

Monday, 24 May 2010

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB**

[Square brackets indicate witness clarifications after the session.]

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Welcome again. This is a welcome to Lieutenant General Sir Graeme Lamb, his third session appearing before the Committee.

Unlike the other occasions, 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 -- and we may also wish to refer to issues covered by classified documents.

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

If other evidence is given during this hearing which neither relates to classified documents, nor engages any of the categories set out in 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 to you. We recognise that witnesses are giving evidence based on their recollection of events, and we are, of course, checking what we hear against the papers to which we have access. I remind every witness on each occasion 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.

Now, for security reasons, we will not be releasing copies of

the transcript outside the Inquiry's offices upstairs here. You will, of course, be able to access the transcript whenever you want to review it.

With that, let's get on to the questions.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** [REDACTED] So [REDACTED] did you wish you had more Special Forces assets with you?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** No. My view was -- and again, it's not an arrogant statement -- the answer is that the judgments we had taken before were enduring, and then just as I left out, was that there was not a need at that point in time for some huge sort of SF force sitting down in Basra. We had very little understanding of the tribes, how atomised or not they had been, how disjointed they had become under the regime that was, their authorities, who was genuine, who wasn't. You know, all that side of life.

We had some pockets of resistance out there, but in many ways one was looking towards trying to bring some effort at stabilisation to where -- at this point in time actually what mattered was that the SF were up in Baghdad doing what they needed to, and continuing to work that side of the house, in many ways that Basra, at that point in time, in my professional view -- I didn't require a great squadron of SF down there, and even in hindsight, they would have [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] not actually done much for me anyway.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Thank you very much.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Turning to that second half of 2003, when you were

GOC MND South East, you had taken over from General Wall, I think. The rundown before you arrived was pretty dramatic. The number of UK forces had gone down from 30,000 to 10,000 pretty rapidly.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Yes. It was high 30s/low 40s, down to about 14,000, I think. No, actually 14,000 includes the coalition. So about 10.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes. Really just looking at force levels during your time, pretty soon after you arrived you did a force level review, which actually brought about an increase of 130-odd in infantry company scale. But then, within a month or so, you did a second review which saw a much more substantial increase against the background of the plan, which was continued drawdown.

It would be interesting to know how far was that due to the changing security situation and how much was it due to Baghdad-led initiatives for reconstruction or whatever it is? I would like to know what the --

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** It was -- I mean, the point in time that Peter left, the view was that, you know, 'all is well'. They<sup>1</sup> had fought extremely well. They had secured actually back entirely what they had intended to do but they were absolutely shot. You know, the staff officers, the force were -- you know, I can tell a worn man or woman at 1,000 yards, and they were pretty worn.

I sensed that they were looking to the transition, and therefore -- and departing. My sense on arrival was 'all wasn't that well', but it was difficult to get a handle on it. It was just the sense that what was emerging was a whole series of unknowns and uncertainties, civil disorder. Actually less so down in Basra than in southern Baghdad. Civil disorder in

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<sup>1</sup> ie the First UK Armoured Division

Baghdad, because I used to go back up to Baghdad every so often, was escalating at a far higher tempo, but it was more about us trying to understand what the problem was.

My reluctance -- because it's very easy in my case as a general officer forward to have just said, "Send more troops over". You know, it didn't work for Haig -- well, it did eventually work for Haig, I suppose, but he got an awful lot more troops.

My view was that unless you know what you want them for, and you have therefore done that piece of intellectual analysis, then don't bring another man or woman into the theatre unless you need it, and you have to understand the consequences. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So I was very conscious of not -- notwithstanding how hard the troops were working in Basra at the time, my view was that I needed to be sure of what these forces were for. I did use and brought in additional forces; I borrowed half a brigade of US marines, because command had changed from Franks at that point in time, and John Abizaid was commanding. He released his theatre reserve, which was 13th marine expeditionary unit, who then came in and worked through Al Faw, bringing dentistry and doctoring and trying to bring some stability down to that.

So I was trying to not -- and deal with things like oil, theft and criminality, which was this sort of emerging sense of the problem. You know, we weren't having running gun<sup>2</sup> battles with insurgents. People were being shot and blown up occasionally, but the truth was it<sup>3</sup> had not morphed into this divided space. So therefore it was about dealing with criminality and a number of things, trying --

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<sup>2</sup> Subsequently the witness clarified that he had intended to say "heavy gun battles..."

<sup>3</sup> ie the south

**THE CHAIRMAN:** In the absence of effective civil government?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Correct, because there was nothing of any shape, [REDACTED].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We might talk about that in a little bit.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** So in many ways -- so my reluctance was one based upon the losses are always very real. My responsibilities are self-evident. I needed to be sure what I needed to do in order therefore to turn around and say, "I need these extra troops". In the meantime, we would just in fact suck it up and work out what was going wrong, because it was not clear. All we knew was that the situation was in fact unraveling in a way, for what reason, very difficult to identify.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Was it clear or clear enough that we were the occupying power, and in default of an effective civil administration to keep law and order, we had to do it?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** No, again, because you ended up with this conundrum which was a sense that as the occupying power, and with a view that we would remain occupying, that that was working actively against us.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** So on the one hand I had this need to - bring in more force in, acting harder, reverting to a more aggressive and therefore combatant posture, because we always -- in the Brits, we had the ability to go back to Phase III rules of engagement, as well as Phase IV, whereas the Italians and all the rest of it jumped straight to Phase IV ROE.

For myself, down south, I was reluctant to go down that course because my view was that we weren't there to occupy Iraq. What we were there to do was to remove Saddam, and therefore set the conditions for a change in circumstances. What we just

didn't know, what was then unfolding and happening.

I had nothing like the force to be able to secure an area of four provinces with 14,000 troops in a way that one would recognise the British Army in Germany in 1945.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** My father was there, mayor of a little town with a Nazi deputy.

Two things I would like to just tug the string on a little bit. One is the occupying power business. We have heard quite a lot of evidence. Frankly I am a bit surprised that the actual language of the Hague regulations, under the Geneva Convention, and then the UN Security Council resolution in May, 1483. Occupying power, as translated into Arabic, what was understood, was itself a significant factor in turning the civilian population, including the Shia, against the continuing coalition presence. Was it that, or was it something much more real like, as you say, needing to use a heavier hand and harder tactics to keep control of the situation?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** I think that, you know, both converged to an unhappy conclusion in 2003, 2004, 2005, whereby the population thought we would just leave and we didn't.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Then they thought -- I remember a great classic line was saying, "You have put a man on the moon". I reminded them and said, "The Americans put a man on the moon, not the Brits". But, "Why can't you get the power into Basra? You should be able to do this instantly because you are a great nation, you've got lots of money".

As I began to look at -- I even vaguely understood what I call different priorities, but as one looked towards the essential services, they had been so badly maintained, had been in a defunct position under Saddam, not then built or reinforced

in any way during the time of sanctions, or since 1990 when he lost face with the Shia, and then of course we [coalition air] had broken it all up in both 1990 and then again as we came in [in 2003]. Plus the fact that he had never done a lot of this stuff.

So I remember at a meeting, for instance, with Sheikh Rashid and a whole lot of others down in Basra, the sheikh, you know, "We used to have water in the Shia flats, the water is not running". I said, "Here are the plans. Here are the town plans. There's never been water in the Shia flats". You know, and it was, "No, no, we knew there was water in the Shia". I said, "No, there's never been water". And there was a sense, because if anybody in the old regime had said there's no water in the flats, he would have a one way trip out to the desert.

So the truth is in fact the great myth that all is well began to unfold. So the expectation was huge. Our ability to fill that expectation with limited forces, and actually very little in the way of support to be able to just do the basics, meant that in fact we were therefore seen to be unhelpful.

Then you had us having to change some of the profiles because of the way we were being attacked and the like. So therefore people began to move from a position of being grateful to ungrateful, to unhelpful, to actually being malevolent.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We have got evidence, I think, that Ministers were being told as late -- ie as late after March, the invasion itself -- as late as August that, thinking of our share of the coalition forces, no major changes in force levels or the rundown strategy were being expected. What you have described is a somewhat shakier situation in August/September. I'm just wondering how and where the impression is fixed between GOC in the theatre, overall National Contingent Commander back in Qatar

or somewhere and PJHQ.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** I think distance doesn't help. There is a time lag in understanding. In August we had the riots. We were running at 150 degrees temperature and 100 per cent humidity. It's grim operating in those sort of conditions.

I was very clear at that time of what was happening. What was not clear -- and you might say that I was just slow in picking this up - was trying to understand therefore how we could deal with it. I was dealing and quite clearly addressing what I was hearing from the leaderships of the tribes and all the rest, which was criminality and these issues were the ones that needed to be addressed, and therefore we were pushing hard to do that, not now looking towards finding the enemy, because my view was that would have been a fatal error at that point in time, and so therefore we weren't rushing to therefore ask for a huge amount of support because actually it was unclear what we would use them for.

I had got the support from Abizaid in the way of being able to do the counter criminality role, but we had to change the laws at the same time. So I had my lawyer flying up to Baghdad to change Iraqi law, because in effect you are allowed to thief [oil] under Iraqi law, Saddam Iraqi law, because that allowed you to break the sanctions.

So you had to undo all of that. Otherwise, in fact, legally we would have had no right to hold these individuals because we had turned up, and rightly so, on a sort of humanitarian and a decency ticket.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** This was a change in Iraqi law, not just for Basra province?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Correct. So we had to change, and we got the CPA to do that. So on one hand I'm sorting out Iraqi



law, and on the other hand trying to understand actually what was going on. What I didn't need to do was just flood more troops in, and anyway I knew the truth is when troops are going home, and they would be going that way, trying to bring more troops in is -- you have got to be pretty clear what you want them for and what they are needed for.

If one had just said, you know, "It's getting a bit difficult and I feel a bit fearful, send more troops over", the answer is they'd have said, "Lamb is not up for it", and my view is I was quite comfortable with a slightly quixotic position. I needed to be sure of what I was looking at in order to see that in bringing more troops in, whether we would upset the scales [of occupation or assistance], where in fact we were absolutely beyond any question of doubt a force of occupation, and the Koran is very clear about a force of occupation.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Do tell us.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** You resist it [a force of occupation], however many generations it takes, because it threatens your way of life and it threatens your faith. It's that simple.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** There's already been a mention or two of the CPA and Bremer. In this private session I think it's quite important to pursue the relationships that there were, both with Ambassador Bremer and with General Sanchez. We have been told in other evidence that their own relationship was not the happiest in the world.

How far did this actually matter? We have heard critical comments on the big decisions that were taken at the beginning of the CPA period, disbandment, de-Ba'athification on a large-scale, et cetera, and how it was done. But day to day, month to month, was there a sense of unified command and control from Baghdad over high policy and strategy?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Not that I got. I only went to Baghdad as GOC maybe eight times in the six months I was there, that sort of order.

The truth was that while we had difficulties down south of the situation unsticking, unglueing itself, and bad actors coming out to challenge our authority or to try and test our authority, the situation in Baghdad was of a completely different order, because we had a -- the communications weren't great, but we did have a satellite link with which we would then have five minutes from all the various Divisional Commanders; Petraeus up in the north, Marty Dempsey in Baghdad, Ray Odierno out in the triangle towards Kirkuk, Chuck whatever his name was who was out west, and myself down in the south. We would then have a sort of -- of an evening we would update Sanchez on the day's business, and it was pretty clear that the north was -- not so much Mosul and the like, but actually Baghdad in particular and the triangle was finding itself -- Marty Dempsey had to take a division that was designed for NTC and major war fighting. It suddenly finds itself in the middle of a city which was experiencing extreme violence, unsettlement, insurgencies, the whole -- international terrorism, you name it.

So in many ways, I think, Sanchez's view was: Graeme, keep the south quiet. At the end of the day -- that's why, for instance, when there was a suggestion -- I think it was about November time. Bremer had in his head that Muqtada al-Sadr was the devil's nephew, and therefore we should go and send an operation into -- not us, but the Americans would go into Najaf or Karbala, or wherever the case may be, and take Muqtada.

My view was this was not a great plan, [REDACTED], and I made that view clear back to the UK. I made it clear up to -- at that point Jeremy Greenstock was up in Baghdad. I said I only ever brought a red card when in my

view it's time to pull a red card. You don't want to fool around with these things. But, I said, you need to understand quite clearly that if you arrest Muqtada al-Sadr, the south goes south. I will lose control. I have no idea what the consequences and implications will be, but I will not be able to contain the violence, and you are not here. So, you know, you do not want to do this.

Actually they didn't do it, and Jeremy, in his finest -- managed to convince Bremer that it [REDACTED] [REDACTED] technically quite a difficult operation to conduct. But that relationship -Sanchez, on the other hand, actually [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the conversation -- the first conversation I had with him, he turned round and said, "Graeme, I need you to do the following things". I said, "I can't". I said, "I'm the coalition, my friend. The answer is that I can't get the Italians to go back on Phase III ROE. The answer is they are on Phase IV and that's it. That's why they come here. That's the politics", [REDACTED]

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes. Was it an issue of divided command between civilian and military in Baghdad, or is it -- well, put it to the other way round. If there was unified command, where it was to be found?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Certainly not Baghdad. I was entirely comfortable with the circumstances. I felt I knew that if I had a major problem, Rick Sanchez, with what he had available, would send forces, because that's how the military work, down to help me, although he was absolutely, and I recognised, he was having to pour everything and anything into trying to actually stop Baghdad literally burning to the ground.

[REDACTED]

Then some young -- very intelligent, but some young lad leapt on to the floor and gave a briefing on, "This is the campaign plan", which was like Jack and Jill, and at the end of it -- and I thought, "I'm about to say something". But at this point in time Petraeus leant forward and said, "Who are you? I have never seen you. You haven't come and talked to me. You have no idea what you are talking about", and that was the sum of.

So to say that there was -- there was in my view no relationship. When I used to go up and see Andy Bearpark and a few others up in CPA, my view was: don't confuse activity with progress. There was a shed-load of activity, absolutely no progress.

People had no sense of where they were going and what they were doing on the CPA side. Sanchez was, I think, struggling

with a mission that was -- just as I was, to be fair. So the military had no position where we could stand on some sort of moral high ground and say, "We were so much cleverer than the civilians". It's not the case at all. The answer is we were really struggling with trying to understand what was going wrong and why it was going wrong, and what we could or what we could not do about it, and then be very careful about bringing in resources and forces, and then acting in a way -- so the Muqtada al-Sadr is a good example of that -- of giving -- here is the military saying to the CPA, "Do not do this. You have no idea". And at that point in time, there was no way they could have handled an insurgency incident in the north and an uprising or Shia dislocation in the south. My view is that it would have absolutely gone south.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Not a counter factual that is pleasant to reflect on, is it?

Can you just say a little bit more than we heard before in public session, about working with CPA south. It had very limited resources, very little it could do, but it had a driving leader in Hilary Synnott and was out to do what it could. Is there much more to say about it than that?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** No, I think that was it. I remember Hilary turning up and saying, "Where is my communications, where are my staff", and I go, "Well, that's your problem. I've got riots out in the streets here right now and I'm trying to save lives. I'm trying to understand what's going wrong", and eventually we scabbled around and got communications for him, and I gave him somebody to work with and the like.

There was no sense of -- there were some very good and very able and very brave souls, but had they been trained, prepared, ready -- you know, I spent a lifetime, you know, and I was sort

of waking up and giving it the old, "What is happening?" And I spent a lifetime training and looking at all this stuff, and done not an inconsiderable amount of operational work, of which the uncertainties and chaos is pretty commonplace here. But this was of a new order.

So my view was that there was no sense of what to do. There was no sense of a campaign plan and how it should be done.

I remember Bremer -- a CODEL came down, the American CODELs came down, led by actually John McCain, and we briefed him and said, "You need to get \$23 billion down here fast, really fast, because this is all going south". He went back up north, and I remember Bremer actually getting Sanchez and saying, "I want the British commander sacked and sent home. I want the general down in the south sacked and sent home", which was me, and Sanchez saying, "Well, that would actually be difficult because he's a Brit", and Bremer giving it all, "I don't care", and Sanchez saying, "No, no, no, it really isn't in your gift, and by the way we have enough problems up here", which he then -- Bremer then said, "Right, no American CODEL will ever go down to the Brits again", and he never did, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] because actually the truth is we needed 23 billion before we crossed the start line, let alone at the point in time we were saying it was necessary.

What he wanted to do was send, just as he did with that police chief he brought in from New York City, just wants a good news story every day, big highlight every week, we're making ground, this is working. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Thank you. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I'll ask Baroness Prashar to take up the

questions.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Thank you very much. We were talking about the CPA(S) before, and in response to Sir John Chilcot, you were talking about your connections, your conversations with community leaders. I really want to understand the nature of the interaction with the local Iraqi community leaders and how did you decide whom to talk to.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Yes. There was a view, a generally held view, a Baghdad view -- you know, the end of the tribal era. Tribes have no place in this new democracy, this new opportunity. It's not a view I subscribe to. My view was that the tribes remain an important social and family and clan network that -- it doesn't matter where you go in the Middle East and it doesn't matter how much damage you do, the answer is as long as there's three people left, there's going to be some family affiliation or tribal affiliation within that.

The problem is trying to identify -- because we had no special branch, we had no intelligence, we had no reference point you could go to. I remember going up to Nasiriyah quite early on, to see a big sheikh, at which, you know, there was the statutory large tent, a pile of food, and lots and lots of people walking around in shamags and looking as if they were part of this great sort of singularity of a tribe.

As I began to look at some of them, I thought this guy looks a bit like a farmhand really, and this boy here looks like a bit of a welder, and a few others, and they didn't quite carry it off. So actually what I was looking at in fact a tribal -- somebody who wished to present, because that's how they -- this was the case, that he was a great -- what he had done is he had just issued a whole load of shamags to his employees and said these are all tribal sheikhs and they are all obedient to me and

I'm a hugely important person. Actually he wasn't that hugely important person.

So we struggled, and we continue to struggle, in understanding -- I'm myself in Afghanistan am now still struggling to understand the nature of this most complicated arrangement that sits between community, tribe, religion, and then all the sort of issues of debt and honour and respect and dignity, et cetera, et cetera.

So we did struggle. I remember, for instance, dealing with one other tribal elder who had been a member of the Ba'ath Party. In his house he had a picture of him and Saddam. It wasn't somehow that he had taken it down, and you suddenly thought here is somebody who actually is probably quite a significant -- he was a Sunni down in the Shia area, but in many ways, you know, that had not -- and a sense of I have to get rid of that because --

So we had people which we tried to understand and begin to map what the tribal networks were, but of course the whole place was built on gossip, rumour and malpractice. So just as Chalabi had come across to the States and convinced everybody of the manner in which the regime would fold, and brightness and light would then emerge within days, was born from his own personal interests, and they didn't reflect actually the probability of the outcome which we then faced and unfolded.

I would say now that our understanding of the tribal structure is slightly better. But, as an army, were we well prepared for this? No. Some of us who had operated in the Middle East have an understanding of these sort of issues, but no real depth of knowledge, and there was no database, because if you turn around and said, "Sheikh, tell me about the tribal structure", he would tell you as he wished me to understand it, for his advantage, and so there was all this concept.



You then had the Technocrats of people like, for instance, I remember the mayor or whoever we had as the early -- he was a judge, Wa'ali, down in Basra. But of course the judge comes from a family, comes from a tribe. So everything is tribal but the Technocrats, on the one hand they would turn around and tell you how they weren't interested in tribal structures, but actually in fact you saw their behaviour tending to emulate a tribal interest. So the tribal issue, notwithstanding the damage that had been done by Saddam against the tribes, remained in place.

A good example would be that we had an unfortunate incident where a young man was shot on one of our patrols because he was seen to be -- he had a pistol. He was forcing a woman into a car, it was thought it was being hijacked, and in the end it wasn't. He was -- she was a cousin or a nephew.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** You were trying to work all this out in your capacity as the army and the military?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Correct, because there was no one else to turn to.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** So how did you decide who to talk to?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** What you ended up with -- I took over and there was a series of councils that had been put in place by the First Division<sup>4</sup> that were existing. So one took that on at face value and then tried to understand who, which tribes, what representation, what was their depth of knowledge, how influential were they, where did their real interests lie. Even some time on, when I went back in as a deputy commander, you could still see the undercurrent of the oil industry, the oil business, you know, still very powerful.

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<sup>4</sup> ie First UK Armoured Division

Then a different Wa'ali, who had then taken over as the man down in Basra, was sacked by the Prime Minister. He didn't move. He stayed in place because his tribe, his clan, his people, in effect, looked after a great deal of the oil business that was down there which was actually very profitable, and they weren't about to release it because someone had said politically, "You are now sacked".

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Were you talking to bodies such as the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution or Muqtada al-Sadr?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** The answer is we were talking to everyone such as the Badr Corps who was down then, and the like. My view was that I had no difficulty in talking. I didn't sense any restrictions on who I could talk to. My view was if you immediately exclude somebody, then you start buying yourself a problem. What I was trying to do at this time was understand what I was looking at, because the Badr Corps had a well formed and well organised body down there who weren't without influence.

Now, was it, you know, benevolent or malevolent? The answer is a bit of both, and inevitably so. Exactly the same with the Sadrist. In many ways you could see that the response against the Sadrist movement was -- the old father had been someone of great respect. He had stood out amongst other clerics.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** He the martyr?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Yes, he the martyr. I remember going to Nasiriyah, for instance, and sitting down with the likes of Anasariyah who was one of the clerics<sup>5</sup> there, an old man, who -- and just said, "I need your help". So I talked to clerics. I talked to one of the two principal clerics down in Basra. I would just go down and spend an afternoon, trying to

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<sup>5</sup> The witness subsequently clarified that he had been referring to senior Shi'a clerics.

understand.

But in many ways they would not act in our interest, and you had to ask them the right question, and they always gave you a straight answer. But if you didn't ask them the right question, then the answer is that you could be misled or you could get a misunderstanding. So one was touching anything and everything to try and understand the nature of the power, authority and influence.

To give you a sort of stark example, only three weeks ago, I sat opposite Mike Flynn<sup>6</sup>, who is in charge of G2, on the issue of Kandahar, and I said, "Mike, do we really understand power, influence and authority in Kandahar? Because if we don't, then the answer is we have to be really careful how we approach this, because we'll get it wrong", and that's eight years on in Afghanistan. So the idea within two months on in Basra, going, "All right, we've got a handle" -- we were scratching the surface and just understanding the nature of how business was done, the date, the tomato trade, how it operated. Very difficult.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Hypothetical question: if we had made a determined effort over the five years before the invasion to really get a proper understanding of Iraqi society, power structures and all that, could we have? There are plenty of Arabists in the British system who can live and talk in the field. I know we are excluded, at least diplomatically, but is it actually addressable?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** We could have done a lot better and we should have done a lot better. I now don't use the term "situational awareness". I find it -- I talk about "situational understanding", and that requires effort. If I look towards the sort of troubled century that we will all die in, the answer is

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<sup>6</sup> US Major General Mike Flynn

that it is situational understanding that we need to gather, and that is of a completely different order to just the sort of superficial awareness which -- where is the enemy, where am I?

The first briefing to Stan McChrystal in Afghanistan was we have asked ourselves for eight years where is the enemy. What we should have asked is where should we be, and exactly the same applied in Basra, in even those early days. But we have to get better, and it's not a case of it's cultural awareness within the force that is going to go into the country. It's a sense of understanding those individuals, and then in effect having the intelligence organisation with the capacity to be able to understand not just the raw intelligence of who is talking to who, but where power, authority and influence lie.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** The supplementary I was going to have, before Usha takes it over again, is what kind of organisation, looking to the future, can conceivably do that? It's not straight diplomacy clearly, but diplomats have a contribution. It's not secret intelligence as such.

Do we have a -- it's certainly not for the military.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** No, my view is we had it and we threw it away. It used to be called political [and foreign service] officers. The answer is if you look at Thesiger's father, who lived in Ethiopia and Eritrea, he spoke multiple dialects, he spent his life up in the hills, he was respected and understood in a way that you can only garner by time, and your ability to be able to talk and understand. You will never be accepted, but your level of understanding, to go back to my situational understanding, is of a completely different order.

They would then gather. Those half a dozen or so souls would come down and speak to the ambassador and say, "This is what we are hearing amongst the tribes". Then, as they still can do, the

ambassador would then craft a diplomatic note, and send it back by slow boat to London, of which it informed the Foreign Office rather accurately, of what was happening 'in them there hills'.

Those individuals no longer exist. So what you do is you get technical intelligence. You get bits of human intelligence. You get gossip, rumour and a raft of cocktail party discussion, which goes back as being, "This is the situation". Nothing could be further from the truth.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** In this situation, was it made worse by the fact that the CPA was dysfunctioning, because the interaction between the civilian and the military side wasn't working as effectively?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Actually, from my perspective, I was getting on just fine with Hilary, and actually we were getting on just fine with the UN. They couldn't be too obvious in that relationship, until of course what's his name got blown up in Baghdad and they all went south to Kuwait, which broke that link.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Did they have sufficient intelligence to share with you?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** They were very happy to talk about, behind closed doors, who they were dealing with and the like, and that was a sort of three-way relationship which I had set up as I was trying to understand the problem that was unfolding, in a complicated, uncertain way, in front of my eyes. So therefore Hilary, myself, and -- I can't remember his name -- I think he was a Norwegian or a Swede who was the UN delegate. He was a good man. We would then meet, and I can't remember whether it was once a week or once every three days or once every two days or whatever it may be, and try and understand what we could contribute as a whole to the problem in the south.

You know, I flew aircraft across to Jordan to buy plastic so

we could save the tomato harvest. So I wasn't about just trying to find the enemy. I was actually trying to in fact work within these -- and we had some very capable -- I remember some individuals who were just hugely knowledgeable on dates and the like.

So the truth is that at where I was at, it was as good as you could make it. It just didn't have any resource. So I had to provide the money. I had to find the funds to go and do things, save the tomato plant or get their grain up to Maysan and make sure it was all right.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Did you see much Iranian involvement?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Iranian? No. In 2003 my view was that if anyone talked about the Iranian involvement, my view was to turn round and say, "Look, we have lived beside France for centuries and they own most of the electricity in our country, and some of our water". So the idea of there being a relationship, and we saw some of that as they began to look towards power sharing and stuff like that.

Now, the Iranians would always go with some sort of -- you know, another agenda. But wasn't just that agenda. You know, there was actually, in fact, a -- of which in many ways Iran wished to benefit from the circumstances Iraq found itself in. My sense was it was always one on their terms, rather than for the wellbeing of Iraq, because eight years of war and a million men they had lost was not an insignificant pain that they felt. But it wasn't all about IRGC and Quds force appearing out of the woodwork and sort of undoing.

That included the likes of the Badr Corps and the like. My view was they had been born of Iran. They operated in Iraq against Saddam Hussein. Were there bound to be influenced by the Iranians -- could I guarantee that every conversation I had with

the Badr Corps would not be doing anything other than heading straight back to Tehran, of course I accepted that. But at the same time, you know, it wasn't a malevolent factor.

I remember there was an incursion where the Iranians came across some forts in 2003 along the Maysan or down in our area, which the word came, in effect, get together a [coalition] brigade and forcibly evict them, and I said, "Look, the water is high. They've just moved to in fact where it's dry". This is 3 kilometres of terrain -- it wasn't even that. It was 300 metres, 800 metres of terrain. So we went out and talked to them, and they all went back and it was all fine. But the immediate sort of, "Right, they're now, in fact, stealing ground". It wasn't. It was just -- again, the perspective from the ground [Basra], very different from the perspective from Washington or Westminster.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Do you think this lack of understanding or lack of interaction created the conditions for the Shia uprising in 2004?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** I think it would not have helped because our ignorance, you know, was self-evident. You know, we are okay at sort of understanding sort of what I call how to act properly. But even then, actually we make a whole series of errors which are absolutely sinful to an Arab, but actually just wouldn't be seen to be that way from ourselves.

So therefore what you begin to do is you begin to allow the opposition the opportunity to take the message, the media, the gossip, the rumour, the coffee house discussion, and say, "Actually they are here for this, because did you hear about such and such", or, "This happened at such and such", and of course the event was correct. Somebody scrubbing something out which he thought was slander on a wall, but actually it was text from the

Koran, and people get absolutely -- they immediately go into sort of running down the streets with swords, looking for white guys to kill.

So that level of -- by the way, it is a community that has been under a pressure cooker for 30 years. At the end of the day, when you release that pressure, then the answer is you hit boiling point really, really quick, especially with 150 degrees and 100 per cent humidity. So all those circumstances played into, I sense, making it more difficult for us.

But the truth is that old Tommy Atkins and Tara Palmer-Atkins actually isn't half bad at learning quite quickly and not getting it horribly wrong. They don't get it right, but they don't get it horribly wrong. But the overall effort, our understanding, our ability to be able to go into in effect from a standing start some of these complicated cross-cultures, we are not well prepared.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** With hindsight, would you say we were not talking to the right people?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** No, I think we were talking to lots of people. Some of them would be absolutely the right people and some of them would be absolutely the wrong people. We just didn't know.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Just kind of making it up as we went along?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Yes. But the truth is that 30 years of warring, that's how it always is. It doesn't matter if it's the Falkland Islands or now.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** I would like to spend just a very few minutes indeed on Snatch. We have got this as a running theme throughout the long period of our presence, for obvious reasons.



But the story starts, I suppose, in your time as GOC, when you needed some sort of protected mobility, protected against small arms fire and that sort of thing. As I understand it, your headquarters said the best thing we could have is a variant, at least, of the Snatch Landrover.

Now, the MOD staff report in two years later, saying Snatch was clearly not designed or capable of countering RPGs or mines or IEDs. But these threats were only, if at all, just beginning to manifest themselves in your time.

Can you just take us briefly into the need for Snatch as it then stood, or was capable of being up-armoured, and the threat against which you needed it?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** The first point we faced was driving around in tanks and Warriors was not conducive to not being seen as a force of occupation.

The second one is there's just logistics. You have got what you have got, and therefore you're trying to operate around that.

Then you have got to turn around and say -- and then what can you get? Of course, you know, to someone like an MRAT, it didn't exist. So had we known that we needed these sort of capabilities, actually if you go back in the FRES programme, the answer is yes, we did. But, again, that's equipment programmes up, long lead times.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We have taken other evidence about that.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** But the idea of getting some sort of less aggressive means to transport people around was necessary. The need to armour it was self-evident. I had an armoured Range Rover. I used to drive quite happily round in that at the time, in order to try and reduce the profile.

We had a couple of incidents where people were killed where they weren't in armoured vehicles. They were just under standard

SUVs, trying to blend in. So we had to therefore create an interim solution. So my view was: what have you got available, whether it's something on wheels -- it's Snatch. That's the choice, and it's Hobson's choice.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes, and the emerging threat, as it later emerged, was not then present.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** We had a couple of incidents I think I lost an EOD operator, for instance, from basically -- after those mine type -- not an EFP at that time, which just went straight through the side of the Snatch, as RPGs would do. So I was acutely aware that Mr Snatch was not designed [for 21<sup>st</sup> century urban warfare] -- it was an extension of the old Macrolowe Landrover in Northern Ireland --

**THE CHAIRMAN:** I was going to say, from ancient memory, there were RPGs up against straight Landrovers in Northern Ireland.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Correct. But, you know, equally in Northern Ireland we didn't drive vehicles south of whichever line it was for 20 years because of the threat of massive IEDs that were being placed in the road.

So one was stuck with a difficult set of circumstances. One needed to get out of or move away from what I call the track, because the tracks -- not only did they look bad, but they are aggressive in their profile, but actually they tear the hell of the roads and the like. So you are doing a lot of damage at the same time.

Yet actually, at the same time, what have you got available at short order? Well, you know, better have a Snatch than a Landrover.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Okay. Thanks. I think I would like to turn to Sir Roderic Lyne now.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Can we do a quick canter through the third way, which is how in previous evidence you talked about reconciliation, now moving into the period when you're back as senior British military representative 1 in Baghdad, 2006/2007.

If you could just describe how reconciliation happened. Was London fully on board with this? Was it local initiative? Was it something backed or thought up in London? How effective was it? Did it work? Was it in fact something that should have been tried earlier, that people had been a bit slow on? And when one talks about reconciliation, is the process with Sunni and Shia fundamentally the same or very different?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** When I turned up -- I turned up in August, I think it was, of 2006 -- the situation out west of Iraq was pretty grim. About 80 attacks a day going against the US marines. In fact I think the J2 analysis from the full [USMC] colonel who was out there at the time was that they had lost western Iraq. So the situation was pretty serious in that context.

As the deputy commander, as a Brit, deputy commander, of course, you are not really a deputy, you are the deputy commander, but it's not quite the same as being American deputy commander. First of all, you don't understand the whole US staff system. So you have restrictions on that. And in many ways, you are there to try and identify the things you can do to move and change the campaign in a way that is above and beyond what is already happening.

So therefore General Casey turned around and asked me to do a number of things. He had been in theatre at that point in time for about 28 months, and therefore, you know, the thing -- the campaign, the operation -- the functionality of the thing was running. What you didn't want was somebody coming in and saying,

"I've got a bright new idea". What you needed was somebody coming in to be able to pick that up, support it, and therefore add value, and my view is that that is the role, and understanding that is not unimportant. It's applicable to Nick Parker sitting in Afghanistan right now, as it was to me in 2006. If you think otherwise, the answer is you just don't understand coalitions or campaign.

So my view is to say, okay, as your deputy commander -- and he was very clear, when he was out of the country, I was in charge. Don't misunderstand the authorities that one sat as a DCOM. I said, "What do you wish me to do in particular?" He asked me to look at electricity, essential services, electric power, and the normal raft of military work. So I need to get round all the divisions, et cetera, and then he asked me to have a look at Engagement. He was quite specific, down the narrow -- which I then came back in 48 hours and said: this is how I see Engagement [with the insurgents], this is how I see the power issues. Go back, brief him and say I have thought about it, this is what I can do and this is how I think I can best support it. This is where I think I can bring value added.

He was very comfortable on the power side of trying to bring some sense into all of that, and on the Engagement side, he said "No, Graeme, I want you to keep it really quite focused to just understanding what we can do with Engagement". He said the Ambassador Kalilzad had been doing this. So I went and saw Zal, talked it through. It was clear that he had gone round a number of countries and had been talking in various guises, normally on a one to one, no notes taken, Zal being typical Zal. Actually quite difficult to figure out exactly what he had done, but he had started a sort of discussion and a dialogue.

At the same time, the Iraqis were looking towards and had reached out to a fellow called Sheikh Sittar in Ramadi as being

authorised to set up 300 men, a Sunni defence force, with money and authority. It wasn't particularly well thought through, but it was an Iraqi initiative which was beginning to emerge at that time.

I then engaged with the Iraqis, reinforced that this was exactly the right thing to do, and then began to build on and then expand my portfolio on the basis that I had a clear view that the reconciliation, whatever you want to call it, was the only way or one of the very few ways out of the conundrum we faced or the situation out west which was not going in our favour.

I had Paul Lincoln who was working for me as my POLAD, and I said, "Look, Paul, it's very important that London are aware, because obviously I'm a British officer, standing here as a DCOM", I said, "but keep that knowledge of who knows absolutely tight at the far end because what I don't need is a good ideas brigade, and I certainly don't need enthusiasm and amateur hour joining the thinking from theatre, which is going to be quite difficult to deliver".

Paul did that, in my view, absolutely splendidly, and he kept London informed without making it sort of, "Here is a great new idea, we are doing this, and here is all the detail, the dotted Is and the crossed Ts", but understood exactly what I was doing. As a Brit, although as a DCOM, the answer is the authorities I had were fine to be able to go out and expand this space.

What I then did was then begin to articulate what that Engagement would be, and how it could unfold. The idea of, you know, establishing some basic trade space, establishing a dialogue, confidence building measures, beginning to see behavioural changes, leading then at some point in time to negotiation.

The problem that -- the Iraqi Government weren't that

comfortable with the idea because obviously Rubaie [the National Security Adviser] said: why would I invite an alligator into the bedroom in the form of the Sunni insurgents coming across? But that's why it was very important that I dealt both in dealing with the insurgency from the Sunni on one side, but equally with the same level of commitment and energy with the Shia militia, who were as thoroughly bad on the other side. But actually, in fact, there was this inevitable sort of what I call interest from the Government of Iraq as to therefore a fair balance of skills being played through.

The most difficult people to reconcile with the idea of reconciliation in Iraq were the American military.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** But they got their heads around it?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** By about December.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** That's right up to the top?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Yes. So we just banged away at this,

[REDACTED]

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** [REDACTED]?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** [REDACTED]

Therefore one just hammered away through the months of that earlier period, in convincing people that, you know, it's good to talk.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Here were you, as a general, operating under the American military command, doing a political negotiation with the guys who were shooting, which you say the Iraqi Government weren't terribly happy with, but they didn't stop you doing it, and the Americans eventually saw the sense of it.

Was this really what you would normally expect to be doing --

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** No.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** -- as a military officer? Wouldn't it have been more natural to have got some civilians? Shouldn't they have been doing it, a combination of \*\*\*\*\* the enemy, your political adviser from MOD, some combination of that? Was there a vacuum that you were having to fill there?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Yes, there was definitely a vacuum I was having to fill. Was there an obvious choice -- was there an Oldfield sitting out there I could put my hand out and pluck in and say, "Come and cut this business"? The answer was no, because (a) he would be a Brit, and secondly --

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Which would disqualify him.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** No, it wouldn't disqualify him, but the fellow on the other side of the table looked at me as the deputy commander of a 160,000-man force. That's what carried the weight.

Actually, my Britishness, or whatever you want to call it, or Scottishness in effect, allowed me to then have a dialogue with him that was not confrontational, and it wasn't about negotiation. In fact, I nearly had a shooting match with the 1920 Brigade at one point because the interpreter used the term

"negotiation", rather than the term "dialogue", and the whole situation was about to in fact what I call go to guns on that particular occasion. But it was about just establishing because they had not sat opposite. They had no idea. So misunderstanding is legion.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED].

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Correct.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Yes. Absolutely. The answer was that one could have sat a Brit down there, and the fellow sitting opposite -- and these were not insignificant people. You had Ansar Al Sunna sitting, Jaish Al Mujahideen and a few others, that would sit there, and with some difficulty got into the country.

Actually, my relationship with the Iraqi Government was fine because I remember the first meeting, I said there are three people I intend to bring. Mowaffak Rubaie said, look, number 1 and number 2 -- number 3 absolutely not -- I said fine, and he said no, no, number 3 -- and I said, "Look, I've got it. You are the national security adviser. You are the government, the sovereign government of this country. If you can't live with me talking to number 3, I'm not going to talk to number 3. I'm not stupid".

So I eventually talked to number 3 about two months later, with the authority of the Iraqi Government, but the idea was in fact this was about a partnership between myself, between the Iraqi Government, the national security adviser, the Prime Minister himself and a few others, and with the top end of



the American military.

The answer is if one had brought in [REDACTED], and I'm sure there is somebody who is quite capable of doing that stuff better than I could, he would have had no authority -- to the fellow on the other side of the table, it's all about message, audience, and self. In this case the fellow would have said, "You are a Brit. Who are you? What authority ..." "I'm on behalf of ..."

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Can we move from that -- you have mentioned the JAM just now -- to the negotiations in Basra that were happening towards the end of your time --

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Yes, they --

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** -- on the ceasefire? To what extent were you personally involved in that?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** I wasn't. I became aware of a dialogue which had been established between the military, between \*\*\*\*\* and -- GOC and a few other boys down there in Basra. I remember speaking to Jonathan about it, and said, "Jonathan, if you take one step ahead of the Iraqi Government, the answer is this is absolutely doomed. It's one thing to sit down opposite the Sunni ..."

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** "Jonathan", for the record, being?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** John Shaw, who was GOC MND South East at the time. He would turn round and say, "So what can I do to help?" Be very careful here, because if you think actually it's difficult for an Iraqi Government to deal with a Sunni insurgent, it is extremely difficult for an Iraqi Shia Government to deal with a Shia militia. Completely different order of business. This is close, it's personal, and it's all -- to go back to the points about the tribe, the understanding of a most complex

chemistry which I will go to hell never understanding, that exists between their religion, between their families, between their clan and their tribes, and in this case, actually how that all unfolded, and the history of Muqtada al-Sadr.

[REDACTED]

But there is this sense of loyalty and bond which exists, which didn't last forever, but the truth is in fact these complications are very difficult for the likes of us.

My advice was the same. Be very careful in this sort of -- I then -- because this came up just as I was about leaving. I remember having a conversation with Mowaffak Rubaie, and said, "At the end of the day, this is happening. You need to be informed", because I'm not sure how well they had kept Baghdad informed of the initiative, a laudable effort trying to reduce the deaths that were occurring on the COB and the like by \*\*\*\*\* and Jonathan - Jonathan Shaw.

So I had no difficulty with that as a concept because UK<sup>7</sup> -- was not strong at this point in time.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** It happened and it worked. What view did the Americans take of it? Presumably not many of them knew about it, but one or two will have done.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** I don't think they -- it began to unfold

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<sup>7</sup> Witness subsequently clarified that he had meant "UK political and public feeling"

at the point in time I was leaving. So I would be making a guess at this is how I think they saw it.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Yes.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** They were aware. They weren't necessarily that comfortable, but they understood the reasons for that accommodation.

Now, time will tell as to whether, you know -- because many people will turn around and say, well, you know, this reconciliation worked and this one didn't. My view is life is never that simple.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Taking it a bit wider, in the time up to your departure, what view did you think the Americans around you in Baghdad at senior levels had of the UK's performance in Basra and MND South East generally?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** I think we had said we would -- we will handle the south. We have got it. I sensed that -- a bit like your words, they had taken us at face value, that that was the case. They were becoming more inclined and suspicious that we didn't have a handle on it, that actually politics of London were speaking loudly, and it was about us transitioning, whereas the Americans, of which that had been the course of action within the campaign back in 2006, had then adjusted their position, had recognised that the transition was probably going to be abject failure, had committed to a surge under Bush, brought Petraeus in with a new doctrine, and therefore had changed the nature of the campaign.

We, down in the south, had run ahead on transition, and saw that as the --

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** So they didn't like the policy. What about the performance?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** I think they were becoming increasingly concerned that we had -- at the point in time we were losing situational awareness even, let alone situational understanding of Basra, that we were unable to therefore control Basra. That actually it was becoming a piece of real estate to which -- and, of course, don't forget, we starting dealing with the Quds in the IRGC force in December 2006. Then we had the operation in Baghdad and we did the operation up in Kurdistan. One was seeing not only the sort of what I call the EFPs and the light coming in, but one was also seeing a malevolent force that was about securing their selfish interest, in this case in Basra, was a sense that the militia was therefore basically beginning to run Basra, and us either having to fight our way in or unable to contest or control it.

Now, the truth is that one could have increased the force, there could have been a military solution which would have required a force of X, quite large. It would have required probably a change in ROE. It would have certainly required much the same surge that America put into -- to deal with what they saw as the shift change that was necessary up in the north. The judgment would have been that in fact that was unlikely. So therefore, how do you find another way through this, and therefore reduce the force, keep the force in place, actually keep with the original plan of transition, because the feeling was that transition for the Shia was right in the south. The question is -- and this was the difference of opinion that existed up in Baghdad between the force in the south saying all is well, and them saying we don't think all is well.

Then of course came Charge of the Knights, which again was pushed forward ahead by Maliki for various reasons. What was interesting, if one looked at the detail of what we were short of in the south -- you know, what were the parts the Americans

brought down? Actually it's quite interesting. It's things like UAVs. It's things like bandwidth. It's things like bio readers.<sup>8</sup> It's just some of the architecture that was necessary. More helicopters. These weren't -- and then there was a significant input in staff because we were running quite a light staff at that point in time.

So we were transitioning and were on that course. We had not committed to a surge like the Americans had done, and therefore, consequently, when Charge of the Knights came, they had to back us.

Now, that's why you have a coalition. That's why you have a campaign. So the idea that you call upon big brother, in this case the Americans, to come in, is entirely within military bounds and acceptable and the correct way to do business.

What I think the Americans were a little bit shocked by was that they had taken the impression that all was well.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Thank you.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** So we had a handle on it, and my sense was we didn't.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Thank you very much.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Okay. We are nearing the end and I want to leave a few minutes at the end for general reflections that you may have. But before that, Usha.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** A couple of questions from me.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** [REDACTED]

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<sup>8</sup> Witness subsequently clarified that he meant communications bandwidth and biometric readers.



different than Karzai is doing now in Afghanistan. He began to assert his sovereignty. He technically had the sovereignty, which we said he enjoys, but of course he didn't enjoy. And so that shift, actually in a short space of time, because these sovereignty issues occur over months or a calendar year and a bit, and no more, are quite violent. They just don't look it.

But if you are watching, if you are close and you can smell it, the answer is actually, in fact, these are quite violent transitions of power and authority because on the one hand you are saying -- for a long period of time, you are saying, "You do as I say", an Iraqi face. Well, that's nothing to do with sovereignty. An Iraqi lead -- and this was where the Americans -- that's where the Brits are really useful because they can come along and say, "Listen, that's not an Iraqi lead, that's an Iraqi face you're putting there". If you want an Iraqi lead -- if he goes right, you follow, even though he walks into the minefield. All you have to do is shout and say, "You're going into a minefield". But the truth is you have to follow because that's where he wishes to go. That's his sovereign right.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** And that helped the operations?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** That helped, yes, because the answer is actually by embracing their sovereignty, what they do is they have to embrace responsibility, and that's why the Charge of the Knights was absolutely right. It was not until, not the Americans, not us, but when the Iraqi Shia Government embraced Basra as its responsibility, at that point in time then in fact a conclusion could be found. Before that it would have just taken us backwards in many ways.

Now, you needed to have the force, and the Iraqis weren't capable, the division or the brigade that was down there, the

division that was down there was so intimidated, they came from the local area, they were part and parcel of the problem. It's no different -- you could hardly see too many Catholic RUC policemen living in west Belfast and turning up for work on a Wednesday morning. It just wouldn't have happened. So exactly the same here in Basra. But you needed them<sup>9</sup> to embrace it, and they would only do that at the point in time they sensed that they had to close on this really knotty issue.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** And he judged that time better than we did?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** And he judged that time -- that's what I said. I had long discussions with Dominic at the time, and he said, "We can't do this with Maliki". I said, "Maliki is absolutely the guy. He is the man of the moment right now, because you cut him in half and he's Iraqi".

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** How do you think he viewed the UK's performance in the south?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** The answer is that partly I think he was genuinely of the view that says that we failed to grip the militias and the like. The answer is that if he had really sat down and thought about it, the answer is we could never really do that with that community, and given what I call the background. That's why my view is Jonathan's approach was not inappropriate. What we lacked was this situational understanding.

But the truth is that in private I'm sure that Maliki wouldn't necessarily be quite as vitriolic as he may have done publicly. Now, he would have done part of that because it's politics. That's fine by me.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** So Maliki was the southern surge, in fact?

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<sup>9</sup> Witness subsequently clarified that by "them" he meant the Iraqi government.



**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Yes. It wasn't a surge by design but by default, the northern surge was by design.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Quite.

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** The southern surge struck me as more by default. That's never a great way to plan.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Coming to the final bit, I'll ask Martin Gilbert to take it up and also fish for lessons learned and all that.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] you were there as senior British military representative with a general overview.

How do you think that the Special Forces evolved during this period, and what lessons can be taken forward with regard to them and applied to other theatres?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** I think that -- you know, it's a bit like if you get down to brass tacks and ask the Americans what the special relationship is, [REDACTED]

The relationship the American military have and their recognition in political circles of the SF's contribution<sup>10</sup> to Iraq and its success should not be underestimated. They are absolutely clear that Baghdad was just about to fall over, and it was the responsibility of the Special Forces [REDACTED] that was operating there, which was attempting to kill the vehicle-borne IED network that operated within that. It would not be uncommon in a day to have, you know, 70, 120, 135 Iraqis

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<sup>10</sup> Witness subsequently clarified that he was referring to UK Special Forces throughout this paragraph, not US Special Forces.

killed by design by three car bombs these were violent days when I was hanging around in 2006. Baghdad was a city that was on the threshold. We had to stop all vehicle movement on a number of occasions. You can't do that and then try and say this is progress and we will succeed, if there is no vehicle movement in your capital city at all and there are still bombs going off.

Those in the American military, and therefore how they speak to their congress and Senators of the UKSF contribution to destroying the vehicle-borne network in Baghdad, which would have probably destroyed any confidence in the surge, is singularly recognised by America. They see that as one of the significant contributions, apart from our overall partnership with them over time, but that's glazed with all the stuff from Basra, et cetera, et cetera. But in this case there is a relationship between the UKSF and the Americans which is, I think, of a particularly high order.

I think the second thing that they have a huge amount of respect for is on their choice of British advice. You know, British -- they recognise their own limitations, and this is people like General Mattis and General Petraeus, who are very smart people. But they recognise that we see things in a way that they could not -- when I said the most difficult thing to reconcile, it took me three months to turn Stan McChrystal around to the idea of letting out somebody who had been killing or been part of an organisation that had been singly killing his good friends in the nature of the war against terror in Iraq.

Now, he got it eventually, you know, but it wasn't because he was dumb. Quite the opposite. He's an extraordinarily smart fellow at the end of the day, but he needed to be convinced. But they can be, and they really do welcome this indirect, alternative, you know, just a non-American view of the world and how it should be approached and addressed.

You know, you look right now. Mark Sedwill, for instance, in Afghanistan is a very good example. If we had half a brain, and we don't, unfortunately, I would immediately be saying Mark Sedwill should be earmarked immediately, assuming that we can get through Afghanistan and it worked, to being our ambassador in New York, just like that, in Washington. Just like that, because he will carry credits that no other will have, and those credits to an American are hugely important. Hugely important.

I think the final point on the SF is that what Iraq and Afghanistan have exposed is the nature of the threats that we face in this century, and that of understanding how to understand and then break and destroy networks. For example if you look at piracy off the east coast of Africa, then you do need some ships. But actually that's a relatively insignificant part of the problem. It's the banking in Doha, it's the lawyers in Switzerland and London, it's the organised crime, and you have to have the laws and the wherewithal to understand the network, and then you can literally take it apart over a year or two and piracy will cease.

But if you do not approach these problems in this network approach, and we are now seeing assemblages rather than just networks, so they are more complicated as they morph out, then the truth is in fact we just keep on chasing the problem with some hardware and singularly fail.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** Thank you. I suppose, as we're a lessons learned Inquiry, my last question, our last question, would be: are there any other further lessons you would like to offer us?

**LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:** Don't salami slice an SDR. If there was ever a time for bold and brave men and women to decide on the needs of the defence of this realm, for our people and our way of life, now is a good time to be called out. I fear we will end up

salami slicing because the institutions will defend their own, their quick programmes, their culture, and what they see to be the necessary future. [REDACTED] But that's my failure, I suppose, although I'm retired now, so it doesn't really matter.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** General, we are grateful. Thank you. I think I have to remind you that the transcript needs to be reviewed and can only be reviewed in this building. Sorry about that, but at your convenience.

**(The hearing adjourned)**