight of hand

in a way, to be honest. We did it quite well.

Essentially, the term "PRT" -- while there was some nominal improvement -- not nominal -- some significant improvement in the co-ordination between the US, the DFID and the MND South East efforts, to be honest, the PRT became sort of a collective noun for international effort. It was very effective. They reported up to the national co-ordinating team who were just delighted that they had been able to meet Secretary Rice's requirement to have a PRT up and running. In fact they had done it, and they had made the Brits actually do it first, because there was a serious reluctance, on the part -- there was quite a lot of pushback from the UK about it. I can remember going to see Dan Speckard, the head of MO, who assured me that there would be PRT in Basra, whether we liked it or not.

But I think in many ways -- you may hear evidence from others that say it was never a coherent PRT, it never had a single unified plan, it never had a single unified leader, i.e. him. But I think, to be honest, it did make -- the points that James makes are very, very important ones. It did bring together a disparate group of people, almost closer to a form of British leadership under the Consul General, around Better Basra, to agree what needed to be done in a way which hadn't been there before, which was

very, very important.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So the net effect would be positive?

TIM FOY: Yes.

JAMES TANSLEY: I think the way it ended up was positive, particularly the international co-ordination and co-operation --

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: More than simply rebranding?

LINDY CAMERON: I think it was, but actually I spent my Christmas 2005 back in Basra, helping to write the paper on this. And I think the challenge was we had to spend more time working on how to fend off some of the bad ideas encapsulated in this, than we actually had to spend time thinking through what did we really need to do in Basra.

The thing that would have added more value at the time would have been to think really hard about what we actually needed to do in Basra, effectively, and how we needed to make that step change in effort to get us to where we needed to be. But we had to spend quite a lot of time working out how to have this idea not, in a sense, be a challenge or a problem in Maysan, Muthanna, and to some extent Dhi Qar, and I think it did end up with an improvement, but less of a step change than perhaps we could have done if we'd been able to stand back, identify the problem and actually tackle

it of our own accord.

JAMES TANSLEY: I agree. There was a lot of bureaucratic time working on that, and as I said, we spent £15 million setting up a structure which, in terms of value added, was perhaps not as great as perhaps some people might have thought.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Then, just finally, lessons learned. What lessons were identified, and to what extent have they been applied, either in Iraq or now in Afghanistan?

TIM FOY: On PRTs, I think probably two or three. The first is it is very, very important to unite civil and military efforts behind a political objective. What we needed in Basra more than anything else was politics to work. I think we began to get that. The political imperative began to emerge much more clearly than it had before. Certainly my time in Helmand, and much more Lindy's, it is politically led.

THE CHAIRMAN: That implies political or policy leadership, rather than military?

TIM FOY: Exactly. In a sense it's indifferent as to who delivers the effect. It's why you are doing things that is so important.

The second thing in the sense that it's really not

about -- it's about what's the effect you want, and the effect you want is to build local capability, local capacity, and it is more important to partner local government than it is to deliver improvements in the standards of living, the quality of life. You can do that, but if it's seen by outsiders as being external forces that have brought it, you haven't really achieved the stabilisation effect that you want.

The third thing is you have to resource these things in terms of having the right people with the skills who are capable of working with the military.

Above all else, co-location is key. Many of the problems we had with the military -- we may not have got rid of them altogether, but they were certainly exacerbated by the lack of co-location. Co-location is fundamental.

THE CHAIRMAN: And especially in a difficult security environment?

LINDY CAMERON: Absolutely.

TIM FOY: And joint planning.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So what you said, recalling General Shirreff's remarks, this is a different sort of model. Both of you have the idea that you need to pull things together, but this is a different view of how you do

it.

TIM FOY: Yes, and I think in terms of the military parlance, the Civ/Mil doesn't happen at J9. The Civ/Mil happens at J5. It happens in your planning section, because you need to plan together, and the objective need to be a political objective to which civil and military effects are both supporting.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's a very interesting point. Do you think that's being done now?

TIM FOY: Yes.

LINDY CAMERON: In Helmand it certainly is, I think.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Time is nearly out. Rod?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just boil it down to two questions, though there's an awful lot. It's been a very useful session. Thank you very much.

James or Simon, we have heard repeatedly that the ground truth of what was happening in Basra, particularly as things got worse from about 2005 onwards, was not really appreciated and understood in London. There was a gap in expectations, understanding and realism.

You were the people who were the prime channel for political reporting from the ground to London. What was

preventing your message from being understood by the top policy makers, some of whom, as you have pointed out, came through your patch? Were your reports dying in Baghdad?

SIMON COLLIS: Shall I go first because of the chronology?

I don't think I agree with the premise. The reporting lines were clear. Whether we were reporting directly or through Baghdad didn't matter. We did sitreps directly. Thematic issues would then have been put into a national level report on infrastructure, services, whatever the social/political issue was, and we would try and give sometimes not just a Basra perspective, but a kind of province outside the Green Zone perspective, which I think colleagues in Baghdad appreciated.

The relationship with colleagues in London was iterative. There was plenty of feedback. Emails would go backwards and forwards besides the formal reports. I looked over the political reports in preparation for this. I'm quite happy that they provided as accurate a picture of what was happening at the time as our understanding allowed, and I don't think we got things massively wrong. We flagged up problems.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm not suggesting you did. My question really is: when you met top decision makers, the Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries coming through and

the rest of it, had the message got through to them as to what the situation was?

SIMON COLLIS: I think it had. The difficulty then is for top decision makers and politicians to articulate that publicly. If you look at the strategy documents, the first three documents that are mentioned in Margaret's commissioning letter, the DFID country assistance program me, the GCPP strategy from 2004, and then the two later documents were "The next six months", the paper that was produced from July 2004 through to the elections, which was getting us to the elections, which was my period, and then the document that was produced just as I left, which was the strategy for 2005.

There is an increased -- each document iteration shows more focus, more realisation of the security constraints, less inclination to treat Iraqis as some kind of social laboratory, year zero, and more focus down on SSR, on what really matters and what gets the job done. So I think the message was getting through.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did you feel that too, James?

JAMES TANSLEY: Perhaps to go back to the original question, I think the issue, as I have said before, the priority during my time was on national issues. I think on

a political basis the focus was very much on what was going on in Baghdad, and Basra was a secondary priority. It was seen as a big military commitment. It might be a military or security problem. It might be a developmental issue. But ultimately it was small beer compared with the politics that was happening up in Baghdad. If you were going to look at the future of Iraq, ministers' time had to be focused on what was going on in Baghdad.

Now, I think that explained why perhaps there was not the engagement that I might have liked on a day-to-day issue on the political developments in Basra. It was small fry compared with the national issue.

The question, I think, behind what you are asking is: why were we taken by surprise by quite how badly things went in Basra?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Which was in the period really after you guys were there.

JAMES TANSLEY: I think it's a question of small steps. I don't think you can say things got terribly bad overnight. I would say that there were bigger steps. I think the Jameat incident was one which did really set back our efforts in southern Iraq. But I think in the overall scheme of things, it was felt that if you are dealing with countries, you don't deal with the council in a small

faraway province down in the south at ministerial level.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Final question then to Tim, simply because you were the last man out in this sequence.

Did you feel, certainly by the time of your last visit there, that it really mattered to HMG, picking up on James' point, what we achieved in the south east of Iraq, or were we simply at that stage desperate to get out?

TIM FOY: A bit of both really. I'll give you a fudged answer. I think there was a sense of we needed to get because, to use a term that Jonathan Shaw introduced me to, we had become a bit of a self-licking lollipop in a way.

We didn't have the resources necessary to project influence. We had become smaller and smaller by being cut down to the fact we were simply sustaining and protecting ourselves and not able to do anything. That point comes back to your question about whether to do things on the margin. It was time to get out.

Also, there was the desire to move to Afghanistan, to realise that we couldn't run two medium-sized difficult costly operations at the same time.

But there's certainly, in terms of our relationship with the US -- and I suppose you could look at both Afghanistan and Iraq very much through that lens -- there was still a desire that we did it in good order, and I think the work

which we were able to do on the DFID side and the FCO side post 2006/2007 shows that there was a legacy that was left, that was built on by people like -- I forget his first name. Was it Andrew Wareing, the guy that came in?

THE CHAIRMAN: Michael Wareing.

TIM FOY: So there was stuff in there that left southern Iraq in a better state than we had found it, in large measure because we put some of the basics in place to make that happen.

So I think it was a balance. Militarily we needed to get out. We needed to do it in good order because of our relationship with the US, and at the same time to have shown back to the domestic constituency at home that it had been worth it, and that was a very strong theme coming through.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: On this side of the table, we have all found this a particularly valuable session, both for lessons and insights, and I think you have all got more to say and to offer us.

So what I'm going to do is -- this is not compulsory of course, but I would like you to think very seriously about whether each of you would like to put in a written note to us with any considered reflections in the light of this

afternoon's exchanges. It would, of course, go up on our website, unless you want to put something in a sensitive bracket, which I don't think is necessary. But I would like to ask you very seriously to think about doing that. I think it frankly would add a lot of value for us.

So with that, I'll simply say thank you all very much indeed for this afternoon. There will be a transcript in a day or three's time, and I would be grateful if you could review it, subject, of course, to where you are going to be, if possible by about the end of next week. But you have to come in here to do it, I'm afraid. We can't circulate it. Or can we? Maybe we could.

MARGARET ALDRED: I think we might consider sending -- for instance, because we have a confidential means of getting it to Lindy in Helmand. So I think we might think about whether we can do some of this.

THE CHAIRMAN: We will do our best to help you anyway, to help us. Good.

With that, I'll close this session. Thank you all very much.

(4.29 pm)

(The hearing adjourned)