

1 (1.30 pm)

2 MR MARTIN HOWARD

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon and welcome.

4 Our first witness this afternoon is Martin Howard --  
5 welcome -- who was the Director General of Operational  
6 Policy at the Ministry of Defence from May 2004  
7 to August 2007.

8 This session will look at the conduct of the  
9 campaign during this period and most specifically  
10 focusing on security sector reform and the implications  
11 of the increased commitment to Afghanistan on operations  
12 in Iraq.

13 We expect the session should last about two hours.

14 Later this afternoon, we shall be hearing from the  
15 Rt Hon Bob Ainsworth in his roles as a Minister of State  
16 for the armed forces and then as the Secretary of State  
17 for Defence.

18 Now, as I say on every occasion, we recognise that  
19 witnesses are giving evidence based on their  
20 recollection of events and we, of course, check what we  
21 hear against the papers to which we have access and  
22 which we are still receiving.

23 I remind each witness on each occasion that they  
24 will later be asked to sign a transcript of the evidence  
25 to the effect that the evidence given is truthful, fair

1 and accurate.

2 With that said, I'll ask Sir Martin Gilbert to open  
3 the questions.

4 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: We have seen you today in your role as  
5 Director General of Operational Policy in the MoD and  
6 I wonder if you could start by explaining to us what  
7 that role entailed.

8 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, my role was to provide -- or to help  
9 provide the political and policy context for the conduct  
10 of military operations, both at home and overseas.  
11 I also had a particular policy responsibility for the  
12 Ministry of Defence contribution to the wider  
13 counter-terrorism campaign and, as very much a secondary  
14 responsibility, I had some responsibilities for  
15 bilateral defence relations with Latin America and  
16 East Asia, but that was very much a secondary  
17 responsibility.

18 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: To whom did you report?

19 MARTIN HOWARD: I reported to what was then the Deputy Chief  
20 of Defence Staff (Commitments) and is now the Deputy  
21 Chief of Defence Staff (Operations), a three-star  
22 military officer. It was General Rob Fry when I started  
23 and it was Admiral Charles Style by the time I left.

24 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of your overall areas of  
25 involvement, what degree of your time was spent

1 specifically with regard to Iraq?

2 MARTIN HOWARD: I think it is very hard to put an exact  
3 percentage on it, but I would have said, during that  
4 period, between 2004 to 2007, I would estimate 40 to  
5 50 per cent of my time, perhaps nearer 40 per cent of my  
6 time on Iraq, but that's very much a guesstimate rather  
7 than a precise figure.

8 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How did you prioritise Iraq with regard  
9 to your other commitments?

10 MARTIN HOWARD: Iraq was always the top priority during the  
11 majority of that period. Towards the end of the period,  
12 as Afghanistan became more of a live operational policy  
13 issue, it moved to being a close second and perhaps by  
14 the time I left it was almost level in terms of  
15 priority.

16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Within Iraq, how did you prioritise --  
17 what were the sort of priorities in Iraq?

18 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, it seemed to me that my first job was  
19 to try to contribute to the overall HMG strategy towards  
20 Iraq. So I tried to bring a forward-looking strategic  
21 planning approach to the campaign in Iraq, not just  
22 concentrated in MND South East in Basra and the  
23 surrounding provinces, but also more broadly, because,  
24 obviously, issues -- political and military issues in  
25 Baghdad had a major impact on the campaign.

1 I took some responsibility for managing the  
2 contributions that we were making to support the  
3 Ministry of Defence in Iraq. I had a team led by  
4 a British senior civilian operating inside the Iraqi MoD  
5 in Baghdad, which I -- I didn't quite manage that, and  
6 latterly, I took on responsibility, under the auspices  
7 of the Iraq Strategy Group, to provide overall  
8 co-ordination of our security sector reform effort.

9 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of these policies, how were  
10 the priorities agreed among them? What was the process?

11 MARTIN HOWARD: I think collectively the priorities were set  
12 through DOP(I), the Cabinet Committee which oversaw  
13 Iraq, and then, below that, the Iraq Strategy Group  
14 chaired by Nigel Sheinwald, the Iraq Senior Officials  
15 Group, chaired by Margaret Aldred from time to time, and  
16 there were also -- a certain amount of direction came  
17 from weekly meetings with the Chiefs of Staff, but  
18 I think the central mechanism for setting overall  
19 priorities for setting the direction of a campaign was  
20 underneath DOP(I) and in the Iraq Strategy Group.

21 There was a variation later on in -- from around  
22 about the end of 2005, when a ministerial meeting was  
23 set up which was jointly chaired by  
24 Secretary of State for Defence and the Secretary of  
25 State for Foreign Affairs -- I think they alternated in

1 chairmanship -- to manage, as it were, the more  
2 day-to-day policy issues that were coming up, rather  
3 than the big strategic decisions which DOP(I) tended to  
4 concentrate on.

5 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Roderic?

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: When you took up this post in May 2004,  
8 for which aspects of security sector reform was the MoD  
9 responsible and what were its priorities in that area?

10 MARTIN HOWARD: At that time, the MoD was responsible for  
11 the building up of the 10th Division of the -- what  
12 became the 10th Division of the Iraqi national army,  
13 which was based in the MND South East area.

14 We also -- as I said to Sir Martin, we had  
15 a responsibility for leading a Multi National team to  
16 help develop and mentor the Iraqi Ministry of Defence in  
17 Baghdad and, from the outset, though this wasn't  
18 controlled by the Ministry of Defence at that time,  
19 a number of police advisers were also deployed into Iraq  
20 both in Baghdad and in Basra, but those, as I say, were  
21 not a direct MoD responsibility at the time.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So which other parts of Whitehall were  
23 dealing with other aspects of security sector reform,  
24 including the police?

25 MARTIN HOWARD: The police development was primarily led by

1 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The area of, if  
2 you like, judicial development of the Ministry of the  
3 Interior, the idea of a -- and the Ministry of  
4 Justice -- I think that responsibility was rather more  
5 diffuse. DFID had some responsibilities there. I think  
6 the Home Office were also providing some assistance and,  
7 indeed, the Ministry of Defence did provide some  
8 military people to work inside the Ministry of the  
9 Interior primarily because it created -- it represented  
10 some very specific security challenges and it was easier  
11 to deploy some military people inside the MoI.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did we have an overall strategy for this  
13 work?

14 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think that the -- the strategy,  
15 I think, evolved over time. I'm not sure I can recall  
16 ever seeing a strategy written down which said "This is  
17 HMG's approach to security sector reform" but what  
18 I observed was a very strong focus on the Iraqi army at  
19 the outset and then an increasing sense that the  
20 development of police was also important and, as I said,  
21 that really started to come together towards the end of  
22 2005, when the Secretary of State for Defence was asked  
23 to take over responsibility for security sector reform  
24 and, as part of that, for what it is worth, I chaired  
25 a cross-Whitehall group, which again tried to, at a more

1 working level, provide the co-ordination necessary for  
2 that.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Given the spread at this stage, before,  
4 as you say, the Secretary of State for Defence, in late  
5 2005, takes over the lead across the piece, how, in  
6 2004, was the approach co-ordinated?

7 MARTIN HOWARD: The co-ordination would have taken place  
8 inside the Iraq Strategy Group or the Iraq Senior  
9 Officials Group at the working level. All the relevant  
10 people were around the table. I was around the table,  
11 my boss was around the table and, of course, the  
12 Foreign Office were represented there as well and,  
13 indeed, other relevant departments, including DFID. So  
14 there was an opportunity to bring it together in that  
forum.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The funding?

16 MARTIN HOWARD: The funding, obviously our support for the  
17 Iraqi army was provided through the normal process of  
18 funding from the Reserve -- sorry, the additional costs  
19 were funded from the Reserve; other sort of standing  
20 costs were met by the Ministry of Defence. Funding for  
21 the police was met by the Foreign Office. I think it  
22 came from -- at least partially, from the conflict  
23 prevention pool. I can't say I'm an expert exactly on  
24 what was happening in 2004.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Talking of the Conflict Prevention Pool,

1           that was spread between the Foreign Office, the MoD and  
2           DFID?

3   MARTIN HOWARD: That's right.

4   SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was this an instrument that worked  
5           effectively? Did somebody have some clear overall  
6           responsibility for taking decisions within it?

7   MARTIN HOWARD: Well, of course, the GCPP didn't just deal  
8           with Iraq. It was a conflict prevention pool which  
9           dealt with a very wide range of issues and it was  
10          jointly managed by the three departments. Every so  
11          often, there would be a meeting to look at priorities  
12          for the GCPP, which would be -- well, the FCO, DFID and  
13          MoD would jointly chair it with the Cabinet Office  
14          sometimes present. In fact, as I recall, there was  
15          a Cabinet Office, or a Cabinet subcommittee, which also  
16          looked at this, which the Cabinet Office chaired.

17                On Iraq, I think it was a valuable resource and to  
18                the extent that we were able to prioritise GCPP funding  
19                for Iraq, that helped. I think we were always faced  
20                with the difficulty that, for the military part of these  
21                operations, the Ministry of Defence was able to call on  
22                the Reserve through the normal practice, whereas other  
23                departments, who would be needed to spend extra money  
24                could not do so and, therefore, some of the non-military  
25                expenditure had to be done by reprioritising the GCPP.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We have heard from earlier witnesses that  
2 because the military had access to the Reserve and other  
3 departments didn't, there was always an inclination to  
4 try to label things military, where you could, in order  
5 to get the money, which you couldn't get nearly so  
6 easily through the civilian departments.

7 Did you observe this happening?

8 MARTIN HOWARD: I can't say I observed it in any sort  
9 of systematic way. I guess there may have been  
10 individual cases, but it is not a phenomenon that  
11 I particularly recall from the time.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Lawrence, over to you.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Moving now into Iraq, you described  
15 the UK strategy that was evolving -- that was your  
16 phrase -- and possibly not fully clear until 2005. What  
17 about a coalition strategy? Was there one and what form  
18 did it take?

19 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, again, I think the overall coalition  
20 strategy evolved in accordance with the situation that  
21 developed on the ground inside Iraq and one of the  
22 things that needed to be taken into account was the fact  
23 that, in effect, the Iraqi army and Iraqi police service  
24 had either been disbanded or had disbanded itself and,  
25 therefore, there was a need to generate manpower to

1 carry out security and law and order tasks pretty  
2 rapidly, and so the early strategy from the coalition  
3 was very much to generate manpower which could be used  
4 for law and order and security duties.

5 Over time -- and perhaps not very much time --  
6 I think there was a recognition that that by itself was  
7 not enough, that it was necessary also to build up the  
8 institutions that would have to lie behind these forces.

9 So the work, for example, to start building up the  
10 Iraqi Ministry of Defence actually started in 2003,  
11 although it probably didn't really get into its stride  
12 until a little later into 2004.

13 So I think there was a realisation early on that  
14 that needed to be dealt with as well.

15 The other thing that had to be taken into account  
16 was the security situation itself, because, of course,  
17 the Iraqi security forces would ultimately have to deal  
18 with the security situation, as it were, and that in  
19 itself involved -- in 2006, for example, we saw a big  
20 rise in sectarian violence, which posed particular  
21 challenges, not just for the coalition, but also for the  
22 growing Iraqi security forces.

23 So again, I think it was a question of evolution.

24 I suppose the final point I would make in terms of  
25 overall coalition strategy was that generating Iraqi

1 security force capability was, of course, on the  
2 critical path towards handing over responsibility to the  
3 Iraqis province by province, the process that became  
4 known as PIC, Provincial Iraqi Control. That became  
5 part of the objectives and, therefore, part the  
6 strategy.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In general, would you say that the  
8 British approach fitted in with the rest of the  
9 coalition approach, essentially the American approach?

10 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think that the British approach was,  
11 in effect, represented by the fact that we had  
12 significant representation in the coalition structures.  
13 We had -- we obviously had the deputy commander of MNF-I.  
14 We also had the deputy commander of the Multi National  
15 Security Transition Command Iraq -- the appallingly  
16 entitled MNSTC-I -- and we had that influence.

17 In terms of our approach, I'm not sure I would  
18 necessarily recognise a very, very distinctive approach  
19 to security sector reform which was radically different  
20 from a very, very distinctive US one. I think all of us  
21 learned, as time went on -- and, of course, US and UK  
22 weren't the only people playing this role.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was there a distinctive British role  
24 within that, as opposed to a distinctive British  
25 strategy?

1 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, as I -- I already mentioned the work  
2 that we did with the 10th Division in MND South East and  
3 I think we also did some mentoring for the 14th Division  
4 and we had a role, as I say, in the Ministry of Defence,  
5 which was, I think -- that was distinctive in the sense  
6 that the British Ministry of Defence sort of led that.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: A bit slower, please.

8 MARTIN HOWARD: Apologies, yes.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You have described this -- these are  
10 largely military areas. Would you see this as largely  
11 a military role that we were playing?

12 MARTIN HOWARD: I think in terms of the resources that were  
13 devoted to security sector reform, certainly in the  
14 period 2004 to 2006, I think the military sort of was  
15 overwhelmingly the major supplier of resources, but we  
16 did actually appoint a succession of police advisers,  
17 both in Baghdad and Basra, and the Foreign Office also  
18 provided a number of police trainers, particularly in  
19 MND South East, both civilian policemen and also  
20 contractors from firms like Armorgroup.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We will be coming on a bit more to  
22 the police role.

23 Just one question on the focus of our efforts, which  
24 is sort of a general question, I think, for all UK  
25 strategy, which is the question of whether or not we

1           were focused on Basra, on the south, or trying to make  
2           our impact on Baghdad and more generally.

3           Which would you say was our main preoccupation?

4   MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I have to say I think they were both  
5           preoccupations. The discussions that we had at  
6           strategic level in the Iraq Strategy Group were as much  
7           about the overall security situation and the overall  
8           development of the Iraqi security forces across the  
9           country as they were about the specific things we were  
10          doing in Basra.

11          Part of the reason was, I think, an early  
12          recognition that the security centre of gravity was  
13          always going to be Baghdad and that, therefore, it would  
14          be wrong for us purely to focus on MND South East.

15          Of course, the actual resources we committed were  
16          much heavier in MND South East because we had  
17          a particular responsibility there, but in terms of our  
18          policy deliberations, it seems to me that we looked at  
19          both areas fairly equally, though that varied over the  
20          period that I was in my post.

21   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did that create tensions in terms of  
22          how you'd prioritise, whether the resources were going  
23          to the right place?

24   MARTIN HOWARD: I don't think it did create too many  
25          tensions because, as I say, I don't think there was any

1           dispute over the fact that the physical resources we  
2           were devoting to this were going to be concentrated in  
3           MND South East in terms of numbers and money, but the  
4           policy work we were doing and the small amounts of human  
5           resources that we were devoting in Baghdad were -- there  
6           wasn't a problem in generating those as well as the  
7           resources we were generating in MND South East.

8           I do recall one particular issue about where -- the  
9           best place to position our Senior Police Adviser,  
10          whether it was better to have him in Baghdad or in  
11          Basra, but that was a little later on, but it was that  
12          kind of level that we would have debates.

13         SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But that sort of debate would  
14          reflect a broader question about what was going on in  
15          the --

16         MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

17         SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about responsibility for  
18          implementation of the policy? What was sort of the --  
19          how was it transmitted through and who was responsible  
20          within Iraq for making sure it happened?

21         MARTIN HOWARD: Well, then I think there would have been  
22          a difference here between what was happening at the  
23          national level in Baghdad and what was happening in  
24          MND South East. The responsibility in MND South East  
25          for, as it were, implementation of security sector

1 reform was shared between the GOC and the Consul General  
2 at the time. I think, increasingly, because it had --  
3 it was a very demanding security environment or became  
4 a more demanding security environment, the GOC continued  
5 to become the more dominant figure but, of course, that  
6 was all done in consultation with the Consul General,  
7 and I think that was reflected in the fact that, in  
8 2006, the senior police adviser moved from sitting with  
9 the Consul General to sitting with the GOC, and that  
10 made very practical sense at the time.

11 I think in Baghdad we tended to work through the  
12 coalition structures. The team we had in the  
13 Ministry of Defence had a direct line through to the  
14 commander of MNSTC-I, if I can use that phrase again, but  
15 he also had a -- if you like, a pastoral responsibility  
16 to me back in London. I would go out and visit him from  
17 time to time and check on the general health and  
18 wellbeing of the team, but the tasking was through  
19 MNSTC-I, obviously consulting many other people, the  
20 British Embassy, the British Deputy Commander and so on.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What role were the MoD civilians  
22 then playing within Iraq?

23 MARTIN HOWARD: Their job in the Baghdad  
24 Ministry of Defence -- I'm assuming you are talking  
25 about that rather than --

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I'm just interested generally. I'm  
2 assuming that the Baghdad Ministry of Defence was a key  
3 part of their job.

4 MARTIN HOWARD: Yes. There were quite a few MoD civil  
5 servants in Basra and elsewhere acting as command  
6 secretaries, but if you are talking about security  
7 sector reform --

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The main thrust was --

9 MARTIN HOWARD: The job they had was to provide advice and  
10 mentoring to officials in the Iraqi Ministry of Defence,  
11 and that sounds very easy. In fact, it was an extremely  
12 challenging job, particularly in 2003 and 2004, when  
13 there were very few officials and in the early days some  
14 of the basic functions of the Ministry of Defence,  
15 things like contracting, personnel management and so on,  
16 were almost being done directly by the team which my  
17 Ministry of Defence civilian headed up, which I have to  
18 say was multinational. Although it was headed by  
19 a British civil servant and it had other British civil  
20 servants there, there were other nationalities,  
21 Australians, Italians and Americans working within that  
22 team.

23 Over time, they moved more into a mentoring and  
24 training role, but in a sense it was similar in  
25 principle to the kind of things that we did in the early

1 1990s to help develop democratically accountable  
2 Ministries of Defence in eastern Europe, just in a much,  
3 much more demanding operational environment, as you can  
4 imagine.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just finally in the scene setting.  
6 You have mentioned the police already and the police  
7 contractors. How would you describe their particular  
8 role?

9 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, the first role of the police that we  
10 deployed, and the police contractors, was again  
11 a generation of policing. Again, the requirement was  
12 for numbers, for people who could provide law and order.

13 I have to say it was part of a much, much bigger US  
14 operation which was very contractor-heavy. In that  
15 sense, it was sometimes, I think, a little difficult to  
16 work out exactly where the British contribution could be  
17 of most value. In the end, it settled around providing  
18 some advice, as we have senior police input in Baghdad  
19 and actually conducting the training down in the police  
20 training college -- I think it was in Shaibah, in  
21 MND South East.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay, thank you.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Usha?

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Mr Howard, I would like to explore  
25 the co-ordination between London and Iraq. How were you

1           being kept informed of progress in theatre?

2   MARTIN HOWARD: We had weekly meetings of the Chiefs of  
3           Staff, of course, in fact rather more than weekly at one  
4           point, in fact, and progress on the development of the  
5           Iraqi security forces would form part of that.

6           We would also have progress reports given to the  
7           Iraq Strategy Group and the Iraq Senior Officials Group  
8           and, later on, when I was given the responsibility to  
9           co-ordinate SSR more closely at a level below the Iraq  
10          Strategy Group, we had progress reports. We met roughly  
11          every six weeks or two months and we would get progress  
12          reports in each area.

13          In addition to that, of course, I had direct contact  
14          with my team in the Iraqi Ministry of Defence. I would  
15          speak to them reasonably regularly, but not to try to  
16          interfere too much from several thousand miles away with  
17          what they were doing. So it was a variety of means that  
18          we received information, but those are the main ones.

19   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But who in Whitehall was holding  
20          those in theatre accountable?

21   MARTIN HOWARD: Could you say that again? Sorry.

22   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Who in Whitehall was holding those  
23          in theatre accountable? How did the accountability  
24          lines work?

25   MARTIN HOWARD: They did vary, depending on which part of

1 the security sector reform picture we are looking at.

2 Of course, the training that we were giving to the  
3 Iraqi national army, the accountability was in the  
4 Ministry of Defence and ultimately to the Secretary of  
5 State. For the police, departmental responsibility was  
6 with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

7 But, as I said, at the end of 2005, the then  
8 Secretary of State for Defence was given a particular  
9 role to co-ordinate that. So that's at the top level,  
10 that's where it came, and of course all that ultimately  
11 was elevated to Cabinet level through DOP(I).

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was it an effective arrangement?

13 Did you think it was effective? Did it work?

14 MARTIN HOWARD: I think it became progressively more  
15 effective. I think the decisions at the end of 2005 to  
16 place a single minister in charge of security sector  
17 reform efforts, you know, made sense, given the  
18 challenges to be faced.

19 I found that being able to chair a group which dealt  
20 with -- which had all the Whitehall representatives on  
21 it, plus ACPO, plus representatives in PJHQ and others  
22 was also very useful. So I think it got progressively  
23 better.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How were the progress and  
25 performance of the Iraqi security forces being measured

1 and who set those measures?

2 MARTIN HOWARD: Again, there is probably not a simple answer  
3 to this. At one level, MNSTC-I set quite detailed  
4 criteria for measuring the effectiveness of individual  
5 battalions and other units against capability  
6 milestones, and I can't remember the exact levels, but  
7 you would have a level whereby unit X could operate only  
8 with coalition support. Then the next level it could  
9 operate with less coalition support, and the top level  
10 would be that it would be capable of fully independent  
11 operations.

12 So for -- particularly for the army, MNSTC-I set  
13 these criteria and they monitored them very closely, and  
14 the criteria were a mixture of qualitative and  
15 quantitative judgments. They tried to do similar  
16 things with the police. I think that was harder to do,  
17 and I think the area that perhaps was most difficult was  
18 in terms of the performance of the ministries, because  
19 it was much harder to set those same quantitative  
20 measurements and it was more judgments being reached  
21 about how a ministry was performing and, of course, in  
22 the case of ministries you can't ignore the politics,  
23 because so much of the performance of the individual  
24 ministry would depend on the minister, and those varied,  
25 obviously, over that period.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: With hindsight, do you think these  
2 were the right measures and that the balance between the  
3 effort put towards ministries and that of training was  
4 right? Have you any reflections on that?

5 MARTIN HOWARD: I think, with hindsight, I don't think we  
6 did -- I don't think we did quite enough quite early  
7 enough in the area of ministries and other institutions.  
8 But that's easy to say. To do that is a huge challenge.  
9 Building up a Ministry of Defence, for example, from  
10 scratch is a huge undertaking, and I have to say that,  
11 of all the ministries, the Ministry of Defence probably  
12 developed the fastest in Iraq, and the Ministry of  
13 Interior tended to develop much more slowly, but there  
14 were special reasons for that.

15 One of them was the Ministry of the Interior was  
16 located outside the Green Zone, so it was much more  
17 difficult to access for advisers on a continuing basis  
18 and, secondly, to be frank, from time to time, the  
19 Ministry of the Interior became, as it were, part of the  
20 sectarian problem rather than a means of solving the  
21 sectarian problem.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So what you are saying is that  
23 developing ministries was a difficult task and training  
24 was a kind of easier target?

25 MARTIN HOWARD: Yes, I think that sums it up.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to ask a few questions about the  
3 tensions and balance between, on the one hand, the  
4 coalition's responsibility to provide and maintain  
5 security; on the other, the need to press forward with  
6 security sector reform and Iraqi-isation of security in  
7 an evolving -- to put it politely -- security situation.  
8 It wasn't getting any better.

9 Looking first at the time you took up your post  
10 in May 2004, timescales were already in existence,  
11 weren't they, for the handover to Iraqi security forces?  
12 Can you remind us roughly what those were at the time?

13 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think those timescales were fairly  
14 rudimentary, I have to say, at that time. I do remember  
15 writing some policy pieces which suggested that we could  
16 be handing over in 2005 and 2006.

17 At that stage, in 2004, as I recall, the concept of  
18 provincial Iraqi control, the so-called PIC process,  
19 hadn't really been fully developed. That came later  
20 and, in the end, the process of transfer happened  
21 a little later than we anticipated in 2004.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: There had been, right from the beginning,  
23 a coalition policy of fairly rapid troop drawdown in the  
24 expectation that Iraqi security would be given effect by  
25 the Iraqi security forces; that was pushed back and

1 back in time. Now, was that principally because of  
2 a declining security situation or because the  
3 Iraqi-isation process itself was taking longer than  
4 people expected?

5 MARTIN HOWARD: I think it is a combination of both and one  
6 feeds into the other, to be frank. I think it turned  
7 out to be harder to generate effective Iraqi security  
8 forces than perhaps we anticipated and, of course, we  
9 were starting perhaps from a much lower base than we  
10 originally anticipated when we entered Iraq in the  
11 spring of 2003.

12 I do think that the fact that we didn't move as  
13 quickly as perhaps we could have done to build up those  
14 institutional frameworks contributed to the fact that it  
15 took some time to build up the effectiveness of the  
16 Iraqi security forces.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Institutional being sort of, what,  
18 ministries, training places?

19 MARTIN HOWARD: Ministries, that's right, and other things  
20 like logistic support for the Iraqi army and  
21 intelligence support. So there was more to it than just  
22 the ministries, but that was, if you like, one example  
23 of that.

24 The security situation, of course, had a major  
25 impact, because the security tasks became progressively

1 more demanding and, in 2006, in particular, the rise of  
2 sectarian violence created a whole new set of potential  
3 security problems which not only needed to be dealt with  
4 in their own right, but actually impacted directly on  
5 the performance of the Iraqi security forces themselves.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: The process of Iraqi-isation, both in the new  
7 Iraqi army and in the Iraqi police services was  
8 proceeding at different rates and those rates in turn  
9 were being, as it were, affected -- impacted on by the  
10 security situation as it deteriorated.

11 MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Where was the key judgment being made about  
13 when you could actually effect transition? Was it  
14 essentially a theatre-based set of judgments or was it  
15 people like yourself in London and others in Washington?

16 MARTIN HOWARD: It was a combination of both. Obviously,  
17 the basic data to reach decisions on handing over  
18 responsibility to the Iraqis had to come from theatre,  
19 through the chain of command. But equally, there was  
20 a high-level, strategic, political element to that  
21 judgment, because it was -- not least because it was  
22 a multinational operation.

23 Just to take a specific example, the very first  
24 province that was handed over to Iraqi control was  
25 Muthanna, where the main battle group providing support

1 was a Japanese battle group supported by Australians.  
2 The military advice about whether that province could be  
3 handed over was becoming increasingly clear-cut that  
4 that was feasible, it was a fairly peaceful part of  
5 Iraq, but there were, of course, political implications  
6 to deciding exactly when the Japanese battalion should  
7 leave and that involved a lot of high-level discussions  
8 between -- well, high-level if you count me as  
9 high-level -- between myself, the Japanese, the  
10 Australians and the Americans to ensure that this  
11 decision not only made sense from a military point of  
12 view, it made sense from a political point of view as  
13 well.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Was that process in part conducted between  
15 capitals and defence ministries?

16 MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: A couple of other points then. The first is:  
18 focusing on MND South East, where we had a whole series  
19 of planned drawdown targets and eventually, in 2005/2006  
20 onwards, a rapidly and perhaps partly unexpectedly  
21 deteriorating security situation, what effect did that  
22 have on planned force levels, UK force levels as well as  
23 coalition in the southeast?

24 MARTIN HOWARD: Obviously, the delay in transitions in  
25 MND South East had an impact on that, but it is worth

1 saying that of the four provinces, in the case of  
2 Muthanna had very little impact on UK force levels,  
3 because of course the forces were primarily provided by  
4 Japan and Australia. And the same in Dhi Qar, when that  
5 was transitioned, most of the forces were being provided  
6 by Italy. The main UK reduction happened when we were  
7 able to transition in Maysan, which happened, I guess,  
8 some six to nine months later than we were perhaps  
9 originally planning.

10 So that would have had an impact, and then of course  
11 there was the whole series of decisions about drawdown  
12 from Basra, which I can either deal with now or you may  
13 wish to deal with later.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: We have taken a great deal of evidence  
15 already, so for now I would just like to focus on one  
16 other point. It is really whether, particularly in  
17 southern Iraq, but also more generally across the whole  
18 country, in your time as DG of Operational Policy, there  
19 was a sense that we had a sufficient presence, be it  
20 military predominantly, but be it also Iraqi-ised police  
21 and other services like the civil guard, or whatever it  
22 was called. Was the scale of the provision of security  
23 in proportion to the rising scale of the threat against  
24 it?

25 MARTIN HOWARD: I think that's quite a hard question to

1 answer authoritatively. We basically worked around the  
2 idea that the coalition would have one or two battle  
3 groups in each province in MND South East. Now, each  
4 battle group, anything from 800 to 1,000 people,  
5 compared with, say, the population of Basra City, of  
6 course is very tiny. So there was never a question that  
7 those forces could provide the totality of a security  
8 response. That had to be primarily Iraqi.

9 My sense during that period was not so much  
10 a problem of numbers of Iraqi security forces, but the  
11 fact that they had become -- in some areas they had  
12 become criminalised. There were tribal issues, there  
13 were sectarian issues, though perhaps those were less  
14 strong in MND South East than they were elsewhere in  
15 Iraq. So the difficulty was not to try to replace that  
16 large group of Iraqi security forces, but to get them  
17 back on to an effective footing so that they could  
18 actually provide security.

19 So I think we were always working on that basis, we  
20 were building up Iraqi capacity rather than thinking we  
21 could flood Basra, with, for example, lots of British  
22 troops.

23 I mean, the other angle to this -- and I know that  
24 you have heard evidence on this from others -- is that,  
25 of course, certainly in the latter part of my time

1           there, the coalition troops became the target of the  
2           violence. So in a sense, it made it doubly difficult  
3           for them to provide the security.

4   THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I'll pass the questions to  
5           Sir Martin.

6   SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to ask the Iraqi Civil  
7           Defence Corps which was created, I think, in  
8           September 2003, very much as an emergency security force  
9           in the absence of an effective police force. Could you  
10          say something about how the ICDC was developed and  
11          particularly the role of the Ministry of Defence in the  
12          development?

13   MARTIN HOWARD: Well, to be honest, Sir Martin, I don't  
14          think I can say very much about it. That process  
15          happened largely before I arrived. By the time  
16          I arrived, as DG Op Pol and by the time we were focusing  
17          on the big policy issues around security sector reform,  
18          we were thinking much more in terms of the development  
19          of the army in direct development to the police.

20   THE CHAIRMAN: Slower, please.

21   MARTIN HOWARD: Sorry. We were focusing much more on the  
22          development of the army and the development of the  
23          police and, in a sense, the Civil Defence Corps became  
24          absorbed into that. I'm sorry I can't help you more  
25          than that.

1 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: My next question was "What became of  
2 it?" so absorbed into the national army. So my next  
3 question is actually about the army and again,  
4 essentially, what was the Ministry of Defence role in  
5 its creation, the Iraqi national army? That was very  
6 much in your time, I believe.

7 MARTIN HOWARD: The process had, of course, started by the  
8 time I arrived. I think it would have been the  
9 coalition that started to build up the army and we, as  
10 being responsible for MND South East, were given  
11 a particular part of the army, as I've already  
12 mentioned, the 10th Division, to develop.

13 We were working within a coalition approach to  
14 building up the army, which was being directed through  
15 MNSTC-I. The Ministry of Defence part of it was  
16 originally being directed through the  
17 US State Department, but responsibility for that moved,  
18 I think, in late 2004/early 2005 from the  
19 State Department into MNSTC-I.

20 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How did the MoD seek to ensure that the  
21 Iraqi security forces and MND South East had the right  
22 equipment? How successful were you in providing what  
23 was needed?

24 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, part of the equipment programme again  
25 was a coalition effort. So we were, as it were,

1 contributing to that overall effort but, as I recall, we  
2 did take a number of opportunities in 2004 and 2005 to  
3 find extra money to buy particular pieces of equipment.  
4 I can't remember the exact amounts. The figure of one  
5 tranche of about £20 million, I seem to recall, and  
6 I think there was a second one of around about the same  
7 amount, to provide additional equipment to help speed up  
8 the development of the Iraqi security forces.

9 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of security sector reform, how  
10 are the various strands prioritised during your time?

11 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think they were prioritised at  
12 a very strategic level, through the workings of the Iraq  
13 Strategy Group. Later on, we established a  
14 cross-Whitehall group, which I was asked to chair, and  
15 that did, I think, some work in helping prioritise. One  
16 interesting point that emerged in part from the work of  
17 that group and in part from the findings of  
18 Sir Ronnie Flanagan, was the way that we prioritised the  
19 development of law and order institutions in Basra as  
20 part of the so-called Better Basra programme.

21 I think there was a recognition that, to put it  
22 crudely, the army was on track more or less. The police  
23 were less so but perhaps becoming more on track -- and  
24 here I'm talking about the beginning of the 2006, the  
25 middle of 2006 -- but that actually perhaps the biggest

1 gap was in the sort of law and order institutions -- and  
2 here I'm talking about local ones in Basra.

3 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. Sir Roderic, over to you.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I would like to look more specifically at  
6 the MoD's involvement in policing before the change in  
7 responsibilities which happened after the Jameat  
8 incident of September 2005. We will come on to that  
9 a bit later on, but pre-September 2005, precisely how  
10 would you define MoD's role within the strategy for  
11 delivering police reform?

12 MARTIN HOWARD: I think the main thing that the  
13 Ministry of Defence did was really -- two things:  
14 firstly, to try to provide support through military  
15 means for the training of police, but trying to do it  
16 under police direction, and so my recollection is that  
17 we made some use of Royal Military Police, for example,  
18 to help in building up police capacity in  
19 MND South East.

20 The other thing that the Ministry of Defence did was  
21 deploy a number of Ministry of Defence police as part of  
22 the policing effort, but very much under the auspices,  
23 the departmental responsibility, of the Foreign and  
24 Commonwealth Office, who had responsibility. So in that  
25 sense we were a force provider, and the

1 Ministry of Defence police was quite well placed to  
2 provide actually quite a large number -- I can't  
3 remember the exact number but, by police standards, it  
4 was a fairly substantial number of individuals to help  
5 train the Iraqi police.

6 So prior to that changing towards the end of 2005,  
7 that would have been my major role.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So aside from the RMP, the army were not  
9 themselves directly providing training or mentoring to  
10 the Iraqi police?

11 MARTIN HOWARD: That's a good question. I'm not sure  
12 I could say absolutely that was the case. I suspect  
13 that, given the urgency of the security requirement, I'm  
14 pretty sure that the local -- that GOC MND South East  
15 would have made use of whatever resources he had  
16 available. So he may well have made use of some army  
17 assets to help at least provide some of the military  
18 skills that the Iraqi police were inevitably going to  
19 need in the security environment we were operating  
20 inside, inside MND South East and inside Basra, but the  
21 policing skills really had to come from the police, be  
22 that civil police, civil police contractors,  
23 Ministry of Defence police, and then, to some extent,  
24 the Royal Military Police.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So this involvement of the army would be

1 perhaps filling two gaps? One is not enough civilian  
2 police advisers and instructors out there, and one would  
3 be that what you needed for an Iraqi policeman went  
4 beyond our normal definition of a civilian policeman,  
5 because it needed actually to have a military or, as has  
6 been frequently said in our sessions, a Carabinieri type  
7 paramilitary dimension to it?

8 MARTIN HOWARD: I think it is more the second than the  
9 first. Definitely, the second would have been the case.  
10 The extent to which the GOC and the chief police adviser  
11 used non-RMP military assets to fill more traditional  
12 policing roles and policing training roles is not so  
13 clear to me.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It sounds all like a rather sort of  
15 ad hoc -- maybe even Heath Robinson -- arrangement for  
16 achieving the target. Is that how it felt to you at the  
17 Whitehall end?

18 MARTIN HOWARD: I think it was very challenging. I don't  
19 think I would describe it as "Heath Robinson". There  
20 was an element of ad hoc-ery -- if there is such  
21 a word -- to this, but I think that reflected the fact  
22 that we were faced with a fast-moving security situation  
23 which required urgent action and that requires  
24 flexibility and adaptability. So perhaps that's how  
25 I would describe it, rather than being "Heath Robinson".

1           I think that when we started to bring things  
2           together a little bit more towards the end of 2005,  
3           I think we brought more coherence to it. But one point  
4           I should stress, I think, is that experiences in the  
5           Balkans and Iraq, and also the experiences that we  
6           currently have in Afghanistan, I think make it clear  
7           that it is intrinsically more difficult to help train an  
8           indigenous police force than it is to train an  
9           indigenous army. You have a double problem.

10           One is that the police themselves have to operate  
11           with the local population and are, therefore, that much  
12           more susceptible to corruption, to intimidation. So we  
13           have the problem on that side and, on the other side of  
14           the equation, it is harder for any country, whether it  
15           is the United Kingdom or anything else, to generate  
16           deployable police trainers than it is to deploy army  
17           trainers. I think there is an intrinsic problem  
18           there --

19   SIR RODERIC LYNE: It is harder because ...?

20   MARTIN HOWARD: I think if you take the situation in the  
21           United Kingdom, the police force is a series of  
22           Chief Constabularies, all of whom have their  
23           responsibilities. There is no one who can order  
24           a Chief Constable to send a group of policemen to  
25           a theatre like that.

1 Funnily enough, the Ministry of Defence police are  
2 one of the few forces where you could almost do that.

3 Secondly, if you are deploying into an operational  
4 theatre, there is a security overhead which goes with  
5 that in terms of movement, protection. By definition,  
6 an army unit has already got that. It is sort of part  
7 of what happens. That's harder with the police.

8 The exception -- and you have already mentioned it,  
9 Sir Roderic -- are forces like the French Gendarmerie,  
10 the Italian Carabinieri, who are more deployable and  
11 which were -- certainly the Italian Carabinieri were  
12 used extensively in Iraq.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You said that the principal role of the  
14 military at this stage in this area was to support  
15 civilian police trainers. Was it actually difficult to  
16 co-ordinate the military and the civilian in theatre  
17 because they had different rules of engagement,  
18 different duty of care provisions, and also because the  
19 military were a much more powerful outfit there and,  
20 therefore, if you had a question of how you prioritised  
21 resources, they would have the power of decision rather  
22 than the civilians.

23 MARTIN HOWARD: No, I think there were genuine problems  
24 there. I don't think there were problems with the rules  
25 of engagement particularly, but certainly there were

1 issues about the levels of protection. Civilian  
2 policemen were deployed into Iraq with a level of  
3 protection which was set by the Foreign Office, but also  
4 strongly supported by ACPO. That, therefore, created  
5 demands on those who were providing security -- that's  
6 the military -- and I think that generated logistical  
7 problems. It may have generated some tensions on the  
8 ground as well, but that was certainly an issue.

9 I think that co-ordination improved when, as I said,  
10 the chief police adviser in MND South East was  
11 co-located with the GOC. That, I think, was the right  
12 decisions to take and that made life -- that simple move  
13 of location made life easier.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's take a break for about ten minutes and  
16 then we will resume. Thank you.

17 MARTIN HOWARD: Okay.

18 (2.20 pm)

19 (Short break)

20 (2.35 pm)

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Lawrence, over to you.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I want to talk about corruption in  
23 the Iraqi police force. We have already had one mention  
24 of this incident in September 2005, two UK service  
25 personnel were arrested by the Iraqi police service and

1 taken to the Jameat police station. The personnel were  
2 rescued but the event publicly highlighted the extent of  
3 corruption within the Iraqi police.

4 How aware were you of that as an issue, the problems  
5 of corruption and infiltration within the Iraqi police?

6 MARTIN HOWARD: I think we were aware of it as a problem in  
7 general. I think that incident brought it home to us  
8 that it had become very deep-seated and had moved from,  
9 if you like, casual corruption into something much, much  
10 more malign.

11 When I think about corruption in the police force,  
12 one can think about a certain amount of, as I have  
13 described it, as casual corruption at the lower levels.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: By "casual corruption" you mean just  
15 people supplementing their income by taking bribes?

16 MARTIN HOWARD: Yes, and you have to be realistic. It is  
17 not always easy to stamp all levels of corruption out of  
18 a force like that.

19 But this level of corruption was actually -- it was  
20 disabling the police force. The police force was not  
21 able to operate effectively and it had gone almost  
22 beyond corruption into, you know, really quite  
23 high-level criminality linked to adherence to militias  
24 and so on.

25 So I think that we were certainly aware that there

1           was a problem. This demonstrated that it was in certain  
2           parts of the police, in MND South East, in Basra, it was  
3           very deep-seated and it was a strategic issue which had  
4           to be dealt with.

5   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just again to try and get a measure  
6           of extent of the problem, we have been told about death  
7           squad and torture dens being operated by militias,  
8           those who had infiltrated the police. How widespread  
9           was this? What sort of practices are we talking about?  
10          Are we talking about this sort of very deep corruption?

11   MARTIN HOWARD: It is very hard to say precisely how  
12          widespread it is, because it doesn't take very many  
13          people to be involved in this sort of activity for it to  
14          have a major impact.

15                 But certainly in Baghdad and in some of the  
16          provinces around there, I think there was a real issue  
17          about some parts of the police service, or people  
18          associated with the police service, really pursuing  
19          a very violent sectarian anti-Sunni agenda.

20                 Of course, it was rather different in  
21          MND South East, there wasn't that sectarian tension that  
22          we saw in Baghdad. A lot of it was to do with tribal  
23          rivalries and also an increasing hostility to the  
24          coalition presence, driven in turn by criminality.

25                 I think it would be wrong to say that the whole of

1 the police force was in this state. I think it was  
2 certain elements within the police force, the  
3 Serious Crimes Unit and others, which really had become  
4 centres of this deep corruption, but I don't think it  
5 was necessarily widespread across the whole police.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to give us sort of the measure  
7 of it, how would you say it compared with the experience  
8 with the Iraqi army?

9 MARTIN HOWARD: I think corruption in the Iraqi army was  
10 significantly less than it was in the police.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So it was a difference of magnitude  
12 of problem?

13 MARTIN HOWARD: I think that would probably be right, yes.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you have indicated that you were  
15 aware of the problem before the Jameat incident. What  
16 were you doing before then to address it?

17 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think we were doing two things.  
18 Firstly, we were doing our best in the direct provision  
19 of training to the Iraqi police in Basra and trying to  
20 make that effective -- trying to instil the idea of an  
21 accountable police force that, you know, provided  
22 services for the population, but of course, that in  
23 itself was not enough.

24 In the end, dealing with that -- what I described as  
25 deep corruption -- really had to be dealt with by the

1 Iraqi authorities, and the other approach we took, at  
2 the senior political level, was continuing efforts to  
3 talk to the Iraqi Government in Baghdad, for them to  
4 take the necessary action to try to resolve this issue  
5 in MND South East, recognising that they also had  
6 problems of corruption elsewhere in the police service  
7 in other parts of Iraq.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Presumably, that was also the policy  
9 you followed after the incident?

10 MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just --

12 MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But more so?

14 MARTIN HOWARD: I think more so, yes, definitely.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the difficulties with this is  
16 obviously getting an accurate diagnosis of the problem  
17 and where it had come from, and you mentioned the  
18 differences between Baghdad and Basra and suggested that  
19 there was something more tribal in the situation in  
20 Basra.

21 Where do you think this problem did come from?

22 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think that we were operating in an  
23 area where tribal loyalties had always been very strong,  
24 that, under Saddam Hussein, had probably been largely  
25 ignored, and that the Basrawis were, in a sense, used to

1 looking after their own affairs and operating through  
2 tribal structures and managing things in a way which  
3 looks very alien to western police forces, and I think  
4 that underlying way of handling disputes, that  
5 underlying way of settling rivalries, in the end moved  
6 into the police force as it was re-established inside  
7 Basra.

8 It is very hard for me to be more precise than that  
9 because, like many other things in Iraq, it was an  
10 evolving situation. It was quite opaque. It is not the  
11 kind of intelligence target which is very easy to  
12 penetrate other than at a very tactical level.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How well was it understood by the  
14 time you took over in 2004 in the relevant job?

15 MARTIN HOWARD: At that stage, there didn't seem to be  
16 nearly so much of a problem in MND South East. The  
17 security problems we were facing in 2004 were primarily  
18 those generated by Sunni extremists, Jihadists, the  
19 so-called former regime elements. We were also beginning  
20 to see, however, some Shia unrest led by Moqtadr el Sadr  
21 and Jaysh Al Mahdi, and that was becoming a factor in  
22 2004.

23 But that tended to play itself out in places like  
24 Fallujah and Najaf. We didn't see it happening too much  
25 in Basra and in MND South East. The problems of deep

1           corruption, criminality, really, I think, started to  
2           become much more apparent in 2005 and 2006. That's my  
3           impression anyway.

4           It is very hard to say that, suddenly, the scales  
5           fell from our eyes and said, "There is a big problem  
6           with corruption here". I think it was an incremental  
7           realisation.

8   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But that makes it harder to nip it  
9           in the bud --

10   MARTIN HOWARD: Yes --

11   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- if it is--

12   MARTIN HOWARD: -- I would have to agree with that.

13   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You have mentioned the importance of  
14           getting the central government in Baghdad to deal with  
15           the issue, and we have heard a lot of evidence about the  
16           differences between Baghdad and Basra. But there is  
17           also a particular question, presumably in this case of  
18           the role of the Ministry of the Interior that has  
19           already been mentioned as a difficulty. So what role  
20           was the Ministry of the Interior able to play in  
21           addressing corruption, or was it part of the problem  
22           itself?

23   MARTIN HOWARD: I think in the early period that I was  
24           there, 2004/2005, and probably into the early part of --  
25           first half of 2006, I think there were severe limits on

1 the ability of the Ministry of the Interior to deal with  
2 problems of corruption. I have to say I think it was  
3 part of the problem, that in a sense it had become  
4 a sectarian organisation in its own right and was  
5 therefore contributing to these problems rather than  
6 necessarily solving them.

7 I think that -- I have to say it has changed a lot  
8 since then. I mean, I visited Iraq many times -- six  
9 times last year, and I have had discussions with  
10 Mr Boulani, who was the Minister of the Interior, and  
11 I think he, over time, provided the kind of leadership  
12 that the MoI needed but probably didn't have in 2005 and  
13 2006.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about the role of the  
15 Iraqi Government more generally? How -- were you able  
16 to get them seized of the problem?

17 MARTIN HOWARD: I think it was quite difficult to get  
18 Prime Minister Maliki in particular to focus on what was  
19 going on in MND South East -- and that's not meant as  
20 a criticism, because there were huge security problems  
21 right across other parts of Iraq and, as I said earlier,  
22 he recognised and, indeed, we recognised, that security  
23 in Baghdad was in many ways the true strategic centre of  
24 gravity here, but I think over time he did recognise  
25 that there was a particular problem in Basra which,

1 after all, was Iraq's second city, and towards the end  
2 of my time, it seemed to me that the Iraqi Government  
3 was getting more engaged in helping to resolve the sort  
4 of multiple problems we faced in Basra of corrupt parts  
5 of the police, the fact that the Provincial Council went  
6 through various phases of non-cooperation with the  
7 British military and we did see a steadily increasing  
8 interest from Baghdad and what was going on in Basra,  
9 and I think that's what came to fruition probably rather  
10 after I left in late 2007/2008.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just looking back, clearly by the  
12 time that relations had soured with the  
13 Provincial Council after the Jameat incident, it was  
14 very difficult for the British to recover the situation.

15 Do you think there are things that we might have  
16 been able to do beforehand that might have made it  
17 possible to improve matters? Was there a resource issue  
18 that hindered us?

19 MARTIN HOWARD: I find that hard -- I don't think so.  
20 I mean, I think that it would have been -- it would have  
21 been better to have had more police trainers to help  
22 develop the police.

23 Would that have prevented the Serious Crimes Unit  
24 becoming a hotbed of corruption? I'm not sure. We  
25 would never have been able to generate the numbers of

1 forces you would need to flood the streets with British  
2 military personnel and, in any case, that in turn might  
3 have generated the kind of resentment we saw emerging  
4 anyway later on.

5 So it is quite hard to see exactly in very large  
6 strategic terms what we would have done differently.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So basically, if you weigh the size  
8 of our capacity against the size of the problem, it was  
9 always going to be probably a bit beyond us?

10 MARTIN HOWARD: I think it would be beyond us if it turns  
11 out that you couldn't generate Iraqi capacity. I should  
12 stress that point. I do not think anyone expected  
13 security in MND South East and in Basra to be provided  
14 solely by British forces. I mean, that would not have  
15 been a feasible thing to do.

16 So there was always going to be an element of the  
17 plan which relied on generating additional forces and  
18 making sure they could provide the majority of  
19 day-to-day security.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But in this case, those additional  
21 forces had to come from outside Basra itself on the  
22 Iraqi side?

23 MARTIN HOWARD: At one or two points, yes, they did, yes,  
24 particularly the Iraqi army units.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Usha?

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. Can you just move on to  
3 look at policing posts, September 2005, because  
4 following the Jameat police station incident  
5 in September, the roles and responsibilities sort of  
6 changed in Whitehall. Can you describe how and why  
7 these changes occurred and how did that change your own  
8 role?

9 MARTIN HOWARD: The change occurred in around  
10 about October 2005 and I think it was a recognition or  
11 a conclusion reached by the then Prime Minister that,  
12 although DOP(I) was working well, the Iraq Strategy  
13 Group was working pretty well, the generation of Iraqi  
14 security forces was now very much at the very heart of  
15 what we were trying to do and that, therefore, it made  
16 sense to designate a single minister, not to be  
17 responsible for delivering all of it but to provide the  
18 necessary co-ordination of the different departments  
19 that were doing that.

20 So the then Secretary of State for Defence was asked  
21 by the Prime Minister to take this on, but very much  
22 doing it in co-ordination with other departments.

23 We introduced regular meetings at the ministerial  
24 level under the chairmanship alternately of the  
25 Secretary of State for Defence and the Foreign Secretary

1 and, as I have mentioned on a couple of occasions, I was  
2 asked to chair a cross-Whitehall group, again not to  
3 provide the executive delivery of the security sector  
4 reform, but to, as far as possible, ensure that there  
5 was coherence between them, there was full transparency  
6 and visibility of what was going on, and that, if there  
7 were problem areas, that then we could look at them  
8 collectively and try to come up with solutions.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you became the coordinator?

10 MARTIN HOWARD: I would say I became, at my level, the  
11 coordinator but, you know, I would never have claimed  
12 that I had direct responsibility for delivering policing  
13 training.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did that have any implications for  
15 the military? Did they have to be re-skilled to perform  
16 police functions?

17 MARTIN HOWARD: No, I don't think so. This wasn't  
18 a question of the military taking over the police  
19 training, it was more at the Whitehall level of  
20 providing co-ordination of different departments'  
21 efforts. If anything, we were trying to find ways in  
22 which we could generate more civilian police to actually  
23 help build up police capacity. This wasn't -- although  
24 the Secretary of State for Defence and, below him, me,  
25 sort of had this co-ordinating responsibility, this was

1 not designed to say this now becomes a sort of  
2 military-led activity, far from it.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you succeed in generating  
4 civilian involvement?

5 MARTIN HOWARD: I think we succeeded in generating more  
6 coherence of the effort and I think we probably did  
7 manage to -- I think the area where we succeeded most,  
8 I have to say, was less on the provision of direct  
9 policing, but more, in the case of Basra, in terms of  
10 helping come up with proposals for improving the  
11 situation in Basra, as I mentioned earlier, the Better  
12 Basra programme, and working to generate the funding  
13 which would allow activities to build law and order  
14 structures. So I think that would have helped.

15 In general, I guess I would have liked the group to  
16 have maybe been a little bit more strategic than it was,  
17 but you have to deal with a fast-moving situation.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You will have seen that last week we  
19 published the review which was carried out by  
20 Sir Ronnie Flanagan.

21 MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Could you tell us a little bit about  
23 the background to his appointment to carry out that  
24 role?

25 MARTIN HOWARD: Yes, when the then Secretary of State

1 for Defence was appointed, almost the first thing he  
2 suggested was to invite Sir Ronnie to go and do an  
3 assessment of policing in Iraq.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: This was Dr Reid?

5 MARTIN HOWARD: This was Dr Reid and, as we all know, he was  
6 Secretary of State for Northern Ireland previously.  
7 So -- and for what it is worth, I thought it was an  
8 extremely good idea. I knew Sir Ronnie slightly from my  
9 time in Northern Ireland and he seemed an excellent  
10 choice to go and, as it were, take stock of what was  
11 going on. So he duly did. He paid, I think, two visits  
12 to Iraq. There were plans for a third. I'm not sure if  
13 the third ever happened, but he paid two visits to Iraq  
14 and produced an interim report and then a final report,  
15 a very good report, which --

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: We will be hearing from Sir Ronnie  
17 later on but, from your point of view, what were the key  
18 conclusions and recommendations of his review?

19 MARTIN HOWARD: I have read fairly carefully, and we read  
20 it, and it struck me that he, first of all, said --  
21 I think the phrase he used was that:

22 "Before the Jameat incident, we were too optimistic  
23 about policing, but after the Jameat incident, we were  
24 perhaps too pessimistic."

25 I think that sums it up well. It seemed to me to be

1 a report which amounted to a sort of substantial course  
2 correction, but not necessarily a major change of  
3 direction. He picked out a number of things that were  
4 going very well, some of the tactical police units were  
5 working well. A lot of the training was going well.

6 He was very concerned that a number of police units  
7 were just emerging -- he called them "pop-up  
8 battalions"; I think that was the phrase that was  
9 used -- who weren't on anybody's books and this comes  
10 back to what we were discussing earlier about tribal  
11 loyalties and other favours being done. So that was  
12 a source of some concern for him.

13 He was the one who said that the British effort  
14 should -- policing effort should be concentrated in  
15 MND South East. He also stressed the need for the chief  
16 police adviser to be close to the GOC, which we followed  
17 up.

18 He also made the point -- and this, I think, was  
19 a very important strategic point, both for  
20 MND South East and more broadly -- was -- that there was  
21 still a gap in terms of support and training in this  
22 area of law and order institutions. This is less to do  
23 with the Ministry of Defence, but going back to what we  
24 said earlier about the Ministry of the Interior, and  
25 I thought he was absolutely right, if I may say so, to

1 stress the importance of that.

2 So that was an extremely valuable set of  
3 conclusions.

4 We also asked him -- I personally asked him if he  
5 would look at the role of the Carabinieri in  
6 MND South East and whether there was more could be done  
7 to use that resource, and again he offered some very  
8 useful reflections on that; on the one hand, suggesting  
9 that they weren't the complete answer to the policing  
10 problem, but nevertheless they were a valuable resource  
11 and -- actually, could I say something about the  
12 Carabinieri now?

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Yes, please.

14 MARTIN HOWARD: Because I still deal with Iraq in my current  
15 capacity in NATO and I visited Iraq six times last year  
16 and, in fact, I'm going there again next week and the  
17 Carabinieri, as part of the NATO training mission, have  
18 done an outstanding job in helping develop a much more  
19 effective Iraqi police force and continue to do so.

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What are the features that have  
21 helped that, in terms of the significant things that are  
22 important? I mean, how are they different from what our  
23 police force does?

24 MARTIN HOWARD: Well, I think that the security situation  
25 has become easier. Iraqi institutions have developed.

1 But the other thing is sheer longevity, if I can put it  
2 that way. The Carabinieri have been on the ground now,  
3 within the NATO training mission, since 2004. That's  
4 now six years, and I think that's invaluable experience  
5 you can learn on the ground, and I think that, over  
6 time, they became an extremely effective part of the  
7 development of the Iraqi police service.

8 Certainly Mr Boulani, the Ministry of the Interior  
9 stresses this every time I see him, that the Carabinieri  
10 have been a unique resource and have really made a  
11 difference.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Yes. Okay, the context changed, but  
13 is there something different in their approach that made  
14 them so effective?

15 MARTIN HOWARD: No, I don't think so. I think they are  
16 there as a deployable, paramilitary Gendarmerie force,  
17 they have learned, as it were, tactically on the ground.  
18 They have been able to do it under a NATO flag, which  
19 has perhaps been a little bit less difficult than doing  
20 it under a coalition flag, but I do not think the  
21 Carabinieri today are doing things radically different  
22 from the kind of training they were doing perhaps in  
23 Dhi Qar five years ago.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That's interesting. Can I just ask  
25 one final question? What happened to

1 Sir Ronnie Flanagan's recommendations? Were they  
2 implemented? If not, why not? Which ones were  
3 implemented?

4 MARTIN HOWARD: I can't remember and I haven't been able to  
5 work out how every single one was implemented. It was  
6 remitted to a small group to implement most of them. As  
7 far as I know, the majority worked, but I can't give you  
8 an authoritative answer, I am afraid, Baroness Prashar.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to ask really one question which  
11 is of a fairly broad nature. Looking at the situation  
12 in MND South East over the whole period, for quite  
13 a long time, certainly into 2005, there was a relatively  
14 benign security environment there, and then it  
15 progressively became worse and more violent.

16 We have taken a lot of evidence about the  
17 contributory factors to why this happened, how it came  
18 about, but there is a contrast that can be struck,  
19 I think, between what the Americans did in terms of  
20 their reaction to the insurgency in Baghdad and central  
21 Iraq. They adapted, we have heard, British evidence,  
22 British military evidence, from people like General Fry  
23 that the Americans adapted well and quickly and, over  
24 time -- and I'm quoting now from General Fry's evidence:

25 "The intellectual baton in counter-insurgency terms

1           passed from the British to the US military."

2           I would like to know whether you agree with that,  
3           but beyond it lies the question: have the US military  
4           got a lesson to teach us about how you make a large  
5           military a true learning organisation capable of quite  
6           rapid adaptation to changing circumstances?

7   MARTIN HOWARD: Yes, that's quite a big question. Of  
8           course, I have never argued with my old boss, Rob Fry.  
9           I think in general he is right. I think that US forces  
10          did adapt to the situation they found and they came up  
11          with different -- with new approaches.

12          Of course, it is not sufficient that that happened  
13          on the ground. It is necessary for changes to happen at  
14          the political direction level as well. But I think  
15          that's true. Whether we have passed the baton to them  
16          in terms of managing counter-insurgency is a hard  
17          question to answer. General Petraeus, who was in Iraq  
18          twice, of course, has written the US army's  
19          counter-insurgency manual, which is now widely regarded  
20          as probably the best or most documented source of  
21          counter-insurgency doctrine, but I think if your  
22          implication is that we didn't learn, I'm not sure  
23          I would agree with that. I think we also tried to adapt  
24          our approach.

25          I think maybe the difference was that, from time to

1           time, the US were prepared to put very substantial  
2           additional resources into Iraq and I think that's  
3           something which was, I think, much harder for the  
4           British Government to do.

5   THE CHAIRMAN: Your tour as DG Op Pol ended in, what, 2007?

6   MARTIN HOWARD: Yes.

7   THE CHAIRMAN: There have been, we have heard, significant  
8           changes since then to the way the British army goes  
9           about its approach. Were these happening before you  
10          left, in terms of adaptation of the doctrine, adaptation  
11          of training?

12   MARTIN HOWARD: There were changes. I'm not so sure they  
13          were within the British army. I think the change that  
14          was emerging as I left, and has continued, has been the  
15          idea of bringing civil and military effort together, the  
16          so-called comprehensive approach, and it seemed to me  
17          that some of the most innovative things we were doing  
18          were in that area rather than necessarily the detail of  
19          changing military doctrine, but then, of course, I'm not  
20          a military person, so I wouldn't necessarily claim to  
21          have got involved in detailed matters of doctrine, but  
22          it did seem to me that our approach to  
23          counter-insurgency or the handling of this kind of  
24          crisis was evolving, and evolving in a way which had  
25          a much more integrated civilian military approach

1 exemplified by the formation of what was originally  
2 called the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit and which  
3 in due time became the Stabilisation Unit, the unit that  
4 I was both the MoD sponsor of and I was a great fan of  
5 it. I thought it was the right way to go.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: I was going to pass the questions to  
7 Sir Martin, but you tempt me with a postscript.

8 Do you think it is possible to sustain  
9 a cross-government, cross-service outfit like the  
10 Stabilisation Unit through time unless it is constantly  
11 engaged in effort?

12 MARTIN HOWARD: I think it is hard to do. I think that if  
13 you have a Stabilisation Unit, you should use it for  
14 what it was intended to do. There was a slight sense,  
15 in my view, that it was probably misused early on in its  
16 existence but, later on, when we developed the concept  
17 of stabilisation as a particular activity which was  
18 distinct from military operations and distinct from more  
19 traditional development, I think it came into its own.

20 In current circumstances, there is certainly plenty  
21 of work for a stabilisation unit, or something like it,  
22 to do. So, yes, I think it needs to do things rather  
23 than just think about them.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Martin?

25 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to turn to the Iraq/Afghan

1           nexus and focus on the decision. We have heard mixed  
2           evidence about the reason for deployment to Helmand.  
3           Tony Blair told us actually the suggestion that we did  
4           it came from the MoD. Of course, they said it was going  
5           to be tough for us, but they said "We can do it and we  
6           should do it".

7           What was your involvement as DG Op Pol in the  
8           decision-making process?

9   MARTIN HOWARD: I think there were three stages to this.  
10          The first -- and this came very soon after I arrived --  
11          was a decision about how to make best use of the  
12          headquarters, the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, the ARRC.  
13          At first, there were some proposals that it should be  
14          sent to Iraq. In the end, that requirement rather fell  
15          away and, in the middle of 2004, it was agreed in  
16          principle that we should plan that it should be deployed  
17          into Afghanistan as part of the implementation of NATO's  
18          operational planning. As you may recall, that involved  
19          a counter-clockwise establishment of NATO  
20          responsibility, and the idea was that, in 2006, NATO  
21          would take responsibility in the south as well as the  
22          north and west, and that the ARRC would be a good  
23          formation to oversee that overall approach.

24          That was in June 2004. I think, in the middle of  
25          2005, the proposal emerged -- and it did come from the

1 military -- that the British effort -- which at that  
2 time was concentrated round Mazar-e-Sharif, around the  
3 Provincial Reconstruction Team and military support --  
4 should be moved to the south as part of this NATO  
5 takeover of the south of Iraq and to complement the  
6 British investment in the headquarters of the ARRC. As  
7 you know, the British provide the overwhelming majority  
8 of officers and other staff in the headquarters of the  
9 ARRC.

10 So in -- as I recall, in the middle of 2005, we for  
11 the first time discussed the idea of deploying  
12 a substantial force into Helmand as part of the NATO  
13 mission, as part of the NATO expansion of effort.

14 The idea was that the focus of the deployment would  
15 be around the UK Provincial Reconstruction Team, the  
16 PRT, and that we would want to provide a sufficient  
17 military force to enable that PRT to do its job.

18 Then the third occasion was -- let me think. This  
19 would have been towards the end of 2006, when we  
20 received a request from SACEUR, the NATO supreme  
21 commander, for two additional battle groups to go to  
22 Afghanistan, and we then had to reach a judgment  
23 about -- and that was really the first time that we had  
24 a direct debate about tradeoffs of manoeuvre units  
25 between Iraq and Afghanistan. I recall that discussion

1           very well.

2           So those are the three stages. There were lots of  
3           other points within it, but those are the three big --

4   SIR MARTIN GILBERT: At the time of the third stage, what  
5           assumptions were made about the operations in Iraq and  
6           the resources that would be required for Afghanistan?

7   MARTIN HOWARD: I mean, up to that point, before SACEUR had  
8           asked them for the extra two battle groups, the judgment  
9           was that the Afghanistan deployment was manageable  
10          against what we were proposing to happen inside Iraq.  
11          Bear in mind, that this is not simply a trade-off  
12          between Iraq and Afghanistan, there were other issues  
13          which impacted on force levels; for example, the  
14          drawdown of units in Northern Ireland as  
15          Operation Banner came to its conclusion, which I think  
16          was in 2007, the fact that we had plans to withdraw  
17          a battle group from Bosnia in 2007, and that duly  
18          happened.

19          But when we looked at the balance of resources, we  
20          used the advice we had from the military chain of  
21          command, that the maximum that we could deploy, in terms  
22          of land forces, on an enduring basis, was eight battle  
23          groups. A battle group, as you know, is centred around  
24          a major unit, a battalion or a regiment plus enabling  
25          forces.

1           We had, at that stage, six in Afghanistan -- sorry,  
2           six in Iraq and two in Afghanistan. If we were going to  
3           provide two more for Afghanistan, inevitably that meant  
4           two having to come out of Iraq.

5           It was more implicated than that, but that in  
6           essence was how we put it to ministers. So we had to  
7           debate what we would do. We concluded in the end that  
8           certainly one battle group would be becoming available,  
9           as the transition was happening inside Iraq, but the  
10          second battle group would probably be delayed because  
11          there was a particular requirement to retain a presence  
12          inside Basra Palace. So that was the debate we had at  
13          around the end of 2006.

14       SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of those assumptions, were  
15          contingency plans made should the assumptions prove to  
16          be flawed in some serious way?

17       MARTIN HOWARD: I think we always make contingency plans,  
18          but I think that we had already got to the point where  
19          we were reasonably secure in thinking that one battle  
20          group could be released from Iraq. The contingency was  
21          really around the second and, in the end, we chose to  
22          retain the battle group for a few more months -- I think  
23          until around August or September 2007 -- in Basra,  
24          rather than redeploy it, because there were particular  
25          tactical risks associated with leaving earlier.

1 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Did you think at the time that it was  
2 possible to take on these extra commitments in  
3 Afghanistan without the campaign in Iraq suffering?

4 MARTIN HOWARD: I thought that the conclusion we reached  
5 was, you know, a rational one, which was that SACEUR had  
6 asked for two extra battle groups. Providing one was  
7 tough, but do-able; providing the second would have  
8 meant a -- providing the second in a timely manner, ie  
9 for the summer of 2007, would have meant probably taking  
10 excessive risk in removing it from Iraq at that point.  
11 But in the end, it was removed. Later on, I think we  
12 did withdraw the second battle group and in the end  
13 I think we were able to provide the second battle group  
14 for Afghanistan, but later than SACEUR wanted.

15 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: We have heard from some of our  
16 witnesses that, by that time, the priority in the MoD  
17 had become Afghanistan. Is that your perception?

18 MARTIN HOWARD: I think -- I left in July 2007. I think at  
19 that stage -- to be honest, I still think Iraq was the  
20 top priority, but it was a priority in the sense that  
21 there was a lot of policy work that had to be done to  
22 address how we were going to scale down. Actually, in  
23 some ways, scaling down can be the most demanding part  
24 of any operation, it can raise some of the most  
25 difficult political issues, and I always felt that maybe

1 towards the very end, Afghanistan was, as I think I said  
2 at the beginning, becoming level with Iraq and  
3 certainly, after I left, Afghanistan started to rise and  
4 indeed, has continued to rise since then.

5 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: My final question is again a link  
6 between Iraq and Afghanistan. We have heard from many  
7 witnesses who arrived in Iraq early in the campaign  
8 that, in their view, we had little understanding of what  
9 we would find with when we got there, when we got into  
10 Iraq.

11 Were you confident that we would understand what we  
12 would find in Helmand?

13 MARTIN HOWARD: In Helmand or in Iraq?

14 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In Helmand; in other words -- in terms  
15 of lessons learned, if you like, from 2003.

16 MARTIN HOWARD: It is just you said "when you arrived in  
17 Iraq".

18 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: That's right.

19 MARTIN HOWARD: Right. In Helmand. I think that there was  
20 always going to be a problem of having the kind of  
21 detailed tactical intelligence that is useful to you  
22 when you arrive in a place like Helmand. I think we had  
23 a strategic idea of what was going on. There were US  
24 forces on the ground, though they were very small, and  
25 they were able to provide some information. We knew

1 some of the leadership, Sher Mohammed Akhundzade and  
2 other key players in Helmand.

3 But I don't think we had -- and I don't think we  
4 could have had, without a big presence on the ground,  
5 a kind of detailed understanding of ethnic and other  
6 dynamics inside Helmand and, in fact, we are still  
7 learning.

8 One of the interesting points that just emerged from  
9 the whole operation that has been carried out now  
10 in Marjah is the extent to which the previous people who  
11 ruled in Helmand had really alienated the population and  
12 that has made it much harder, as ISAF has moved into  
13 these areas, to say that "The Afghan Government will be  
14 able to provide the services you want", because their  
15 experience earlier of allegedly sort of Afghan  
16 Government representatives has been poor. So we are  
17 still learning as time goes on.

18 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: So in a sense, the lessons learned from  
19 Iraq 2003 is not that you have to know more, but you  
20 will in fact not know enough.

21 MARTIN HOWARD: I think that's reasonable. Almost by  
22 definition, if you are moving into an area where you do  
23 not have a large presence on the ground, you are  
24 inevitably going to learn more as you get there.  
25 Inevitably.

1 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: The last set of questions, Roderic?

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: In your time, how did the deployment in  
4 Helmand affect planning for force level reviews in Iraq?

5 MARTIN HOWARD: I think I have described that. I mean --  
6 the initial decision to send the HQ of the ARRC -- there  
7 was a choice between Iraq and Afghanistan, but that was  
8 very easily resolved. The decision to deploy the PRT  
9 into Helmand and deploy around about 3,000 forces to  
10 help support it, I didn't think had much impact on our  
11 planning for Iraq at all.

12 Where, if I can say, the rubber hit the road in  
13 terms of the trade-off between the two operations came  
14 towards the end of 2006/early 2007, in the way that  
15 I have described to Sir Martin, when we were asked by  
16 SACEUR to provide more forces and that was when we came  
17 up against -- in terms of land manoeuvre forces, the  
18 kind of limits of what was sustainable for an enduring  
19 period, and even that with some pain.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But we also had to make priority  
21 decisions over equipment and we have heard from  
22 General Shirreff, for example, that he felt that,  
23 because of Afghanistan, there was a negative impact on  
24 the availability of equipment in Iraq, particularly  
25 strategic enablers. Is that something you were very

1           conscious of?

2   MARTIN HOWARD: I can't say I was particularly conscious of  
3           it. I mean, I think that there are strains involved in  
4           providing two, as it were, lines of communication to two  
5           medium-scale operations and that that could have  
6           stretched those assets.

7           But I don't recall any specific debate in London, in  
8           the Ministry of Defence, which says, "Now, we must do  
9           less for Iraq so that we can do more in Afghanistan with  
10          those enablers".

11          I mean, Richard may well have felt that that was the  
12          case and I wouldn't want to second-guess his military  
13          judgment. He would be much closer to the situation on  
14          the ground, but that's not something I particularly  
15          recognised from my time.

16   SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did this stretch that you described mean  
17          that we effectively had lost our options in Iraq? We  
18          had to continue the path towards transition, and  
19          drawdown, so that, when the Americans started surging,  
20          if we wanted to, we didn't actually have that option?

21   MARTIN HOWARD: I think that probably is true but I don't  
22          think that was ever really a policy option that was on  
23          the table. I think there were other reasons why a major  
24          surge probably wasn't a realistic proposition.

25   SIR RODERIC LYNE: So there was no discussion about the

1 option of trying to re-establish control over security  
2 and law and order in Basra before we transitioned by  
3 putting in more forces; that just wasn't discussed?

4 MARTIN HOWARD: I don't recall it being entertained as  
5 a serious policy option.

6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We were set on drawdown?

7 MARTIN HOWARD: I think we were and I think with some  
8 reason. We had gone through a process of successful PIC  
9 in three out of the four provinces. It was always the  
10 intention that we would draw down in Basra.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But we left the city before the PIC.

12 MARTIN HOWARD: We left the city before PIC, yes, but that  
13 was partly because the particular situation there was  
14 that the violence was being directed against us.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But we left it in the control of the  
16 militias. We hadn't actually got on top of the militias  
17 before we left it.

18 MARTIN HOWARD: I think to say we left it in the control of  
19 the militias is probably exaggerating.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Who was in control?

21 MARTIN HOWARD: As I said earlier, not all of the Iraqi  
22 police service and not all of the Iraqi army was in --  
23 corrupt or in the hands of the militias. The army  
24 itself had moved in, General Mohan had moved down into  
25 Basra. So there was an increasing Iraqi investment. It

1           wasn't as tidy as we would have liked. I certainly  
2           would agree with that, but I'm not sure it is right to  
3           say we just left it completely in the hands of --

4   SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were they the dominant force on the  
5           streets of Basra at the time that we moved from the city  
6           to the airport?

7   MARTIN HOWARD: I wouldn't describe them as that, no.

8   SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

9   THE CHAIRMAN: I think we have come to the end of our agenda  
10           for this session. I would like to ask you in a moment  
11           whether there are any particular lessons you would like  
12           to offer or any reflections that we haven't covered this  
13           afternoon, but just to make the point, you have  
14           mentioned once or twice that your current NATO  
15           responsibilities get you to Iraq and, although our terms  
16           of reference stop in terms of the narrative in 2009, the  
17           lessons are for now and the future, so anything you have  
18           to say drawn from either experience would be welcome.

19   MARTIN HOWARD: Yes, if I could just say a general point  
20           about this kind of operation and then say something  
21           about the NATO mission in Iraq.

22           I have been fortunate enough -- if that's the right  
23           word -- to have been dealing with these kinds of  
24           operations for many years, and it does seem to me that  
25           there are some big strategic lessons which have emerged

1 from Iraq and are now emerging from Afghanistan and  
2 I think also emerging from the Balkans, the first of  
3 which is that we really do have to try to make these  
4 kinds of campaigns properly civil/military from the  
5 outset and have the right kind of resources to do that,  
6 the right kind of high-level, strategic management, and  
7 I think the United Kingdom and many other countries have  
8 improved enormously but I think there is still some way  
9 to go.

10 Within that, I would just like to stress again what  
11 I mentioned earlier, that the generation of the capacity  
12 to build up indigenous law and order structures,  
13 including the police, I still think it remains  
14 a weakness within the international community and is an  
15 area that I think the international community could  
16 still address.

17 Then you invited me to say, Sir John, something  
18 about the NATO training mission. That was established  
19 in 2004. There was a very strong political reason  
20 behind the establishment of the NATO training mission,  
21 but my experience has been with it over the last  
22 18 months and what I have found is that, for  
23 a relatively small group of people, a mixture of police  
24 and military, it has had a disproportionate impact in  
25 building up the capacity of the Iraqi security forces.

1 The Iraqi Ministry of Defence, the Iraqi Ministry of the  
2 Interior and, indeed, the Prime Minister, are very, very  
3 keen on retaining the NATO training mission.

4 It does strike me as a model of the kind of thing  
5 that an international organisation can do which is short  
6 of combat but can still help build up additional  
7 security forces in a post-conflict, post-crisis  
8 environment.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: With that, I'll close the session. I thank  
10 our witness, Martin Howard, and we are going to resume  
11 at quarter to four, when the witness will be  
12 Mr Bob Ainsworth. Thank you.

13 (3.23 pm)

14 (Short break)

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