Friday, 18 June 2010

MARTIN HOWARD

THE CHAIRMAN: This morning, we welcome Martin Howard, Deputy Chief of Defence Intelligence, which is the senior civilian post in the Defence Intelligence Service[1], from early 2003 to May 2004, and then DG Operational Policy in the MOD to 2007. We envisage this morning's session lasting no more than an hour and a half because we have a further opportunity to hear from Martin Howard in public next month.

The session is being held in private because we recognise that much of the evidence in the areas we want to cover will be sensitive within the categories set out in the Inquiry's Protocol on Sensitive Information -- for example, on grounds of international relations or national security.

We will apply the Protocol between the Inquiry and HMG regarding Documents and Other Written and Electronic Information in considering whether and how evidence given in relation to classified documents and/or sensitive matters more widely can be drawn on and explained in public, either in the Inquiry Report or, where appropriate, at an earlier stage.

If other evidence is given during this hearing which neither relates to classified documents nor engages any of the categories set out in that Protocol, that evidence would be capable of being published, subject to the procedures set out in our letter to you.

We recognise witnesses are giving evidence based on their recollection of events, and we cross-check what we hear against the papers to which we have access.

I remind every witness on every occasion that they will later be asked to sign a transcript of their evidence to the effect

[1] Correctly the Defence Intelligence Staff.

that the evidence they have given is truthful, fair and accurate. For security reasons, in this case we will not be releasing copies of the transcript outside this building. So I'm afraid, when convenient to you, could you review it upstairs here.

With that out of the way, let's move straight to the questions. I'll ask Sir Lawrence Freedman to start.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just check, you came in January or February 2003?

MARTIN HOWARD: February 2003, I started. I think it was more to the beginning of February.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The beginning of February 2003?

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you came in at a point when obviously this whole issue had been pretty live for a while.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How aware were you of the efforts DIS had been making in order to find evidence of Iraqi WMD activity?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, the DIS were sort of part of a broader intelligence effort to establish the truth of the position on weapons of mass destruction, and of course this is before the war, so we were still relying on the intelligence sources that we had.

I think that the role of the DIS in many ways was concentrated in the analytical and assessment area, really making use of the expertise by the Defence Intelligence Staff has in the area of WMD, to interpret evidence which had come perhaps from human intelligence [redacted] although there wasn't really very much on that side of things, and check it against what they knew, their own expertise.

The other contribution that the DIS made was that for many years the DIS had supported UN inspections inside Iraq, UNSCOM and then UNMOVIC, and as a result had built up both a familiarity with how the UN carried out its inspection work, and also familiarity with the people who did that. [redacted]. So they helped to bring that expertise to it, but we fed into a broader process.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you feel there was a general concern that there wasn't a lot of information upon which they could work?

MARTIN HOWARD: I'm not sure "concern" would be the right word. I think it was an acknowledged fact that the actual amount of intelligence available from a number of sources was very slight, but that was characteristic of Iraq and had been characteristic of Iraq for many years. [redacted].

So like any intelligence organisation, we would have liked more, but you have to work with what you've got. I don't think there was a concern in the sense that we only had a few sources, therefore this whole thing was wrong. I never found it.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So how did you view the overall assessment of Iraq's WMD when you arrived? Were you confident in the position that had been reached?

MARTIN HOWARD: I was pretty confident, yes. Because I had done some of this work before in the mid-1990s, in the assessment staff, the position seemed quite familiar. There had been some developments because I had been out of the intelligence work for

a while and come back, but it seemed to be a logical progression from the position it was in the 1990s, and the judgments that I saw from JIC papers in 2002 and from papers produced by the DIS, as it were supporting that process, seemed to me to be well-founded.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the features of the assessment seems to be the unresolved business left over from UNSCOM, the questions that had been left.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In your sense, how strong or what sort of proportion of the final assessment would you say was weighted on the UNSCOM unresolved issues?

MARTIN HOWARD: I think the assessment on physical holdings of WMD did rely to a substantial account on that. I can't remember all the details, but certainly discrepancies in relation to biological weapons, for example, on growth media, was one big gap that was left over from earlier inspections which had never been resolved. Similar issues existed around missiles, long-range missiles.

So I think in terms of the judgments about whether or not there were physical holdings of WMD, that was quite an important point.

Of course that wasn't the totality of the judgments. There were judgments about intent, past record and so on and so forth. But in that respect, I think it was a major factor.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you. Then when you came in -- in December there had been the Iraqi disclosure in line with resolution 1441.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And presumably DIS would have played

quite an important role in assessing the Iraqi disclosure. Can you recall how that was viewed, whether there was seen to be any new information, whether it was just seen to be in line with previous statements?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, it was obviously a little bit before my time, but I was obviously briefed on it when I arrived.

Basically, the Iraqis produced a declaration which was something like 11,000 pages of mixed material, some in Russian, some in English, some in Arabic, and included electronic media as well.

The DIS, as the repository of expertise on these things, basically spent the weekend analysing it, generated assessment, which in due course was translated into a JIC assessment from -- it would have been, I think, in December, possibly into January, but I think it was in December.

That said that the judgment that the JIC reached at that time was that it confirmed some information we had about past programmes. It didn't address all the questions that had been raised by the UN, and it didn't address all the issues raised in the September 2002 dossier.

So I'm not sure it changed our overall assessment of the position of Iraq and its possession of WMD, but it was quite a detailed analysis of the declaration that Iraq made.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Do you think the September 2002 dossier, or the JIC assessment on which it was based, was being used as our benchmark against which to judge the accuracy of what the Iraqis were saying?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think it would have been one of them. There was a series of JIC assessments. I think there was a JIC assessment in September 2002, which actually covered very similar ground to the dossier, and regardless of what people think about

the dossier, you know, that JIC judgment, that JIC assessment, was, as it were, the latest assessment. The process continued, obviously, after the Iraqi declaration. To the extent that the September JIC assessment covered the same ground as the dossier, the two were very similar.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It just gets back to one of the problems throughout this whole episode of Iraqi declarations being judged against an assessment, no doubt produced in good faith, but which turns out to have been wrong. So I'm interested in the extent to which it coloured the view of the assessment of the disclosure.

MARTIN HOWARD: It's hard to deny what you say, but the fact is that Iraq WMD was the subject of a continuous series of assessments from the early 1990s, right the way through up to the start of hostilities in 2003. As you say, those were produced in good faith. They were based on the intelligence we had. [redacted]. They were also based on Saddam's past record, his well-documented systems for deception and obstruction of UN inspectors. It would have, I think, taken a brave person to say that the whole thing was a sham.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just one final question. You are no doubt aware that there have been a number of suggestions of pressure being put on DIS to come up with assessments which help to support the policy that the Government was pursuing at the time. When you came in, were you made aware of any concerns to this effect or any concerns in relation to the September dossier?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, there was a very specific issue in relation to the September dossier which I covered at some length when I appeared before the Hutton Inquiry, where two analysts felt that the phraseology used in the foreword of the dossier didn't quite bear the weight of the intelligence -- the intelligence

didn't bear the weight of it. It was the difference, and again, I can't remember exactly, between "intelligence shows" and "intelligence indicates", that kind of thing.

Those experts -- and a lot of it was around the issue of the so-called 45 minutes point. It's worth saying that those experts were in the technical WMD part of the DIS.

Another part of the DIS, which actually dealt with Iraqi army tactics, and indeed the use of battlefield munitions, they also looked at this, and they actually thought this was entirely sensible and credible.

So there was that one specific issue which, as I said, I covered at length in evidence to Lord Hutton.

But I never got the impression, certainly when I was there, and I never had an impression reported to me, that there was a systematic pressure on the DIS to come up with things which would then be sort of slanted or spun in a particular way. I would have said there were some issues specifically around the dossier, but in general I wouldn't have said that was the case.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And you didn't feel yourself under any pressure from a couple of months before the war?

MARTIN HOWARD: No, we were there to do our best to provide intelligence support for what clearly was inevitably going to be a conflict. It was simply evident that that was what was going to happen.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks. I'll turn to Sir Martin Gilbert.

I think, Martin, you want to ask some questions about the ISG.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Essentially about the establishment of the ISG from our perspective.

First of all, whose responsibility was it from the UK perspective to start the ISG?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I guess probably mine in the sense that I was the first person to discuss it with the Defence Intelligence Agency of the United States. It was an American idea, but I think in April 2003 I had a videoconference with a senior member of the DIA, whose name I'm afraid I have forgotten -- I can't remember who it was -- where he raised this idea of the Iraq Survey Group, a fully integrated team to go into theatre, and asked what I thought about it and whether the UK would want to be part of it. My recollection was that, yes, this seemed a good idea to me, that, obviously subject to decisions by ministers, I'm sure the UK would want to be part of it. So that's how it started.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: [redacted]?

MARTIN HOWARD: [redacted]

THE CHAIRMAN: [redacted]

MARTIN HOWARD: [redacted]

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Whose responsibility was it to provide the

analysts and technical experts?

MARTIN HOWARD: In theory it was a cross-Government responsibility under the direction of, first of all, a JIC sub-group chaired by Sir John Scarlett and a working group chaired by me. In practice it was mostly the DIS that found analysts. I think the one exception was that we did invite a small number of ex-UNSCOM inspectors to be part of it. That was done under my direction, but dealt with by another part of the MOD, the contact with them.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: We have heard there were problems with providing subject matter experts. Why was this?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think, first of all, the requirement was quite large in terms of numbers of subject matter experts, and the fact is there aren't that many who really know deeply about the subject matter. We would have had to reach judgments about whether those people were still needed in London or whether they could be deployed. So it was a question of making use of the talent that we had.

After a while, one of the other problems that we had was rotation. We only posted people for a short period into theatre. So that tends to use up people very quickly.

We did actually bring in other analytical experts, who weren't necessarily deep experts in WMD, but who knew the principles of intelligence analysis and who were able to contribute very strongly.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were other Government departments drawn into this?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I tried, but, to be honest, it was mostly from my own resources that we found people, as I said, with the exception of the ex-inspectors that we recruited through the

counter proliferation group.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Why did your efforts not succeed?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I'm not very sure I know why. Maybe I just wasn't sufficiently persuasive in my advocacy. [redacted]

But, to be fair, most of the expertise is in the DIS. Then when you add in other expertise like sample testing and DSTL, which is another defence organisation, they contributed. People who were doing explosives ordinance disposal, because it was a very hazardous operation, they came from the MOD as well, and it was sensible they came from the MOD. So I don't feel in any sense aggrieved that we had to do the heavy lifting.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: We have heard evidence of the problems of the shortages of interpreters.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And also debriefers. Was this something which you were aware of and able somehow to deal with?

MARTIN HOWARD: I was certainly aware of it. There wasn't a huge amount that the UK could do directly. Bear in mind that, again, this was overwhelmingly a US effort. In many ways the US, I think, put a lot of efforts into finding interpreters and they brought over people from the United States. I wasn't able to help very much with that at all.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What was the ratio between our contribution and theirs in the interpreter field?

MARTIN HOWARD: The overall strength of the ISG was about 1,300. That included everybody. I'm trying to remember how big the analytical team was. That would have been maybe 300 or 400. I'm slightly guessing here. It would have been about that size. We,

on average, supplied around about 30 or 40 analysts into that effort, but that excludes the EOD people, the military people that were helping to enable operations.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Finally from me, we have again heard evidence about problems of the quick turnover of UK military and civilian personnel. How did this strike you, affect you?

MARTIN HOWARD: I thought it was a real problem. We had some excellent deputy commanders, starting with John Deverell and going on through -- the fact that there were four or five others in a sense illustrates the problem. It was a question of who I could extract from the military. John Deverell was suggested to me by the army. I know him well. I thought he was an excellent choice. But he was pulled out, I think, to do something grander rather earlier than I hoped. So yes, it was a real problem.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: This wasn't really something you had the authority --

MARTIN HOWARD: I tried. But in the end the army posting authority, they guard their privileges jealously, and they were the ones who decided when people could go and when they had to come back.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And clearly this wasn't a priority for them, to address this problem?

MARTIN HOWARD: No, probably not. Again, I don't blame them for that, but it had an impact.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's turn to the post public reassessment of the WMD.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can you just tell me, what was your level

of confidence in the ISG's ability to provide an accurate account of Saddam's weapons programme under David Kay?

MARTIN HOWARD: I think the ISG had many strengths, and I have to say, if I could make this point early on, that I felt it was the right approach, and in similar circumstances, though they are very unlikely to arise, I think something like that would work.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: The right approach under David Kay?

MARTIN HOWARD: The right approach, full stop. The idea of having a large integrated in theatre team of collectors, operators, analysts, that seemed to me to be a very sound construct.

The appointment of David Kay, I think, was an interesting moment because initially it was going to be a DIA organisation, headed by Major General Keith Dayton, and in fact Keith did actually stay in command. But in around about May or June 2003 -- I can't remember exactly when -- [redacted] and hence the appointment of David Kay and then, after him, Charles Duelfer.

Actually, although at the time I was slightly concerned that we would end up with a split command, it worked quite well. Keith Dayton got on, ran the ISG, did the tasking, sent people out, made sure they were properly protected and, as it were, managed the administration, and David really concentrated on the analytical effort and targeting the analysis, saying this is where we need to concentrate our efforts, and I think that actually worked reasonably well.

I thought that the industrial handling of documents and other sources by the ISG was very good. I think there were problems, nevertheless, of record-keeping, and problems of actually really bringing a vast amount of material into a single cohesive report.

So it was a mixed picture, but the general approach, I think, was right.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did things change under Charles Duelfer, and did you have personal contact with him?

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes, I had several contacts with Charles Duelfer.

First of all, there was a gap, which was unsatisfactory, between the departure of David Kay and Charles Duelfer's arrival. Charles was a different sort of individual, who was perhaps slightly more communitaire, if I can put it that way, than David. But he had a not dissimilar background, and actually he essentially picked up the baton from where David left it. He switched direction in a couple of areas, which you would expect, but the basic approach of giving guidance to the analysts, setting priorities for target areas to investigate, I think was very similar.

So, as I say, he was a different person to deal with on a personality basis, but the overall construct was the same.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were you able to feed advice and comments to him readily?

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes. First of all, we had the deputy commander and I had 40 DIS people out there. So they were working. But we had pretty regular contacts with Charles Duelfer. I visited Iraq several times, and I think from about the end of 2003 or early 2004, when Charles Duelfer was appointed, I was plugged into the weekly US VTC conference which was chaired by CIA, and that helped a lot. That was quite a departure from previous practice. [redacted].

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I understand that in early 2004 John Scarlett suggested to Duelfer that he include some of the

nuggets from Kay's report into his status report. We have seen evidence that these suggestions were made following consultation with the entire intelligence community. Were you consulted, and who would Scarlett have consulted before making such comments?

MARTIN HOWARD: I remember that. I think that came up in a videoconference where John Scarlett and I were there together. John never used the word nuggets. I think this came out afterwards from Charles Duelfer.

What John asked was that -- the previous September we had gone through David Kay's interim report, which was a very thick document. I had to go to Washington especially to read it and go through it in a lot of detail. And of course, you know, we had our copies of that, and within that there were half a dozen quite interesting pieces of intelligence about particular parts of the programme which, when we saw the material that Charles Duelfer was assembling, seemed to have gone missing, as it were. John, I think quite reasonably, said, "I remember these things, are we going to include them in the next assessment?", and that was it. It was a part of a much longer VTC. It may have slightly entered folklore as the "Scarlett nuggets", but John never actually used that word.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So what was the significance of the comment that he consulted the entire intelligence community?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, because the way the ISG was managed was that it was done through a subcommittee of the JIC, chaired by John Scarlett, and the detailed work was chaired by my task force, which of course included representatives from all the agencies, SIS, GCHQ and so on. So the whole process was done as not a collective effort, but certainly as a consultative effort involving all the agencies.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were there differences in assessment

between the ISG and our Government on issues such as trailers or on the reliability of CURVE BALL?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think there were, if you like, tactical differences. The trailers issue -- you will remember the pre-war intelligence about the transport production system. The MOD likes three letter acronyms, so it became TPS inevitably.

Then in April 2003 we actually found some trailers which looked the part, if I can put it that way. So I sent my top BW expert into Iraq to look at them, and she came back with some conclusions saying, well, there were similarities, not conclusive. And that sort of process of investigating the trailers went on through the ISG.

I think there were differences of view. I think there were differences of view between individuals, not necessarily between HMG and the ISG. I think actually there were differences of view inside the DIS.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Within?

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes, and when I left it had still not been resolved, and I think to this day no one quite knows what the trailers were for. They could have been very inefficient mechanisms for generating hydrogen for balloons. They could have been very inefficient means of generating BW. So the jury is still out.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: The reliability of CURVE BALL?

MARTIN HOWARD: CURVE BALL, [redacted], I think in the end -- I think the SIS view, and it would be worth asking SIS about this because they were closer to it than I was, was that, although they agreed in the end that his reporting was probably unreliable in some areas, there are other areas where actually he seemed to be quite well placed. [redacted]

[redacted].[2]

So again, during my time CURVE BALL was still, to the point when I left in May 2004 -- I think at that time CURVE BALL was still regarded as a reasonable source. [redacted] I can't remember what those questions were. So at that stage he was still regarded as an asset.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What was the opinion of the UK personnel in the ISG on these issues? What was the opinion of UK personnel?

MARTIN HOWARD: On what, in particular?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: On the issues such as CURVE BALL and trailers and the differences?

MARTIN HOWARD: I don't think they had a distinctive view which was different from other parts of the ISG or other parts of the DIS. As I said, there were differences of view, but they were mostly differences of view between individuals rather than necessarily between organisations, I would say.

The DIS team out there were working on a vast range of issues, of which the TPS, the trailers issue, was but one. There were many, many other things that they were investigating. So I don't think they were sitting there thinking about that most of the time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence, you wanted to come in on something.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just one question. Obviously the work of ISG was covering some pretty explosive stuff in terms of the politics of the UK, and there were a variety of discussions about

[2] The witness explained that the reports had been received through a liaison service and SIS was not able to question CURVE BALL until after the military conflict.

how this should be released on an interim basis, and then what would happen with Duelfer's interim report, which I guess would still have been live while you were --

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes, it was. In March, I think.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: There have been suggestions that the British were not desperately keen for too definitive judgments to come out until absolutely sure that there was nothing there, or not what had been described before. Do you recall those debates?

MARTIN HOWARD: I do recall those. [redacted] David Kay gave evidence to Congress, quite detailed evidence, but with some parts redacted to protect sources. And that had been, you know, a big public event with mixed outcomes, if you like, for the Government.

I think the view in February/March 2004, when Charles Duelfer was considering doing an interim report, was a concern across Whitehall -- it wasn't just me, though I have to say I shared the concern -- that another published interim report, which didn't say much more than was said in September, it wasn't going to be of much substantive value and, to be frank, would probably not help the public presentation of these issues.

So I think the line that John Scarlett and I took was that it would be better to hold off a full report, a detailed report, when more work had been done. I don't think we were -- we weren't against the idea of a progress report itself, but I think we were concerned that another full detailed report would look too similar to what had happened in September.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But in the interim, you would have

David Kay's "you were all wrong" outburst.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So in a sense the genie was out of the bottle.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes. Well, in one sense it was, but in a very strong other sense, the ISG had not finished its work, and it did a lot more work in the period between January, when David Kay said those things, and when it was finally reported, which I think was in September 2004.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were you surprised by David Kay's statement?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, it's hard to say, really. I sort of knew David Kay a bit. He had come in very much in order to make this work and saw this very much as a reputational thing for him, as much as anything else. I thought it was inevitable that once he decided to resign, that he would make public statements.

I thought the statement he made was too definitive. I can't really remember whether I was surprised or not, but I certainly felt that he had drawn conclusions too early.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's move on to DIS's work on what we would find when we went in.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I want to step back in time from where we are at at the moment and just explore what we knew and what we might have known about what we were going to face after the campaign.

When you came into your job in DIS in February 2002[3], it was clear that the British forces were going to come in from the

[3] He actually started in February 2003.

south, not the north.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And it became clear, as we got nearer to the conflict, that they were actually going to have to take charge and take responsibility for parts of the southern region around Basra, the four provinces that they eventually controlled.

Were DIS at this point asked to provide intelligence on what they were likely to find in the south when they got in?

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes, we were asked. We self-tasked as well, because it was quite clearly -- it wasn't so much finding intelligence. It was assessing the intelligence. That's really what certainly my side of the DIS did, though the other side of the DIS did collection and that contributed as well.

But during the second half of 2002, towards the end of 2002 into early 2003, the DIS did a number of very substantial assessments, some at an excruciating level of detail about infrastructure structure inside Iraq. But two or three stood out for me. There was a very comprehensive assessment of what we would find, particularly, as it were, in terms of a military campaign, called the Road to Baghdad, which laid out how we thought Saddam would approach the conduct of a campaign.

We also did a lot of work on opposition groups inside Iraq. We did a lot of work on SCIRI and the Badr Corps, which was a very relevant issue as far as the south of Iraq was concerned, and the influence that they would have in and around Basra.

We also did one very major piece of work on Basra itself, how the city worked, the people within it. Again, I think that was done before my time, but we did do another one shortly after, a little bit before the conflict started, which very much focused on our very latest understanding of the dynamics that would happen in and around Basra. The then CDI was very keen to be

able to give commanders some idea of these are the kind of issues you may have to deal with, with the Badr Corps and so on.

So I think we did a lot, and that fed in, I think, to certainly one JIC paper, again just before my time, and it would have fed into other JIC assessments as well, I guess.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were you the lead agency in Whitehall on these issues? Were other people working on it?

MARTIN HOWARD: I think we were the lead agency, if you like, on the detail because we had access to all the [redacted]. We had all the analysts. We had the big analytical grouping. Of course, at the strategic level the lead agency was the JIC. They are the ones who produced, as it were, the capstone intelligence assessments.

What the DIS tried to do was do things at a level a little below that, to produce products which would be of interest to high level policy makers, but also extremely useful to planners, to commanders and so on and so forth. So I'm not sure we were necessarily the lead, but we probably did the bulk of the analytical work.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And your assessments -- which, as you say, included infrastructure, opposition groups, the state of Basra -- when we actually found ourselves in there, how did they look? Had we got reasonably near to the target?

MARTIN HOWARD: I don't think we were too far off in many areas. Certainly in terms of understanding Basra itself, I think the DIS assessment wasn't bad, bearing in mind we had no people on the ground. So there's always a limitation.

I think in terms of our judgments on military tactics and, for example, the use of the Republican Guard divisions around Baghdad, we were pretty well spot on in the way that we described it. But we also assumed that at some point WMD would be used,

and that was wrong.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I ask this partly because we have had a series of witnesses telling us that we had no idea at all about how degraded the Iraqi infrastructure was, power stations held together with string and sealing wax and so on. We've also had people, again particularly military commanders who went in early on, saying -- and not just commanders, but down the levels -- that they really were not well aware of the sectarian divides and so on.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was that because they hadn't read what you were producing?

MARTIN HOWARD: That's quite possible. These are very sizeable documents and there is a lot of detail in them, and I think that on a practical level, there were problems of dissemination of product actually out to theatre because they were generally quite a high level of classification, and that problem was never really solved until quite a lot later.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But in the briefing before people went out to theatre?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, the DIS, as I recall, did a lot of work to try and brief people. We certainly produced documents on those issues, including on the state of the infrastructure.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Which showed that it was very fragile?

MARTIN HOWARD: It certainly -- again, we didn't have direct access, but conclusions were reached over the fact that there had been two or three decades of both neglect and also, because of sanctions, an inability to keep the infrastructure at a high level. So in a sense it was an assessment, rather than

necessarily full knowledge, but I don't think the DIS ever claimed that the infrastructure was shiny and new and fully ready to go.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: If I just take as one example the JIC paper of 16 April 2003, which is one that was in the pack of documents listed before this hearing for you, presumably this drew on DIS as well as other product?

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And if I take the key judgments here, there are seven key judgments, but six of them really are in a sense predicting what we might find. Three stand up very well to hindsight. Three of them read rather oddly, with the benefit of hindsight. The very first one:

"Resistance to the Coalition by pro-Saddam forces will increasingly be limited to sporadic and small-scale attacks. Few volunteers will stay to fight."

Then the third one assesses that there is no Iraqi social or political structure which could co-ordinate widespread opposition, and the fifth one gives a slightly reassuring message about Al Qaeda.

As I have said, the other ones which I've not highlighted look actually pretty good. So it's a mixed package.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: When you look at that, have the JIC reflected the sort of research that existed in DIS, or have they perhaps not drawn as fully on the efforts of DIS as they might have done?

MARTIN HOWARD: I think that this would have drawn adequately on what the DIS had produced. The DIS would have been part of the CIG process, and my recollection of chairing the CIG myself is that DIS are extremely active members of CIGS and frequently the

main contributors.

So no, I don't have a sense that this in any sense is ignoring DIS assessments. The ones, Sir Rod, that you pick out which have proved to be wrong, there was no one in DIS would have at that stage, in April 2003, have dissented from those judgments.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, obviously a lot of this work was done in a rush because the decision that we were actually going join in this operation came fairly late. The decision that we were going to go into the south came much later. The military would like six months' notice. They had about three.

If we had had more time, could we have built up a much better picture of what we were going to face in Iraq after the campaign?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, of course, that's a classic hypothetical question.

I'm really not sure because it's not as if we only started studying Iraq when we decided where we were going to go in. Iraq had been a high priority for intelligence assessment for years. It would have covered the full range of Iraqi issues, and in particular, work has been done for many years on Iraqi opposition groups. That was certainly the focus in part around what was happening in the south, because Shia opposition in the south was obviously a key part of it, but we would have also looked at the north.

So it's very hard to say with hindsight whether we would have been able to know any more, but we produced certainly a mass of material, even in the short time we had available, and I'm not sure that there would have been a fundamental improvement in what we could have provided if we had had another few months.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can I ask about another body of material? This isn't one that we have listed in the documents for you, so

I'm not going to go into detail on it.

The Red Teaming exercise in the DIS was set up at the end of February 2003. Can you recall who initiated it and why, and why it came so late in the day?

MARTIN HOWARD: The person who initiated it was the CDI in waiting, Andrew Ridgeway. We had the slightly complicated position that when I arrived Joe French, Air Marshall Joe French, was Chief of Defence Intelligence. He had been due to move, I think, at the end of 2002 or early 2003, and Andrew Ridgeway was also being prepared, trained to replace him.

For very good reasons, the CDS of the day decided to ask Joe to stay on for what was clearly going to be a period of hostilities, and therefore Andrew didn't take over when he expected to take over. Being an activist officer, as he is, he actually came up with an idea, why don't I run or set up a Red Team organisation to help with intelligence analysis? So that was the origins of it.

Why wasn't it done earlier? Well, it's hard to say because I wasn't there before February. If I had been there in September 2002, would I have suggested a Red Team? To be honest and frank, I'm not 100 per cent sure I would.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was it part of the standard operating procedure or was this a new idea?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, it's not a new idea. The idea of a Red Team has been around for many years. I think Kennedy used it during the Cuban missile crisis. It wasn't embedded as a way of doing work in DIS. And part of the problem was that people mean different things by Red Teams. A true Red Team is you sit someone in a room, and they literally try and put themselves in the minds of the opposing leadership and get the same information as the leadership, whereas what Red Teams tend to be is just

alternative hypotheses. So in that sense it's valuable and helpful to have that question coming from the side.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And this Red Team was a group of people, two insiders from DIS, but who were not from the teams already working on the subject --

MARTIN HOWARD: That's right.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- supplemented by a group of academics and outsiders, and for the reasons of full disclosure, it's important to note that at some of these meetings they included a member of this committee, Sir Lawrence Freedman. They were drawn together by King's College in London.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: To get this on the record, it was organised through my colleague Michael Clarke. I went to one of the meetings to see what was going on, but that was the limit of my involvement, I should say.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Your name is first on the first annex to the first report.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Among the guilty parties, Sir Lawrence. They produced nine reports between 28 February and 18 April, which had some interesting insights in them.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: They weren't radically different from what one reads in other papers, but they did come in from different angles. They did stress points that you didn't find elsewhere.

As I say, I'm not going to go through all the detail, but what's, I suppose, of interest to this Committee is: what impact did this exercise have? How widely were these reports distributed, and did you see it having an impact within the

Ministry of Defence and beyond the Ministry of Defence?

MARTIN HOWARD: I dredge my memories back of what happened here.

I think that what tended to happen, as I recall, was, as you said, there was a series of reports generated by the Red Team, and they were fed in, if you like, to the main team or the Blue Team who were doing analysis. The idea was not that they should say, "Gosh, we are wrong, we need to follow this". It was more to help to test their own judgments, and it seemed to me that the Red Team work was useful. As you say, some of it actually tracked very closely to what the main team were doing otherwise. But the insights were part of the material, part of the information that was flowing into the main assessment team, and they would have taken it into account and, to the extent appropriate, reflected it in the assessments they did.

There wasn't a very, as I recall, systematic process by which we would do an assessment and say, "Let's now test it against the Red Team work". So I think it was influential in that sense, but almost by a process of osmosis, rather than necessarily as a formal exercise.

I think the influence was probably within the DIS. I don't think, to be honest, the Red Team inputs had a huge amount of impact outside the DIS, but I don't recall the detail.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The rubric, when it was set up, said that they were there to challenge, if appropriate, and to identify areas where more work may be required, and I think that's a fair description of what they did.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Their reports were distributed to senior levels of the Ministry of Defence, including the Secretary of State's office and the chiefs of staff, copied also to the Foreign Office, DIS for defence and intelligence, head of the

Iraq Planning Unit, JIC Chair, and then the distribution varies as you go on. It's not clear that they penetrated all the way through to Number 10. It doesn't appear on the face of them that they are copied to SIS, for example, and it's not clear to what extent they may have been shared with the Americans. They went to the liaison, I think, in Washington.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So it's hard for us to judge, just from looking at these papers, what impact they had, whether they were actually read, and you don't have a recollection.

If they had had a big impact, you probably would recall that because questions would have come back to you about this work.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes. I think it was -- a huge amount of analysis was going on with the JIC, with the DIS and others. This was another part of it. It was useful.

I don't recall it having massive impact on the work that we did during that period, but I think it raised some interesting points. I think in the end, although it had a senior level distribution list, as you have reminded me, Sir Rod, that the practical impact would have been at the analytical level, rather than necessarily the policy making level.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: If I just pick out one judgment that's made several times in these papers, it is that the Iraqi army was a very respected institution in Iraq that would be very important in the post campaign phase. There are other very perceptive remarks about the opposite, respect held for the Iraqi police, which was corrupt and inefficient. So there are messages there which might have been rather useful, but perhaps got lost in this mass of material.

Let me just move on to my final question, which is a more specific one about the extent to which you felt, with all these

people doing all this work, the DIS enjoyed full and timely co-operation with SIS.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: How was that relationship working?

MARTIN HOWARD: During my time it was very good. We worked extremely closely with SIS in the immediate run-up to war and during the war. [redacted]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did you feel that they were sharing with you all the [SIS reporting] that they should be sharing with you? If I take one specific example, do you recall the highly classified

case[4] that started well before you came into the job, [redacted] which was about chemical and biological weapons?

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes. I think that did -- [redacted]. I don't actually recall seeing any reporting on that. I have a feeling that was the compartmented material that wasn't shown to the DIS analysts at the time of the dossier. I may be wrong.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think you are right.

MARTIN HOWARD: I think it is that.

To me -- I don't recall seeing any of that reporting while I was there, but then one of the things I actually complained about when I arrived as DCDI was that the actual amount of raw intelligence I saw was very small. I changed that after a while.

I never felt that SIS were needlessly keeping things back from me or my team, though I know that it was an issue in September 2002.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to move on to really just a single question, I think, about the insurgency, not in the south, but in central of Iraq and Baghdad, and how it became apparent that there was something more than Former Regime Elements and dissident Sunnis floating around doing bad things.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: How soon does DIS begin to think that there is something more serious than the ordinary backwash from the invasion itself? How does it develop in time?

MARTIN HOWARD: It's very hard to put specific "gosh" moments to

[4] Reporting from this source was withdrawn by SIS in July 2003

this, but, you know, reminding myself of that period and looking through the JIC assessments that you kindly identified for me to review, I did see it going through a number of phases.

It started with just general disorder and criminality, and with an expectation that some of the residue of people like the Fedayeen and other Saddam regime elements would continue to cause trouble.

Then, I think, against expectations, that solidified. The Former Regime Elements -- again another acronym -- the FRE threat started to increase in the middle of 2003. I think that would be where I would place it.

During most of 2003, I think we weren't clear about the extent to which more jihadist extremists were part of the insurgency. I think we thought there was the potential for that, and I remember some discussions with analysts which said that it seemed likely, given the way events had gone, that Iraq could become, as it were, the theatre of choice for jihadists. And over time, towards the end of 2003 and certainly into 2004, we did see the emergence of what in the end was called AQI, but actually had many names.

THE CHAIRMAN: Was this developing view the changing assessment based on a few critical events or -- you rather implied, I think, that there wasn't a tipping point as such -- or was it simply the general flow of information about attacks and the rest of it?

MARTIN HOWARD: Talking about 2003 and 2004 -- I'm not talking about the Shia, the JAM insurgency, which came a bit later really -- it seemed to me more of a general flow of events and information. It solidified a little bit more when Zarqawi became the key figure as far as the jihadist opposition was concerned. In that period it seemed to be a general flow, rather than one moment.

THE CHAIRMAN: And how surprising was it that there was a jihadist element, and a growing one indeed, in late 2003/2004? We have had some evidence that it wasn't a surprise at all that AQ should interest itself and find in Zarqawi a vehicle. On the other hand, we have had evidence, including from Tony Blair, that people didn't think that AQ would get in in a big way and change the game.

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think that it's very hard to delink this from the general absence of law and order and of structure which emerged in Iraq after the invasion. We haven't come on to aftermath, but in a sense we probably planned for the wrong aftermath in Iraq, and the thing we didn't anticipate was the sort of sheer vacuum that would be there in terms of governance, law and order, arguably made worse by some of the Coalition decisions later that year.

Once it became clear that vacuum was there, and that disorder was going to be an issue, then I think most of us thought that it would be an obvious thing for AQ or people inspired by AQ, because in a sense Al Qaeda never really had full grip of what was going on inside Iraq. They tried, but it was a sort of homegrown thing. That seemed to be fairly obvious that that was going to happen.

THE CHAIRMAN: One thing. We have had evidence from one of our generals that -- this is late 2003 really -- it really took some doing to persuade the Coalition chain of command that there was something more serious than the blowback from the invasion itself, that there was an insurgency developing.

MARTIN HOWARD: That's interesting. Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Was your sense, sitting in DIS, that there was a greater awareness developing in the intelligence community, or in the UK broader community, than was being accepted early enough

in theatre?

MARTIN HOWARD: I must admit, I don't recognise that picture, Sir John. I went to theatre admittedly mainly for ISG business, but I did talk with the command structure there, and certainly the Americans that I spoke to very clearly were concerned about this what I call a jihadist element.

THE CHAIRMAN: Andrew Figgures gave us some evidence that the chain of command in theatre, the US top of the chain of command, there wasn't going to be an insurgency because it wasn't supposed to happen.

MARTIN HOWARD: It's a bit hard to answer a question like that.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question is really: did people's eyes open wide enough soon enough in theatre to the reality of what you and the other elements of the intelligence community were finding?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I don't think they did. I go back to what I said earlier. I think we planned for the wrong kind of aftermath. We planned in perfectly good faith, but we weren't quick enough to recognise the aftermath that we were really facing. I say "we" in the very broadest sense. It was that lack of understanding that a vacuum was going to be developing and it would take a long time to resolve it. Once that was understood, I think certainly people in the intelligence community, and I would have thought in the chain of command, would have seen it as pretty likely that that could be filled with some very unsavoury characters.

THE CHAIRMAN: One last point before moving on, and this is the nice relatively quiet situation in the south, apart from a few hideous events.

I'm talking 2003 into 2004 now. Was DIS beginning to pick up or wonder about the possibility of a different kind of insurgency

with the Shias in the south? You have done quite a lot of work before the invasion, you've said.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes. I don't think -- maybe into early 2004, when Muqtada al-Sadr started to become a more prominent figure, [redacted] But during most of 2003 and 2004 I don't think that was anticipated.

If I could just make one point here though, one of the main things that the DIS concentrated on in the immediate post-war period, and right through to the autumn of 2003, was an attempt to measure consent, both Shia and Sunni consent. We all would recognise that there was going to be a huge problem in maintaining Sunni consent because they were going to be the new dispossessed in Iraq.

We also recognised that loss of Shia consent would have very significant strategic implications, but we didn't see it happening at that point. We just said that this would be an issue.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is it right to say it was conceptually realised that there would be diminishing tolerance of occupying presence, in the south included?

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes. That was our assumption. We just felt that the decline would be slower in the south.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Thank you. Let's move on to the role of our Special Forces.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: We are going to see you, of course, next month in public to discuss your role as Director General Operations Policy.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In this session there are a few areas we would like to cover which are not appropriate for public session.

MARTIN HOWARD: Right.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: First, can you explain to us how the policy and operations of Special Forces interacted, who owned each segment of policy and operations?

MARTIN HOWARD: For this campaign?

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Yes.

MARTIN HOWARD: Because this campaign was run slightly differently from how SF is normally handled.

When I arrived as DG Op Pol in May 2004, the general parameters of the SF operation in Iraq had been broadly set and had been in place for some time. Essentially it was integrated in two ways. Firstly, it was integrated into PJHQ management of the British part of the campaign, and it was very closely integrated with US Special Forces.

So in that sense the framework was already there, and the management of Special Forces operations was handled very much in theatre by PJHQ. To the extent that ministers needed to give clearance for particular things, quite often that would actually come up from PJHQ, rather than from me or my SF division that dealt with these things, and that was proper because they were under command of PJHQ.

So I dealt with issues to do with Special Forces which had a particularly either very strong political flavour or were a bit more strategic. [redacted]

[redacted] So that was one issue.

The other issue was really how the target set for Special Forces evolved, because again you saw an evolution where the Special Forces operations started out by being very much concentrated on FREs. It then evolved into targeting AQI and the Zarqawi network and so on. Then, very late in my time as DG Op Pol, we did look at [redacted].

So there were issues both of rules of engagement, designation of targets, and also issues of resources [redacted]. So those sort of issues had to be discussed.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was there concern that Special Forces weren't doing enough for our MND South East?

MARTIN HOWARD: Not at all. The SF operation, I think, ran pretty smoothly and was extremely impressive. It was almost [redacted] So no, I never had any doubt that they were not doing a very, very good job.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: It's been put to us, and I would be interested in your comment on this, that our Special Forces were

operating alongside the Americans in order to, as it were, enhance our reputation, buy us strategic credits. Would you comment on that?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think there's always an element of that in any Coalition operation. I have known successive directors of Special Forces, [redacted]. They will always want to be part of a campaign like this. They have always had a very close relationship with the Americans, and they value the fact that the Americans value our reputation very highly, and UK Special Forces have a very, very high reputation, not just with the US.

But I don't think that was the only motive. [redacted] So there was substance to it as well as just saying we want to be part of the show.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And for them an integral part of the effort?

MARTIN HOWARD: Absolutely.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Can you tell us something about the role of the MOD, and also of course Special Forces, in the hostage crises?

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes. Again, a lot of this was done in theatre, but we have [redacted] fairly set procedures for when ministers need to give approval. When SF operations were carried out to deal with hostages, we followed that procedure. So very much an interdepartmental point, through COBR and so on and so forth. If we got to the point where we decided the only credible option or realistic option was a rescue operation, at that point the Secretary of State would give authority to the SF to conduct it.

They were handled in a fairly standard way, although hardly standard operations.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: One more question. We have heard a lot and read a lot about the very high tempo and high involvement of the Special Forces in Iraq, really quite extraordinary activities. Were there difficulties in providing support for them in such a fast moving environment, such an intense activity?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I don't recall any particular difficulties, but I'm not sure it would necessarily have come to me. This would have been a force generation issue, and I think PJHQ would probably be in a better position to say if there were -- do you mean logistic support?

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Yes.

MARTIN HOWARD: I think they would be in a better position. I'm not aware of any particular problem.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And in terms of the wider policy decisions to make?

MARTIN HOWARD: No, the policy was more or less set when I arrived and continued to executed, with those variations that I talked about.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks. We would like to, still in your time as DG Op Pol, move on in this private hearing to the issue of corruption in the Iraqi security services. We will deal with broader aspects of security in the public session.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What I want to understand is what intelligence did you have to help you assess the level of corruption within the Iraqi security forces?

MARTIN HOWARD: I don't think it was just an intelligence issue.

We were sort of dealing with it on a day-to-day basis. The Coalition was intimately involved in training the army, police and others. We were also involved in helping to develop ministries. I supervised a team of advisers inside the Iraqi Ministry of Defence. And those trainers, you know, had to deal with a whole range of issues to do with building up the effectiveness of the Iraqi security forces, and corruption was certainly one of the issues, but it had different manifestations.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That's what we want to concentrate on, because other aspects we'll be talking to you in open. So if you could just focus on the corruption.

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think the two things that struck me in relation to corruption was, firstly, problems at the ministerial level, in the ministries. I went to Baghdad several times to talk with our team, and there were, to start with, major problems in the Ministry of Defence about corruption, contracts and so on and so forth. There were major problems actually with counter corruption activities, because at one point the minister basically sacked all of his DGs, or at least suspended them, because of the charge of corruption. Now, they may or may not have been true, but what it did, it took out the whole leadership. So you had this perverse impact of counter corruption activities inside the Ministry of Defence.

But over time I think the Ministry of Defence became [redacted] reasonably clean. I think there was much, much more concern around the Ministry of the Interior, and that wasn't just a question of corruption. That was a big element. Also, at one point, the Ministry of the Interior ran Shia militias, death squads. So it's a very, very extreme version of corruption, if I can put it that way, and that was a very real concern that I had.

The other problem about corruption at the more tactical level was particularly with the police. This is not unique to Iraq, I have to say. I never felt that corruption was a huge, huge issue inside the army, though it clearly was there, but it was disabling as far as the Iraqi Police Service was concerned. When you add it into, again, militia links, it meant that in effect for a while the Iraqi Police Services were pretty dysfunctional.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you think it was motivated by the militias or just general criminality?

MARTIN HOWARD: I think it's a combination of both. I think there would have been militia links and there would have been general criminality, tribal tensions, the whole range of issues that would have swirled around and would have impacted on police.

It's interesting -- Sir Rod mentioned earlier the fact that the police was hated and distrusted before. Actually, we did recognise that. We actually reached that judgment before the war happened. And that was a big legacy. So you had, if I can use the phrase, a double whammy of both the police being corrupt, and being ineffective and being dysfunctional, and actually the general population thinking this is what we have come to expect anyway.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What about the judiciary?

MARTIN HOWARD: I never really got involved with the judiciary in any detail. The sense I had in my visits and in policy discussions we had was that there were similar issues of corruption there.

It's as much about effectiveness as well though as corruption. Not only were they corrupt, they were ineffective. Sometimes the two things ...

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How concerned were you with issues of

corruption within the Iraqi security forces before the Jameat incident in September 2005?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think it's as I described. I think we knew it was there. The Jameat thing was a very strong manifestation of it, but I think the concern was already there, and would have been reinforced by that incident.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did things change after the incident?

MARTIN HOWARD: I think things changed in the sense that we recognised that we had to redouble our efforts to try and do something about the police, and there were various things done. We may cover this in the public session, but we invited Ronnie Flanagan to go and look at it. He's very expert and did a very good report on that.

We took military action against some elements of the police. We tried in the south to build bridges to the council, the governing council, to seek to make changes, and crucially, we tried in Baghdad to get the Ministry of the Interior to grip this, because by that time the Ministry of the Interior was beginning to move out of the dark period it had been into, as I recall. Funnily enough, I went to Iraq many times last year and met Bulani, who was still at the Ministry of the Interior, and it's transformed. It is completely different from how it was in those days.

So there were a number of things that needed to be done.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So what priority did you give to driving corruption out of Iraqi security forces in MND South East?

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think that we would have approached it in a slightly different way. The key thing for us was effectiveness. What we were looking for was an effective police force and an effective army. Clearly part of that was driving

out corruption, at least to the extent that corruption was, as I say, disabling the function of these organisations. You have to be realistic. We were never going to stamp out corruption entirely, and that was never the aim. The aim was to generate effective police forces which could at least command some respect from the local population, and where corruption was not actually preventing that happening. So I think that would be the way we approached it.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you were more concerned about capability and competence?

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes. To the extent that corruption was impacting that, we were concerned about it. But our start point, the output we were looking for, was capability and competence, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think this set of exchanges has helpfully brought out that corruption could be seen as too narrow a term to cover the full range of everything from minor peculation and briberies right through to death squads, the militias, disloyalty to the regime.

MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for that.

Lawrence, a few questions which we probably couldn't pursue far enough in public on the US connection.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes. Not long after taking up this post you were -- this was just after the Americans had launched Vigilant Resolve and subsequently withdrawn from Fallujah. What was your frank assessment about concerns about the tactics being used by the Americans at this time?

MARTIN HOWARD: My frank assessment?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes, or the UK assessments.

MARTIN HOWARD: I think that -- it's such a vast subject. It's quite hard to know where to start really. By that time -- so we were talking middle of 2004 -- I think the US were recognising, arguably belatedly, that the generation of Iraqi capability was going to be the key to reach a satisfactory conclusion inside Iraq.

I think that things like the operations in Fallujah were an understandable reaction to events that had happened, and interestingly, the subsequent operation in Fallujah in the autumn, as I recall -- I can't remember what the codename was -- was a much, much more judged -- although it was still quite violent, it was a much more judged intervention and much more carefully prepared.

The impression I got from the Americans was that they would sometimes make mistakes. I think we made mistakes as well, but the Americans are very, very good at learning lessons, as it were, in theatre. They know that things went wrong there. They had adopted an [redacted] approach in the first Fallujah, and learned the lessons from that.

The other thing I would say is that we weren't separated from them. We were an integral part of this Coalition. We had the deputy commander, who would be in command if the commander was away. We had deputies all the way down the line. So we had, you know, plenty of opportunity to make our points.

So although there are elements of the US operation, the military level, which could be open to criticism, I think we were implicated in that.

I think the things that I felt the US didn't quite get right to start with was again they very much focused, in terms of building Iraqi capability, on generating battalions, generating the army, which we needed to do, and perhaps not enough attention was paid to the ministries, to the higher command structures and

so on and so forth.

One of the things that was awkward was that the programme of assistance in the Ministry of Defence, the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, was run by the State Department, I think, whereas the assistance to the army was run through what became MNSTC-I, multinational -- whatever MNSTC-I is[5].

THE CHAIRMAN: We have heard the acronym.

MARTIN HOWARD: One of the sensible things that the US commander did was actually bring this together. We put it all into MNSTC-I, and that was the right thing to do, and I think a good illustration of how the US learned some lessons from that. So we had a more integrated process of building up Iraqi capacity, though it was much more difficult on the Ministry of the Interior side. But that wasn't necessarily the fault of American tactics or strategy.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You had this period of -- I'm thinking of it in terms of April 2004, the low point, with the Fallujah Sadrists uprising and so on.

Did you sense concern around the Ministry of Defence that we had got ourselves attached to an American operation that risked going in completely the wrong direction?

MARTIN HOWARD: Not going completely in the wrong direction. I think that there was concern that we were associated with an operation where things had happened which looked very bad. Abu Ghraib was a very good example, and of course that generated a whole set of accusations about British abuse of prisoners. That was a big issue that I had to deal with during 2004.

But I never felt that I or anyone else felt we were hitched to something where the strategy was completely wrong. The broad

[5] Multinational Security Transition Command - Iraq

strategy actually was pretty consistently in two parts of supporting the Iraqis in containing and suppressing insurgency, while building Iraqi governance and capacity. Those were the thrusts, and they always remained the same thrust.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were there any efforts in theatre where we had to distance ourselves from American tactics and strategy? There were some well-publicised commentaries on American tactics and strategy.

MARTIN HOWARD: As you say, there was various commentary. [redacted]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And were there any other areas?

MARTIN HOWARD: [redacted]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: You talked earlier about planning for the wrong kind of aftermath, and lack of understanding that a vacuum was developing. But again, if one reads back some of the papers like the JIC, or indeed the very first Red Team paper, key judgments, the first sentence warns of an internal security vacuum, warns that support for the Coalition would erode rapidly,

fertile ground for Al Qaeda. You find similar sentiments in JIC papers at the time, a warning in the April paper I mentioned earlier about popular frustration and resentment growing, giving the opportunity for significant resistance to develop.

How was it that these important messages embedded in the material did not get through to our top decision-makers and get embedded in our planning?

MARTIN HOWARD: They did filter up to the top of the JIC pile.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes.

MARTIN HOWARD: Well, that's very hard to say. The intelligence community, I think, laid this out. I think they spotted the risks of a vacuum early on. I think that the problem in a sense was the inertia of pre-war planning and the mechanisms that had been put in place for dealing with the aftermath, where you had Jay Garner and ORHA deployed, again really to deal with a huge refugee and humanitarian issue, whereas actually probably what you needed was something much more to do with establishing law and order early, trying to establish governance.

The other tension, of course, was that in setting up the Coalition Provisional Authority, I think the Coalition rightly wanted to sort of involve Iraqis from the outset and, as it were, start to build up the seeds of an Iraqi administration. Inevitably the people that tended to be part of that were violently anti-Ba'athist. They were very keen that Ba'athism should be completely removed, and I think that actually did influence some decisions that were made in the middle of 2004 about the Iraqi bureaucracy, about the army, which I think with hindsight were probably the wrong decisions. But there was very strong political pressure from the people who ultimately were going to be part of the government.

So I don't think that people ignored the threat, but there

were other issues which were influencing policy makers, and of course most of the policy making was being done in Washington.

THE CHAIRMAN: Martin, we have got the public session to come, but is there anything, while we are still in this private session, that you would like to say a word about?

MARTIN HOWARD: I'm just looking at the questions you have sent to me, to see if there was anything that I thought was important.

No, I don't think so. We've covered the ISG, which was, I think, probably the key thing.

Could I just say something about UK/US relations in the intelligence field, which was on your list? [redacted].

[redacted]

[redacted]

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Just now you referred to the mistakes made in some of the decisions made. I think you said 2004, but we were talking about --

MARTIN HOWARD: I'm sorry, 2005.

THE CHAIRMAN: You mentioned some documents in responding to Rod Lyne earlier. We'll follow those up. I don't know whether we've got them actually at the moment.

I think, with that, looking forward to your next appearance, I'll say thank you very much indeed, close the session, and remind you that the document has got to be looked at here, but at your convenience.

MARTIN HOWARD: I'm next here actually for the public hearing, so maybe I could do it that morning, 6 July.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

(The hearing adjourned)