

Wednesday, 2 June 2010

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW

THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon and welcome. This session we are welcoming Major General Adrian Bradshaw.

This session is being held in private because we recognise that much of the evidence we wish to cover will be sensitive within the categories set out in the Inquiry's protocol on sensitive information, for example on grounds of national security, international relations or defence capability. We may also wish to refer to issues covered by classified documents.

We will apply the protocol between the Inquiry and HMG regarding documents and other written and electronic information in considering whether and how evidence given in relation to classified documents and/or sensitive matters more widely can be drawn on and explained in public either in the Inquiry report or, where appropriate, at an earlier stage.

If other evidence is given during the hearing which neither relates to classified documents nor engages any of the categories set out in the "Protocol on sensitive information", that evidence would be capable of being published, subject to the procedures set out in the Inquiry Secretary's letter.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Can I also add that the Inquiry is seeking advice from the MoD and other departments because of other inquiries, or prospective inquiries, regarding detention and interrogation policy and we don't therefore want to get into the detail of that today.

We recognise that witnesses are giving evidence based on their recollection. We cross-check that against the papers to which we have access.

I remind each witness on every occasion that they will later be asked to sign a transcript of their evidence to the effect that the evidence they have given is truthful, fair and accurate. For security reasons on this occasion we won't be releasing copies of this transcript outside the Inquiry's offices upstairs here. You, of course, will be able to access it whenever you want to review it.

I think, with that out of the way, I will turn straight to Baroness Prashar.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. General Bradshaw, you were involved in the planning for the invasion and the invasion itself. What did you expect to find when you arrived in Basra?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: An interesting question. I don't think we knew nearly enough about what we would find in Basra, but I might point out that my involvement in the planning was at a relatively early stage in defining what the land contribution to Third Army's plan might have been and so I was looking in particular at the military attack plan.

While I was there, we didn't get substantively into what would come after that. Clearly we were all aware that that was territory which had to be covered and indeed my successor came in with, I believe, a remit to look at that very carefully, because by that stage the land plan was starting to firm up. So what one was looking at before the war was what one might see in terms of more conventional opposition from the Iraqi armed forces. We had not really looked in great detail at what the social and political map of Basra might look like, for example. So my expectations were not based on the work we had done at that time.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay. When you took command, how did you decide which communities to engage with?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: Well, on the advice of those who had been there for a marginally longer time than me and on the basis of my observations and understanding of the situation, I attempted to engage with three major elements of society and of politics in Basra. The first were the Shia theocratic parties who, it was very clear, were very anxious to secure a strong foothold over the future politics of the city and the province and who were quite determined that their day had come, and who could blame them after what they had been through? There were then the rather more traditional tribal leaders, who were very keen to engage with us and they clearly wanted to be able to exert their authority in the new politics. Then, most importantly, were what I would describe as the educated middle classes and commercial classes, whose aspirations were remarkably similar to those that ours would be of any political system, who wanted fair representation, wanted a decent education for their children, wanted an open society, wanted representational government, wanted international engagement; all the things that we would wish for.

So those three major elements from my point of view were the ones to be engaged with.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were your observations similar to the advice you were given by those who had been there longer than you?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: Well, I was faced with an interesting situation upon arrival, because as I arrived the existing temporary political construct collapsed. Graham Binns, my predecessor, had set up an interim governorate which was led by a former Ba'athist -- you will of course have heard about this. Direction had come from Baghdad that people at this level within the Ba'ath party were not to be engaged in politics, so

he was removed and the committee that had built around him collapsed. So we were left with a vacuum and it was very clear that we had to do something about that vacuum. I hadn't actually appreciated, on arrival, quite how important that was, but over the next few weeks it became abundantly clear to me that of all the things that needed fixing in Basra, almost the first was the politics because everything stemmed from that. That was an interesting area for me to get into clearly without having had much experience, and I can elaborate on how we went about it.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I would like you to, because when you were in command the Security Council Resolution 1483 was signed and of course there was the disbanding of the army and I would just like to hear what was the impact on the situation on the ground that you were dealing with?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: The impact was, as I said, Sheikh Muzahim disappeared off into the background, his committee thinned out around him and I received various representations from people who were aspiring to be part of the political process and went out and engaged with them to try and identify who was out there who was wanting to be active in politics.

We thought that the first and most important challenge to overcome -- and by the way, I park the whole security thing as being taken for granted that we knew that was a big deal, but the first thing we thought we had to deal with was the practicalities of delivering services to a province in which all public utilities had been very seriously damaged as a result of this explosion of looting and frustration when the Ba'athist regime collapsed. It was almost as if the population were taking revenge on their tormentors by smashing every bit of

public property that they could get their hands on.

We thought that the first and foremost requirement was to build a structure to deliver services. It became abundantly clear that actually, because he who delivers services gets the Wasta, to use a local term -- the credit for it -- that actually the first thing that had to be done was to create a political body to oversee this delivery of services. So, having set out to build a technical committee of experts to deliver services, we very rapidly realised that we had to deliver a political structure to oversee that. That was made the more urgent by, I think, a report in the local press or Al Jazeera, I can't remember which, referred to me as the military governor of Basra. Now clearly we were not there to be an occupying power and that was absolutely not the role that I should have been --

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But do you think that came about because of the Security Council resolution which declared that we were a joint occupying power?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: Well, I'm sure that the perception of the locals was that that was exactly what we were and of course, under the Ba'athist regime, the military were very powerful. There was a respect accorded to the military because of the power they exerted over people and, if you like, that respect transferred itself to us in the most interesting ways. We were consulted about all sorts of things which actually, had they thought about it, the locals could have taken into their own hands.

Clearly we needed to use that respect very, very carefully to make progress on the political side and, as rapidly as was possible to do without allowing things to get chaotic, we needed to build a structure which allowed them to take the political power into their own hands and be seen to be supported by us.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So how would you describe the nature of your engagement with the local community?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: With the educated and sort of commercial classes, extremely polite. I mean all parties made a great effort to say how enormously thankful they were that we had delivered them out of the hands of Saddam Hussain and they all engaged very politely.

Clearly the educated classes saw their sort of politics as being pretty close to what we would recognise as being the sort of politics that we live within. The tribal leaders were extremely respectful and I think looked back to the 1920s when we had been there last and alluded to that time and the relationship they had had with the British in quite complimentary ways, I suspect to get us on side. The religious parties were very polite but quite determined that they were going to have a slice of the power, and they were by no means unified, as you know there were different elements -- SCIRI, Dawa, Fadilah -- who featured rather highly, perhaps out of proportion to their numbers. It was clear that the more theocratic element of Shia politics was competing within itself, which was going to be a problem for us and of course became quite a problem later.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You mentioned the security situation. Can I just move on to the fact that, as an occupying power, we were responsible for providing law and order. Was there a plan for how this would be achieved?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: Well, when I arrived we were in a situation where there were about 4,000 odd troops on the ground and no proper police force in a city of 1.5 million people in a province about the size of Northern Ireland, and actually that bore an interesting reflection and comparison with

Northern Ireland in the time of the troubles when there was, of course, the Royal Ulster Constabulary. So it was clear that we had an urgent task to rebuild security structures.

We were a couple of weeks ahead of where people were in Baghdad and the authorities in Baghdad weren't ready with a plan for military structures. Indeed, the direction was more about what one should not do with ex-military, rather than what they were going to do, because there was no plan, but they were anxious that we didn't take matters into our own hands -- and I might come back to that, because in effect we had to.

So the urgent requirement was to rebuild the police force and we set about refurbishing police stations -- of course they had been very heavily damaged in the looting -- and trying to gather former policemen and get them together into an organised police force of a sort that could start to impose order. But as, I think, has been observed by other witnesses, the police force represented the society from which they were gathered and that society wasn't entirely unified in its vision of the future of Basra.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you feel you had enough troops for security purposes?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: Well, we didn't have enough troops if things started going wrong, not nearly enough. About 70 per cent of one of the battle groups that I visited in the first couple of days -- about 70 per cent of their manpower was tied to guarding infrastructure. That gave them virtually no room for manoeuvre whatsoever to get out, to patrol, to make their presence felt, to do all the other activities that we were meant to be doing and clearly that situation couldn't be allowed to continue. There were no further troops coming in, that was very clear, we were on the wind down, so we had to generate

security forces from within the local population, which of course was the desirable thing to do anyway.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you succeed?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: We did and that particular battle group set about with enormous energy training guards actually for the oil infrastructure, because in the early days there was considerable concern that the oil infrastructure would be damaged and the wealth of the province would not be realisable, because they wouldn't be able to secure their oil revenue.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: And the fact no further troops were coming, you didn't make any further requests, you just decided to look at alternatives?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: Well clearly I think within the chain of command there was a clear understanding that we were very tight on money, you know, we all knew that. We also knew that if we were going to be able to man an enduring force there we had to allow the army to develop that through a commitment cycle. So what we took now might not be available in the future.

Actually, things were relatively calm at that stage. A little later in the tour I was faced with some quite serious potential public order problems, which didn't materialise but we dealt with them by seeking to assuage the grievances and moving quickly on the political side, which seemed to keep them under control. But I was very aware that, had those turned into serious public order incidents, then I would have been pretty pushed.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was it clear to you as to who were the perpetrators of violence and looting?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: Well the majority of the looting was ordinary people who were probably enjoying the opportunity to do so because they had never had it before, but also who needed to survive. Now, the question of sustaining life and, you know, looking after one's family and deriving an income from somewhere was a real problem in a province where most organised activities had ceased. We dealt with that by paying 180,000 civil sector workers every month, paying their salaries, which I estimated was probably putting cash into the hands of half a million people directly, which was clearly stimulating some economic activity and allowing people to live. In the weeks after our arrival, we became very aware that the ex-naval and military personnel in the province, of whom there were 10,000 or 12,000, had also not been paid for several months and were facing a desperate situation and, great credit to their middle management at sort of colonel level, they came to us asking for us to do something about their people and I indicated that the direction from Baghdad was, you know, dealing with military is sort of off limits because we are going to come up with a plan there. It was clear to me that what was at that stage developing into quite a sort of robust peaceful protest had the potential to go a lot further and of course we knew that within the military there were quite a lot of Ba'athists who might well be inclined to turn to insurgency. So I proposed to my divisional commander that we should effectively demobilise these people with a demobilisation payment and then take them on effectively as 10,000 more on the 180,000 civil sector workers with a marker against their name to be part of the future security structure and almost immediately then we started employing them in a force that we created called the Basra River Service which was designed to promote security on the waterway, along which a vast amount of looted copper and brass ingots were

being spirited away into a sort of open black market in the Gulf and tons of steel from cables and all manner of material.

So we dealt with the problems like that, which I think at that time prevented them from getting violent and I think they would have done had we not acted in that way. Great credit to actually the Royal Fusiliers who actually carried out that operation, who organised an immaculate demobilisation process in the docks with 2,000 or 3,000 people queuing every day and we went through and we had CD information of exactly who people were provided by the army officers and everybody was accounted for and paid and it was a very orderly process which I think they appreciated.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: The River Service sounds like an extremely elegant way of getting around the effects of the CPA decision on army disbandment and deBa'athification.

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: And indeed they did a great deal more than just river security. We provided them with some boats, uniforms and weapons, but they looked after food depots and various other bits of civil infrastructure and became a ready force of security guards.

THE CHAIRMAN: Where did you get all the funding for it from? From Baghdad?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: I can't remember exactly where all of the funding came from. We, of course, did have access to a certain amount of funding for ourselves. Actually, we were pretty strict about what we did with the contents of the national bank. The national bank was in three or four shipping containers outside my office and consisted of 20 billion dinars and 15 million dollar notes and to pay our civil sector workers

we issued the money in black bin liners and got back an acquittance roll, which was extremely efficiently carried out by the Iraqis, and it was clear this money was going to the right place because otherwise people would have been on our doorstep telling us that it wasn't. So I'm sure it wasn't a perfect process but it worked reasonably well.

In the meantime we refurbished a five or six storey tower block, which was a blackened stump with no doors or electrical fittings or anything when we arrived: £350,000 and about three weeks later we cut the tape on a new, gleaming, painted building with windows and desks and the lot, which was the new national bank. So that was the speed at which things were moving.

THE CHAIRMAN: An interesting story, thank you. I take it you then reabsorbed into the nascent Iraqi army south east division?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: That came after my time.

THE CHAIRMAN: In that case, Lawrence, over to you.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I just want to follow this up a little bit. It is a very interesting story, I'm not sure we covered it before.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: It is very interesting.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And it is an interesting contrast with what seems to be going on in Baghdad at the same time. So the things that interest me are, first, that you have obviously got commanders in place in that army who are able to come to you -- middle levels, obviously -- yet we have been told elsewhere the army completely disbanded, and that you were able in quite short order to kind of -- as the chairman said -- provide a reasonably elegant solution to a problem.

How much of this was done in relationship to the command in Baghdad?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: It's a long time ago now, but I remember having the distinct impression that Baghdad wasn't nearly ready for us to start doing things like this, because they clearly wanted to come up with a proper swept-up plan for the rebuilding of the Iraqi army and armed forces, quite rightly. But as I've suggested, we were a couple of weeks ahead of the situation than Baghdad, simply because we had got there sooner if you like, and the situation did need dealing with. So what we came up with was a holding position which allowed for any subsequent plan for the army.

But in relation to your suggestion that the army was there and ready to be engaged with, yes it was to the extent that we were in touch with, you know, sort of what I would describe as mid-level management, and had we, instead of saying "We want to demobilise you in order that your people get some income", had we said instead "We want your people to form up for reconstituting in their original units", I'm sure it would have been possible but it was clear that that wasn't going to happen. That wasn't the plan.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Very interesting.

Can I ask just one other question on this period. You mentioned that there was a period when -- I guess it must have been August -- when you were concerned about public order in Basra?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: No, it was May. It all happened quite quickly.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This is almost as soon as you arrived?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: I mean we left in June.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Of course you did, so this was quite early on. Again, do you think there's a sort of a pattern

established early on that sustained itself thereafter in terms of the interaction between the British military and the local society, that you were accepted from the start but there were limits on how far you could impose British military will on what was going on happen within the town?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: I don't think they got the impression that they were in the ascendancy at that stage. I think they got the impression that we would respond to their concerns and address them in a sensible way. Interestingly, when Fadilah got 3,000 people out on to the street to protest at the way that the technical committee was being set up -- and I hinted that I think we got it wrong in trying to set up the technical committee before the political, that was clearly the message we were getting from them -- when they did this my response in discussions with their leaders was, you know, we are delighted that you now have the ability to indulge in peaceful demonstration of what you want, this happens in our country. Actually I think I said that we had just had a demonstration on the streets of London of half a million, so you know this sort of thing happens in a free country and that provided it was entirely peaceful, you know, we would take note and try and meet their concerns.

But it was made clear that we weren't ready to allow one group in particular to gain the ascendancy and in attempting to create this political structure we said to all the representatives of the various factions, "Look, we need a governorate, we are not going to have elections any time soon because there is no census of the population, that's got to come later, let's build it in a pragmatic way, we need a committee of a certain size, we are looking for, you know, academics, medical professionals, teachers, religious figures, tribal leaders,

people who are someone in society and people who know about matters of governance, to come together, so give us your list of potential candidates and then we will thrash it out between you". Then over long, long sessions going late into the night with the various factions where everybody's proposals were compared with everybody else's, and they weighed up their relative positions in what was going to emerge, we came up with a construct of a governorate of acceptable people who were deemed to be of good character and education who could take responsibility for the politics, and between them elect a governor.

The intent, of course, was not to let any particular faction be in the ascendancy and it worked and they went along with it, and with almost naive willingness they produced their lists and they were good people and to a large extent they were very acceptable to everybody else, and they were very keen to demonstrate inclusiveness, you know, they included the Mandaean Sabaeans who sadly are not doing so well now, and I think the one Jew in Basra was represented, and the Catholic bishop.

THE CHAIRMAN: Women?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: And we made it clear that the political structure would have to have a number of women in it so they produced names of women for this, so they went along with it. So I wouldn't say that they were demonstrating their power over us, I would say they were going along very much with our ideas. Actually, as I was leaving, I handed across this process to the very nice Danish ambassador who, of course, was meant to be dealing with all of this [earlier on] but was unable to -- and I will deal with that if you want -- because by that stage he was ready to take it on and I said, "Get this lot to

vote in a governor", and the next day they did and they voted in a respected former judge who was acceptable to all parties and until, I think, Wahili was elected in later, you know, this individual proved to be a very satisfactory governor. I think it's unfortunate that the politics went the way they did later on, but --

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That was after your time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Could we hear a bit about the Danish ambassador?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I was about to say, with your permission, Chairman, I think this is quite interesting and important in our -- well in effect to get over this Danish ambassador.

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: Well, clearly on my arrival I went around all the figures who were clearly going to be important and his role was clearly going to be critical and he was frankly pretty frustrated. He was trying to get office furniture and a fax machine, you know, it was hopeless, he had nowhere to work. So we rapidly got into gear and tried to provide him with the wherewithal to start business, but in the meantime he neither had the sort of bureaucratic horse power to take on the job and also, as I pointed out, the locals all turned to us, the military, as the credible partners in this to start with and so one had to wean them on to the idea that this was all going to be the responsibility of the Coalition Provisional Authority.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, was he looking to Baghdad and the CPA for the support he wasn't getting?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: Well, I presume he was. He wasn't getting much and, as I say, we stepped in and provided some of what he needed and by the time we left he was ready to

take on the responsibility for taking the politics forward.

I do wonder whether, on reflection, it might have been wise for me to advise my successor to remain more closely engaged with the politics but at the time it seemed that that was the CPA's responsibility.

THE CHAIRMAN: He was the CPA representative?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: He was.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Do you think in retrospect it would have been better if a Brit had been given that position so you could work more -- or don't you think that was necessary?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: I think it wasn't necessarily a national thing. He was an extremely competent individual as far as I was concerned, he just didn't have the opportunity to get on with the job.

Clearly from the team work point of view there might have been some advantages in having a Brit there, given that the province became in effect a British responsibility, but at the time that didn't seem to be a problem at all.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

One of the options -- and I'm not sure it really was an option by the time you got there, probably not -- was that as the joint occupier in power with the United States we work closely with the United States across all of Iraq, yet we seem to have acquired MND South East, like the British Empire was supposed to have been acquired by accident.

¹ Sir Lawrence asked a question about the relationship between the army and special forces, the precise wording of which has been redacted on the grounds of national security.

Were you aware that you sensed at that time, May 2003, that there was another way of doing this, because as you've described when you were talking about your working relationships with [REDACTED], that there's enormous benefits to working very closely with the Americans just in terms of the resource and capacity they bring to these issues?

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: Well, Special Forces are a theatre asset so --

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I mean, the question is a more general one, not just about Special Forces.

MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN BRADSHAW: And I will try and address it, but I will start with that point because you would therefore expect to apply the capability that Special Forces bring wherever appropriate within the theatre, according to the priorities that are there. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

But for the framework forces, you know, the conventional forces on the ground doing the stabilisation task, it's normal for them to be given an area of operations, and we had an area of operations. Actually we had a Danish element within the brigade, so we felt it was multinational, and we were very aware that our divisional commander was working to a US Corps Commander.

Now I think it is possible to comment on the degree to which it was expected that the commander in MND South East looked to the UK rather than Baghdad for direction, but as I wasn't working at that level I think it's probably better to ask the people who were.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay, that's helpful. [REDACTED]

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THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any final remark of your own?

In that case thank you very much indeed for your evidence, General Bradshaw. Can I just remind you that the transcript will not leave this building and you can review it whenever is convenient upstairs. With that, I will close the session.

(The session closed)

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