

***The Inquiry has received the following evidence, which it has agreed to publish anonymously in accordance with paragraph 4 of the Protocol for hearing evidence by the Iraq Inquiry in public, and for identifying witnesses.***

Anonymous evidence 2

"I recall a meeting with the Prime Minister where the Foreign Secretary made the argument, in the circumstances which we were then heading into on 12 March, for the UK military not being involved. I recall that, in addition to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, officials from No.10 were also present.

The point the Foreign Secretary was making, in my view, was that this was the final opportunity to decide on a different track – advising the Prime Minister that he still had a chance to avoid it if he wanted to. I personally did not think there was a risk of the Foreign Secretary resigning; he certainly did not suggest that in my hearing. In fact, the argument he was making was more in terms of "If you want to avoid your own resignation, Prime Minister, you still have an opportunity and here it is. You have a way out and why don't you take it?"

It was offering the Prime Minister a way out if he wanted it. The Foreign Secretary certainly put across the argument in a very clear way, but the thing that I was absolutely struck by privately was the Prime Minister's response, the speed of it and the absolute insistence of it, and the fact that he had got his arguments all marshalled and all laid out.

No.10 officials decided, after careful consideration, that the meeting should not be recorded because it didn't change anything. It was decided that it was a very personal meeting and a very personal discussion and that in operational terms, for Whitehall or anyone outside the meeting, the track we were on was unchanged."