Thursday, 24 June 2010

(1.59 pm)

JONNY BAXTER, RICHARD JONES, KATHLEEN REID, ROB TINLINE and JOHN TUCKNOTT

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's make a start. Welcome to everyone.

We welcome to this session -- I'm talking for the record at this point -- Jonny Baxter, Richard Jones, Kathleen Reid, Rob Tinline and John Tucknott. We are looking forward to hearing your views on the 2007 to 2009 period, to add to what we heard on the 2004 to 2006 period from our FCO and DFID witnesses on Tuesday.

We are also going to be hearing from Mark Etherington, head of PRT South in 2006/2007, later in the proceedings as he has asked to be heard in public.

We are looking forward to hearing your perspectives as FCO and DFID representatives on the ground in Iraq. You were being to asked to deliver UK strategy in some extraordinarily challenging circumstances.

Now, the session today is being held in private because we recognise that, at the time you served in Iraq, some of you were not yet in senior Civil Service

grades, and that's our cut-off point. The advantage is that most of the evidence today, though heard in private, will not be sensitive within the categories set out in our Inquiry Protocol on Sensitive Information, which in essence points to international relation questions or secret intelligence or highly classified documents.

We are proceeding then on the basis that the transcript of this hearing should be capable of being published in full, but if we do get into sensitive matters, we apply the Protocol between the Inquiry and HMG regarding Documents and Other Written and Electronic Information in considering whether and how evidence given to classified documents and/or sensitive matters more widely can be drawn on and explained in public by us, either in our Inquiry report or, where appropriate, at an earlier stage.

Now, we recognise that every witness gives evidence based essentially on your recollection of events and we cross-check what we hear against the papers we have got access to.

I remind every witness on every occasion -- so don't take it personally -- that you will later be asked to sign a transcript of the evidence to the

effect that the evidence you have given is truthful, fair and accurate.

With that, let's get started.

I think it would help us very much -- we are who our nameplates say, and you are who your nameplates say, but I think it would be helpful if you could confirm, going around the table, which posts you held, where based and, broadly speaking, the period covered because it's all a bit different.

Can I start with John?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: John Tucknott. I was Deputy Head of Mission in Baghdad from November 2007 until July 2009.

JONNY BAXTER: Jonny Baxter. I arrived in Baghdad in August 2007 as the deputy head of the DFID office, and then took over the headship of it from October 2007 to May 2008.

RICHARD JONES: Richard Jones. I was Consul General in Basra from March 2007 until March 2008.

ROB TINLINE: Rob Tinline. I was Deputy Consul General in Basra from February 2007 to February 2008, and took on leadership of the PRT from April 2007 to February 2008.

THE CHAIRMAN: We wondered about the overlap or

underlap.

ROB TINLINE: There were six weeks when I was focused on other things not to do with the PRT.

KATHLEEN REID: Kathleen Reid. I was head of DFID in Basra from August 2007 until late September 2008.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Can we turn straight away to Sir Martin Gilbert, who would like to ask some questions about strategy objectives and what we were there for.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: First of all, I would like to ask along the line. My first question is really: what were you asked to deliver during your posting in Iraq, and how was this communicated to you?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I obviously arrived halfway through the business year. So we had a business plan which had already been agreed earlier in 2007. That plan itself covered all aspects of normal embassy business. Obviously, shortly after I arrived in November of 2007, we started work on the following year's plan.

We delivered it through a cross-Government organisation, working together. That included not only colleagues around the table across the three posts in Iraq, but also involved consultants, both from private

companies, but also consultants from, for example, the UK police forces. Basically we were asked to deliver what had been agreed on how the United Kingdom could best help Iraq as it moved forward in its democratic process on all fronts.

Of course, the emphasis changed as we moved through the period that I was there. When I first arrived there, the emphasis was very much on the military, the military side of things, but towards the end of that we were developing the new strategy, which I know you have seen, which looked at the wider range of issues: economic, political, visas, trade, British Council involvement, et cetera. So the emphasis did change, certainly in the 20 months that I was there.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How did you measure success?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Well, we set ourselves targets. We set ourselves challenging targets, I hope. We measured them against whether or not we actually achieved those. We set ourselves timelines we would like to help the Iraqis achieve various goals in the legislative programme -- for example, on hydrocarbons law, on provincial laws, including the provincial elections law -- and we measured ourselves against those targets.

We also measured ourselves against the impact that

the Embassy programmes -- I can only speak about the Embassy programmes. For example, with the police forensic service, the Iraqi police forensic service, where we had a large programme, how well the Iraqi police were able to take on and take on board the messages that our training programme was giving to them. That went across other ministries as well through the consultants that we used. How well they were being able to stand up and do their jobs without too much of our backroom help, our assistance.

My own view is that progress was overall fairly good. There were real capacity issues that we were faced with in Iraq ministries, and of course you were dealing with an ever changing cast of providers. I think you might want to go on to that further on.

JONNY BAXTER: Our top line really was to help Iraq unlock its own resources, to make use of its own resources and to effectively turn those into services for the Iraqi people. That involved helping the Iraqis have the sort of leadership capacity to achieve that. So at a sort of high level, that was what we were going in to do.

I think in terms of what my task was, what I was asked to do, there were quite a few other things like

ensure that DFID was seen to be and was actively being a good partner across Government. This issue of working well with other Government departments was very important and was absolutely stressed. Also, the issue of staff welfare and oversight of staff and staff security was particularly stressed.

The third area of any job like that is going to be some level of oversight of the programmes. That would be a norm for a DFID job overseas, but in this case in many ways was a slightly lower level issue, partly because of where we had people based. We had a lot of people based in either Basra or in the UK.

So, as I say, the sort of higher level ones were very much about ensuring that DFID was seen to be, and was indeed, playing its part as part of a cross-Government mission.

RICHARD JONES: My role as consul was rather more different, I think, from John's up in Baghdad in a sense that we weren't accredited to a sovereign state. We were a subordinate post, and therefore we didn't actually have a country business plan to work to.

What we did have on the table when I got there was the Better Basra plan, the revamped Better Basra plan

from early 2007, and that, taken together with Mr Blair's statement in the House in February, basically that was my marching orders, as it were.

My job really was to lead the UK's effort down there on the political side. The economic side obviously I took a very close interest in, but it was more the PRT and DFID colleagues who led on that, but we acted closely in tandem.

The key memory that I was given before I went was a blindingly obvious one, and that was to work very closely with the military, something which had been, frankly, a little problematic before, but something which we found, during the period I was there, much easier because we had co-located at Basra Air Station. So we didn't have that physical distance between us. I ended up attending the generals' meeting at 8 o'clock every morning. So we felt very sort of neighbourly.

I suppose the key objectives that we had flowing from the Better Basra document and the Prime Minister's February statement was to get the political atmosphere as propitious as possible, firstly for the repositioning of the military away from the city centre bases, which finished with the withdrawal from Basra Palace in September. I think the centrepiece really

for my time there was getting the political situation right for provincial Iraqi control of the security file, which we achieved in December.

Then again, rather like what John said, the emphasis shifted during my period from those sort of military objectives to an economic agenda. That finished off in my time with the launch of the Basra Development Commission in February 2008. So that in a sort of snapshot is what I had to do.

ROB TINLINE: As Deputy Consul General, I got very clear marching instructions that I had essentially six weeks to get us out of the palace and into the air station, and like Richard, we were to work very closely with the military. Measuring success on those was relatively straightforward.

As head of the PRT, I think it was a much less clear picture, not least because the PRT reported to the American Embassy in Baghdad formally, but obviously also to the British operation locally, the British operation in Baghdad and London. So it was a slightly -- well, it was a very complicated reporting chain.

On the political side, I would absolutely agree with Richard. It was: how do we get to provincial

Iraqi control?

On the PRT side, the PRT when I arrived was in Kuwait, four people to a cabin in the airport and could do very little. It was to get the PRT functioning properly again and to do as much as we could. I wouldn't say that it was hugely defined beyond that, but our focus was especially on building Iraqi institutions so that they could spend their own money. It was to get it as far as we could as quickly as we could, given the constraints on us.

I think the second six months, it did change. We were more firmly established at the airport. The level of threat to us decreased significantly. The horizon for getting out, I think, lengthened, and the Prime Minister gave us a very clear economic agenda in his statement to Parliament in October, which set the development forum and the development commission as certain big milestones.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I want to ask you about that in a moment.

Just one other point. Once you were at the airport, what were the problems in terms of actually communicating with the city?

ROB TINLINE: Well, actually it worked rather well.

Because we were next to the airport, which was Iraqi obviously, but close enough to our security and kind of enough within our security blanket that it was safe-ish for us, there was a neutral venue that meant they didn't have to come and see us and we didn't have to go and see them. So it was actually very good.

I would say from a PRT perspective -- Mark Etherington and people can comment on how it used to work at the palace. I was very happy with how it worked because I think that was a good venue where we could meet without us exposing ourselves to too much risk or them exposing themselves to risk.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: That's important.

KATHLEEN REID: Quite a lot of similarities actually to both Jonny and Rob, not surprisingly.

Yes, I arrived in the August, and before I went out, kind of instructions from DFID were around oversight of the programmes. A lot of the DFID programmes predated the establishment of the PRT, but fitted very nicely within the kind of main workstreams of the PRT and got rolled quite naturally into those. But we had a lot of consultants that were working directly on DFID project work that sat within the PRT. So that kind of traditional programme management

oversight, and again kind of pastoral care of them.

I was also given a strong steer that was to be supportive, but not providing a leadership role on the PRT. So working very closely with Rob and with colleagues. But also across to Chancery in terms of kind of development inputs and making sure that that part of the agenda wasn't lost, and, along with everyone else, playing nicely with the military, particularly on areas -- because parts of the military were going out, they were doing projects, they were spending money -- where there were opportunities to try and influence that in a way that didn't undermine what we were trying to do, trying to take that experience of DFID and PRT kind of experience to influence them.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Perhaps I can ask you, and then go back this way, on the follow up on that.

Did you feel that our strategy was concentrating on the more immediate PIC aspects, and also troop drawdown, affected perhaps our longer term interests in Iraq? Was there any contradiction there?

KATHLEEN REID: I think, to talk of kind of a single strategy, it changed a lot over the time we were there. Each successive visit from ministers, from Prime Ministers, in some ways gave us more clarity,

certainly in terms of timelines.

When I arrived, there was no real sense of was the PRT going to be there for another six months or another four years, and that became much clearer as time went on and allowed us to do, on the civilian side, our planning. Again, there was a kind of clarity, when we were moving to PIC, when there was going to be troop drawdown and what kind of level of troop drawdown there was going to be. That made it much easier for us to do our planning and ultimately to move towards an exit strategy.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was there a quantitative change when Gordon Brown came in with his October statement?

KATHLEEN REID: When he came in October 2007, to be honest, we were doing quite a few of those things, or struggling away at trying to do a lot of those economic things. Things like the Basra Investment Promotion Agency was something we would have been working on well before he came and visited. Likewise trying to establish the Basra Development Fund, some discussions around Iraq/Kuwait borders. But they were things that there just wasn't necessarily the environment to be able to do that or the impetus behind it, and I think he came and gave far more impetus to that. We put more

resources towards it, and then obviously, with the kind of changing security in the following months, it gave more opportunity to then really deliver some results on the ground.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Is that the general view?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: If I can add something, I think the focus when I arrived was more immediate, as you have suggested it might have been.

But obviously, once we got past the last review of the Security Council Resolution in December 2007, we realised that we had one year to start thinking about the longer term strategy. To my eyes, there was definitely a change in emphasis about what -- we had to start thinking about the longer term, and we started doing that in early 2008. That's how I see it.

JONNY BAXTER: I think maybe from the DFID perspective in Baghdad, that may be the place where we felt this tension most, because we were always clear from a developmental perspective that there had to be a long term, and that there were things that we could do in the short term, short-term expedient measures, that would actually create problems for the longer term, things like actually taking ownership ourselves, doing

things ourselves, which would ensure that there wasn't any longer term sustainability.

So I think that was a challenge for us at the beginning. But it did change, and I do think that the process around the Prime Minister's economic initiatives, the discussion around that, actually outed a lot of that and allowed us to put out a lot of the sort of background thinking, the framework behind the ways we operated and why we operated like that.

I also think that at the same time some parts of the American system had actually worked through that same thinking process themselves. I think USAID were always very clear of it, but people in the State Department, people in the military, had gone through similar processes with other provinces and had realised that, because they had insisted that X had to be delivered, they were then banging their head against a wall, making sure that X was delivered.

When it came to us looking at Basra, we were much more concerned to try and get the Iraqi system to identify what it was that they wanted to commit to deliver, and then it was more a case of helping them deliver on their own commitments. That became a more comfortable environment in that sense for us to operate

in.

But it didn't take away this issue, and it was an understandable tension between the need for some short-term returns versus some much longer term and much harder to measure returns as well.

ROB TINLINE: I would agree. We had that tension in spades. The military instinct being if something is broke, then get on with it and damn well fix it, not spend six months to try and persuade the Iraqis -- well, ask the Iraqis whether they think it's broken, whether they would like to fix it, how they would like to go about fixing it and how we might help. So trying to put those two approaches together was actually quite -- it was probably the biggest tension in my life.

I think we managed it. Obviously, as Jonny says, there are things that it's worth going in and fixing immediately, and there are things that you need to work through the Iraqi system to do. So I think we managed it, but it was the biggest tension, certainly that I had anyway.

THE CHAIRMAN: Could you slow down a little?

ROB TINLINE: Sorry.

THE CHAIRMAN: Imagine it's simultaneous translation.

MARGARET ALDRED: And imagine you are going to have to correct it.

ROB TINLINE: Sorry.

That was certainly the biggest tension while I was there. I think we managed it. I think we had two generals who were very aware of the tension and wanted to help us manage it, and that was really helpful. But it was the biggest tension.

The other -- the division I would make, which is sort of coincidental with Jonny's division of the Prime Minister's speech in October, is once we got to PIC and we could hand over control, at that point you could sort of take a deep breath and say: then what? Until we had got to that point and we had got out of the city, I think we were very focused on: okay, how do we get to that point?

Because of the security situation, as Kath said earlier, it was hard to know whether we would still be there in two weeks' time. If a rocket had taken out a significant number of my team, we would have gone, I'm pretty sure. Nobody ever quite said that, but I'm pretty sure we would have been out very quickly. So we never quite knew whether we were going to be there in

a month's time, and so planning for five years was a bit of a struggle. But that became easier in October time, as we got to PIC.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I want to follow on a bit on this question of relations with the military. We have heard, I think from Kathleen, all about the importance. Just a general impression after a period in which relations had, shall we say, been variable, how you found relations and what you were able to do to improve them over this period.

It's probably best to start with Basra, but if Baghdad wishes to come in on this, we would be interested to hear about it.

ROB TINLINE: I think we got pretty clear -- after the period that you mention, we got pretty clear instructions and the military were getting pretty clear instructions that London didn't want to have to sort out local squabbles, and part of our job was to make it work. I think we all approached it to try to make it work.

Co-locating was an enormous help. You went from having to do a sort of midnight helicopter ride across

town, that more often than not would be cancelled, just to talk to the military, to being able to be at the 8 o'clock, 8.30 meetings every morning, seeing people all the time.

So for me, it was not always an easy relationship, but we saw enough of each other, had enough of a relationship with each other, and there was enough goodwill on both sides to try and work it through.

That was particularly true in the senior handful, half a dozen military, who had clearly got that message very strongly from their headquarters and were working most closely with us. I'm not sure how much it transferred all through the military system, but in some ways that didn't matter. It was the guys at the top, and our relationship with them, I think, was very strong, for those reasons.

KATHLEEN REID: I'm largely in agreement with Rob. I think I arrived at a time that relations hadn't been so good. By the time I arrived we were all co-located. We were one corridor away from each other, and we would be talking several times every day. It wasn't just because there was a formal meeting and needing to go and sit down, and I think just actually being in that military environment for us made it much easier to

understand the culture, the working environment that they were under. I would say it kind of got steadily better across the time that we were there, actually.

THE CHAIRMAN: And that's not just personalities changing?

KATHLEEN REID: Personalities certainly a part of it, but I think we then had changes in personality on both sides, and that continued with changes on both the civilian and the military side.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What you are saying is just the experience of working together and seeing each other's problems, as well as the instructions from above, was actually what made the difference?

KATHLEEN REID: Yes, and I think we had a happy relationship, certainly with General Binns when he came in. But it meant that in his handover to his successor and to their staff, a lot of that kind of ethos and ways of working was actually passed on. So there was some institutionalising of the way that we worked.

ROB TINLINE: The other thing that I would add is that over the period, if you like, the military did far less military things. So our agendas converged quite a lot, which probably helped. It could have been a problem,

but it probably helped as well because we were beginning to think about the same things far more than I think we had done a year or so ago.

THE CHAIRMAN: Richard, do you have the same perspective?

RICHARD JONES: I was going to say exactly the same thing, actually.

Just in terms of process, as Rob and Kathleen said, we were in sort of constant communication with the military in a way that we hadn't been in the palace, and constantly discussing things. That meant that sometimes there would be initial disagreement, but through debate we would reach a sort of common understanding.

We also had, I think, a new device or relatively new device, which was a weekly report, which gradually became less weekly, which I was explicitly asked to clear with the GOC. That meant that there was no sort of dichotomy between the two lines of reporting. We also had the Southern Iraq Steering Group which met on a regular basis to talk about strategic issues.

I think the military probably had two frustrations. One Rob has already mentioned, which is: can't we do it now? Can't we just do it ourselves? The other was:

where is your plan, down to the last sort of Powerpoint slide? And we couldn't really deliver on either of those.

On the second one, that was because, obviously, we had to respond to events outside the base. I think, again, on both of those strands the military, through discussion, saw where we were coming from. For me, the fruition of that was a standing order that General Binns put in place in January 2008, which said -- I'm speaking from my faulty memory now -- basically it said, "Our role is here to support the civilian effort, it's not the other way round", and that was fantastic, I think, in, as Rob says, getting the message down to the lower levels.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about from the Baghdad perspective?

JONNY BAXTER: I think the circumstances in Baghdad were clearly different and the military players were different. The British military that I came into most contact with was the Senior British Military Representative in Iraq, so the deputy to General Petraeus essentially, and he would have two interests. He would have a British military interest, and Basra to some extent, but then he would have

an American military or an MNFI military interest into which Basra would fall, but into which a wider range of issues would fall.

I think the challenge for us there was that it was back to this issue of the military wanting to do things, having huge capacity, huge numbers of people, and being, certainly at the Baghdad end, engaged in an awful lot of areas. They had military officers in almost certainly every ministry. They had an energy fusion cell, for example, a group of military people talking about energy. All the names of all the sort of structures that were set up were all military, despite the fact that they were dealing with what we would see as more normal civilian activities.

So the context was a different context. I think the relationship was always a challenging one, but a challenging one, I think, in a constructive and a positive fashion. You know, we all went through one or two bruising events, but it was clear that we had shared objectives and we were trying to achieve similar ends. We had different ways of doing it.

I wouldn't underestimate this issue of having the routine meetings and being engaged in the discussions. To go back to General Rollo, the SBMR(I), he would have

fortnightly meeting with senior Brits. I would be there, John would be there, a number of other British civilians would be there, and he would have his brigadiers and above, and they were very good at bringing us into almost all the discussions. So that was the place where these things could be aired, and communication really was the only way of dealing with the differences.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I would agree totally with Jonny.

At the strategic level, we used to meet, the Ambassador, myself, with General Rollo, then John Cooper and Chris Brown, on a weekly basis to discuss the larger picture, the big questions. Those meetings gained more focus and more importance as we moved through 2008, as the thinking was developing about the military effort winding down, withdrawal, et cetera, et cetera, and how we were having -- the FCO, DFID, British Council elsewhere, UKBA, UKTA -- having to build up the civilian effort to maintain our presence, maintain our influence within the Iraqi system.

We were having to work -- we were working, I think, much better together, certainly at the end of my period, than we were at the beginning. That may well

be to do with, partly personalities, but it wasn't all that. There was a good interchange, there were good discussions, as Jonny said, with SBMR(I)s.

Also I and Christopher made it a point to emphasise to people working on energy issues, get next door to e.g. the Energy Fusion Cell, find out what MNF-I are doing. If we were working on interior ministry issues, get next door to the guys embedded in the military offices. Then we can understand not only what the Iraqis are thinking and how they want to take it forward, but actually, and more importantly I think, how the Americans are thinking and how they wanted to take it forward. That wasn't always clear in discussions at a higher level with Ryan Crocker and David Petraeus or Ray Odierno.

JONNY BAXTER: Can I just pick up on that last point?

The American system was so vast, and it had so many co-ordination issues, that actually, if you were to compare the two, if you want to look at how the British UK effort co-ordinated versus how the American effort co-ordinated, ours actually worked pretty well. Quite often the challenge was actually how to link into this very, very complicated American system, which didn't have obvious linking points.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is that because of their sheer scale? Or could they have configured it better and differently?

JONNY BAXTER: Well, I would be nervous to -- but a combination of both. Scale has to have been one of the issues. I think the way it developed was another issue. Many of these structures developed organically. You turned round and you noticed, my goodness, a group of people have suddenly formed a cell, it's become a routine meeting. How does it work?

By my stage there, they had a number of different ambassadors. They had Crocker at the senior level, and then they had an economic ambassador, and that was an attempt to bring together, from their perspective, the American effort, but then to bring in the rest of the civilian effort as well, and I think that process improved it.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I think that process improved it. The obvious docking points for us were the British military officers embedded within these various American-led operations within ministries or the cells.

I think I would add to what Jonny has said. I think that even the American civilian side, the American Embassy themselves, had difficulty in docking

themselves into the vast American military machine. There were frustrations voiced by very senior members of the American Embassy, about, "We don't know what the military are doing", or, "The military are doing this, we don't agree with this, but we don't seem to be able to get our message across. How do we get this across?" This escalated it.

ROB TINLINE: When we were writing Better Basra -- whatever number it was -- in February 2007, one of the great debates was: is it a British plan or is it a Coalition plan? And obviously with GOC MND South East saying, "Well, if it's going to be mine, it's going to have to be a multinational plan", the Consul General saying, "Well, hang on, we can't clear this through the State Department, it will take forever", what do you do? I think I'm right in saying 90, 95 per cent of the money that was spent in Basra was American money. So if we wrote a British plan with 5 per cent of the money, well ...

So how you wrote a plan was actually a ridiculously complicated thing, and we ended up, as you would expect, with us sort of compromise where we'd shown it to the Americans and they sort of said, "Yes, this is more or less right", but it was a British plan. It was

partly American co-ordination. We would never have got a multinational plan for the south through the American system.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just quickly on, I guess, a more Basra-related, as the troop drawdown for UK military approached and started to take place, how did this affect your relationship?

ROB TINLINE: With the military?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: With the military.

RICHARD JONES: It didn't have a huge effect on anything like our working relationship. As Rob said, we always had the thought that in 10, 14 days' time we might be leaving, and the security safety net that the military provided us was pretty central to our thinking about our future at that stage in the consulate.

But, you know, these were military decisions which we took note of, but, you know, it wasn't for us to pass comment or anything like that. But it was, as I say, important for our planning for our future. So we always slightly on tenterhooks when the senior military person would come from London and say, "The plan now is X, Y and Z". But more than that, I don't think it had much of an effect.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay. So presumably one of the basic tests for you of this relationship was getting access to things like transport, as well as security? Did you get what you needed there?

ROB TINLINE: I think by -- it might be slightly different in Baghdad. By the time we had got to where we were when I arrived -- by the time we had got out of Basra Palace, our requirement for military movement was actually very low. We weren't going to be going into town. There wasn't a need to move between bases. We were fundamentally focused on Basra, although we did do a little bit in Dhi Qar and Muthanna and Maysan, and most of that was done in the airport which we could go to by ourselves next door.

So I would say in terms of assets, that's probably a question that before our time was an extremely live one. But by the time we got to where we were, there was the occasional, well, how do we get a minister in and where does the minister rank in precedence to get an air asset. So occasional issues where there was a frustration, but I don't think it was about assets. It was far more about strategy and policy, what we were saying to the Basrawis, and what money we were given and how. It was far more a policy question than

a practical question, I think.

RICHARD JONES: I agree with that.

KATHLEEN REID: I think, just because of the timelines, and I was there for a few months after, so I was there kind of post Charge of the Knights, where the situation was getting to a point that we could get out and about much more. General White-Spunner at that point -- I sat in a meeting with him, and he made a commitment there and then that they were there to support. Whatever we needed in terms of assets, he would make that happen, and I have to say, always came good on that, as we were -- you know, from the very first trip out down to the Palace, which was the first time we'd moved off in a year by that point, down to kind of the following months, where we were needing less military assets and able to move more with our own -- whether it was helicopters, whether it was Mastiffs, whether it was actual physical military people to go with us, that was always made available during that period.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: From a Baghdad perspective, going down to Basra, the RAF was the obvious route for us. Likewise for you to come up to see us in Baghdad. But actually getting to other places, including to Erbil,

we were very much reliant on US assets because there was no other way of doing it.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Embassy got its own aeroplane eventually.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Yes.

ROB TINLINE: But for about a month, I think.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: No, it's still there.

ROB TINLINE: Is it?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: It eventually got its aircraft a month after I left.

JONNY BAXTER: In terms of the indicators of whether it was working, I think things you would look for in Baghdad was really whether all parts of the British system were saying the same sort of thing and making the same arguments, and you would find that out quite quickly because you would end up in a discussion with an American group or something, and find out that actually someone in the system had been saying something different or they had read something different. I think that was always the clearest indicator. Was the UK in any sense speaking with one voice and pursuing consistent agendas?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And the answer was ...?

JONNY BAXTER: And I think the answer was pretty much yes. There were clearly some people in that who wore a number of hats, and therefore they had to be quite clear under which of those hats they were speaking.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What difference did the PRTs' introduction make to cross-HMG working?

ROB TINLINE: The PRT was there six months before I arrived. So I would be cautious about commenting on what life was like before the PRT.

I think I would -- personally I'm reluctant to say that the PRT was the only way of delivering what we wanted to deliver. I think had you had a DFID programme and a military all co-located, even if they nominally had different chains of command, I think you could have done it differently.

But the fact that PRT worked was as much that it was American as well, I had an American deputy through my time there. That the PRT had every bit in it was actually very useful in terms of being able to put it together, but I wouldn't oversell the extent to which I was responsible for development in Basra. There were lots of other people who thought that they had a pretty

serious stake as well.

KATHLEEN REID: I mean, a few things kind of evolved, I guess, after Rob's time, including once we had a lot of US troops coming down after Charge of the Knights. You had a CMOC[1] -- I don't know if anyone can help me on the acronyms.

ROB TINLINE: Civil Military Operational Cell, I guess.

KATHLEEN REID: Which was essentially a kind of US version of our J9 coming in, spending service money, and a few things were set in train, including a Basra development group, which was chaired by the head of the PRT, but brought in a whole lot of work streams. So it brought in that kind of J9 aspect. It brought in people that were working on the airport and trying to kind of get that as good as we could before we got out. People that were working on Umm Qasr, a whole range of different things, and just bringing those players around the table. So it was a much broader thing than just the PRT.

ROB TINLINE: And even in my time, the PRT never controlled J9 in MND South East. It didn't control the US army corps of engineers which had a big budget. So

[1] Witness clarified after the session it was Civil Military Operations Centre.

there was a co-ordination thing, but it never quite got to the point where you had unified everything under a single person.

JONNY BAXTER: Just to comment on that from a Baghdad perspective, I think the other thing that a PRT could and should do, and in the case of Basra did do, is allow both a co-ordination at that end of it, at the Basra end of it, but also actually organise the linkages into the centre. For us that was one of the important things, actually supporting an Iraqi Governmental system, which meant that the centre, the Iraqi centre, was talking to the Iraqi province. I think without a PRT, that would have been much harder to have delivered, although there were lots of PRTs in other places where that didn't work.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about the stabilisation unit? What difference did that make?

ROB TINLINE: I would confess -- I think it was the post-conflict reconstruction unit from my time there, before it changed its name and may have changed its function as well. To be frank, they funded some slots, I think, in the PRT, but most of my interaction into the UK system in London was back to DFID and a little

bit to the Foreign Office.

JONNY BAXTER: It was very early days. I think they funded a few slots.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to wrap up this section, are there basic lessons that you might help us with here about what structures help or hinder cross-HMG coherence, co-ordination?

ROB TINLINE: For me, the two things I would say are location and personalities. Now, there was a potential cost in terms of co-location with the military that we lost our identity. I don't think that happened, but there is a risk there. But it was about location and personalities. So you got to a relationship that could work.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And that relates to FCO and DFID as well as --

ROB TINLINE: I think that relates across the board.

JONNY BAXTER: In Baghdad DFID relocated from one part of the embassy into the Chancery, so behind those heavy doors it's normally quite hard to get through, and that made a big difference.

But if I was to say one thing that would make

a significant difference, it would be trying to get some sort of IT system that allows all those three departments actually to talk to each other, because we never had it then and we don't really have it now. We still operate off three or four different systems. It's silly and small and difficult to fix, but it makes a big difference.

RICHARD JONES: The word I would use -- it echoes what Rob said -- is flexibility. In a situation like that, what you really do not need is a rigid framework, and we didn't have that. We did have the flexibility to -- not exactly make it up as we went along, but to respond to changing events and personalities.

KATHLEEN REID: Just one thing. I think you are right, relationships are absolutely key, but one thing that we did see with a number of people that came through on both the civilian and the military side, I'm not sure, certainly from DFID's perspective, that we got enough background. Most people hadn't worked with the military before. I had, but most of my other colleagues, certainly most of our consultants hadn't. Most of the military hadn't worked directly, certainly with DFID, anywhere else before, and whether more could be done pre-deployment to better understand each

other's ethos, where you are coming from, what you are trying to achieve, just the language that you use, how you are structured, and that was something that I did think was missing from what we got pre-deployment and for our consultants.

THE CHAIRMAN: We had a lot of evidence early on, particularly military evidence, that length of tour was a crucial factor in this. There was a typical military turnover at six months. All of you did plus or minus a year in this particular role. I don't suppose there's a magic number, is there, but is more duration than a six-month turnaround important, given the impact of personalities, or not? The counter argument is that the quicker you turn people over, the more times they return to the scene and the more experience they get.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I didn't find a great effect on the embassy's work with the UK military in Baghdad in this area. It may just be the personalities and the people that I knew, and the fact that I worked for many years closely with the military.

Where it did have an effect was actually with the Americans.

THE CHAIRMAN: Who did longer tours?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: The Americans did longer tours, and they didn't quite understand why Brigadier X was coming in for five and a half months and then would head up a cell, and then would be disappearing off to be replaced by another Brigadier. I think that caused -- people who were actually in those jobs, that caused them problems. There were strains between them and the relationship they were operating within.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think there was a tale of the four, or was it five, brigadiers within a year.

JONNY BAXTER: I think there's a tension in this. From the DFID perspective, I think we are used to spending longer in places and to get pretty engaged, building up those relationships, getting the knowledge.

I think though it would have been hard to recruit as many people as we did if we hadn't started off with the six months, and our experience tended to be you put down six months, people felt that was manageable. If you looked at it in terms of slots, that was three and a half tours, as it were, and then people extended. And that sort of worked. There would be a little bit of me that would say, "Absolutely, we would gain an awful lot by extending the tours there", but I would just be nervous about what we would lose, and I would

be nervous that we might miss some good people who would be prepared to initially sign up for six months and then actually would be happy to do a year.

THE CHAIRMAN: Because essentially this is a voluntary business?

JONNY BAXTER: Absolutely.

THE CHAIRMAN: Richard?

RICHARD JONES: Very much the same remark as Jonny. Our experience, I think, Rob and mine, running the consulate, was that everyone was on the same deal, coming for six months, and pretty much everyone, I think, extended. There were one or two exceptions.

ROB TINLINE: I think I'm right in saying that nobody didn't extend who didn't have a reason why they had to leave.

RICHARD JONES: And I think certainly for, if you like, the top of the organisation, that made sense. I mean, because so much of our work was to do with relationships, with Basrawi officials and politicians, and I think we had a sense that there was an agenda which we wanted to see through. And it frankly helped in our dealings with the military, because we had

a little bit of sort of local knowledge that we would contribute to them in the debate. I think a year was about right for those times.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm trying to imagine myself, which I can't -- I did visit Iraq -- in the kind of circumstances in which people were living, as well as working.

ROB TINLINE: You could have -- I mean, the military might turn it round and say six and two -- six weeks on, two weeks off -- is very disruptive, and actually it's much better to be there for six months and then go, rather than to not be there half the time. There is a tension between the two. The longer you give people, the more breathers you need. I'm relatively comfortable with where we ended up. I think it was a reasonable place to end up.

My big issue, I think, is about institutional memory. I know you have tried to go through our records. I'm sure you have the same view.

[redacted][2], our political adviser, had been there from the start, knew it all backwards, and could give us that. But when it looked like he might go, we were really thinking, "God, we will lose a lot of our

[2] Name of junior official redacted

contacts, we will lose a lot of our memory". I think if you are going to have a year-long system, somehow you've got to do better at doing institutional memory, and it's hard to justify staff in a war zone who are there to do the filing, and everybody is in a war zone. So we don't do that stuff.

But how you get the institutional memory right, I think if you asked people from Basra, people we talked to, I think they would probably say, yes, there was a bit of going round the same circles a couple of times as people changed.

KATHLEEN REID: We had a number of consultants that had been there for rather longer than the 12 months. I mean, I don't think there is a magic number, whether you are a civil servant, a consultant or a military. It depends on individuals, how they respond to that.

But actually, for us, having some of those longer term consultants actually did, certainly for Rob and I, gave us some of that institutional memory. They became rather exasperated as you're going through your fifth military rotation of just saying, "We've been here before, we're having the same conversations". You get to five months and suddenly they get it, and then they're moving off and you get the next ones coming in

again.

So for us, it's a difficult tension again, because we had the same duty of care for consultants as we did for the Civil Service staff. But we did allow them to do longer, subject to checks on psychological assessments and so on.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we want to come back to that later on. It's an interesting topic.

KATHLEEN REID: But they did provide some of that institutional memory.

ROB TINLINE: I absolutely concur.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: From an Embassy perspective, I was one of those -- I did agitate to extend the tours. I thought that six plus six was too short because of the problems, and I think -- I like to think -- that the fact that Christopher Prentice and I were there together for such a long period of time and through that important transition, that that helped ease that transition through.

But having done 20 months, when I left I have revised my opinion. I think six plus six and perhaps a little bit longer, but six plus six plus six plus a bit more is quite a long time, and I think people who

do do a long time don't realise how frazzled they are.

THE CHAIRMAN: Until you stop.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Until you stop.

JONNY BAXTER: Are we coming on to this later, were you saying?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, we are.

ROB TINLINE: I think there's also a sensitivity to what the situation is like. The situation had changed. There was a sensitivity to -- I don't think we adapted our terms and conditions very much to the changing security situation, and I think maybe we could have been a bit more sensitive to that.

THE CHAIRMAN: We will come back to that.

I would like to ask some questions we have already started on already a bit, which is the international dimension, essentially the US one, but not entirely.

I have a prepared question here: how is UK strategy for Iraq co-ordinated with that of the US? You've already answered it, I think, by describing the Better Basra plan.

Did you have a sense that at the strategic level between national governments, there was a real

co-ordination function operating in terms of broad strategy towards Iraq and within Iraq, our bit, if you like? Is that an unanswerable question?

ROB TINLINE: From Basra?

THE CHAIRMAN: Mm-hm.

ROB TINLINE: I didn't see much of what was going on. I didn't feel that we were a million miles away from the Americans normally, but I wasn't conscious of such --

THE CHAIRMAN: I want to focus this right back down into the PRT in a minute, but just try and get a sense of the broad strategic unity of effort or direction.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Certainly the local evidence -- Christopher Prentice or I would see Ryan Crocker and the senior American team. We would see General Petraeus and the senior military team.

THE CHAIRMAN: And they were a more unified team than the US had had hitherto.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Indeed, and I think that was very important in the period that I was there.

All indications I had was there was a considerable amount of to-ing and fro-ing between London and

Washington during my period and there were consultations going on. There were slightly sticky periods when, for example, they were -- in the early days of discussing with the Iraqis the LTSA, the Long Term Security Agreement, when we felt -- because we had our own issue to deal with, we had our own bilateral agreement to move on to, and we felt we weren't being given the visibility of their ideas as they were developing.

But that was smoothed out fairly quickly, actually in Baghdad, basically with visiting senior State Department personnel like David Southfield and Bob Loftis. But those were smoothed out in the end. There was a considerable amount of high level talking going on.

JONNY BAXTER: And it slightly depends how you define strategy being developed. There were, I think, quite broad strategies developed at a UK and an international level outside of the country. But certainly from the American side, you got a sense that a lot of the tweaking of that strategy happened in Baghdad because of that very close Crocker/Petraeus axis.

Then, as John said, we were then very often involved in those sorts of discussions at all sorts of

levels, and so were engaged in how that strategy would be tweaked and how our joint efforts would work together. You could then see that as becoming quite tactical in a sense to use military terms.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to know what others think. Think, for example, of Gordon Brown's first Parliamentary statement, which was designed to be a comprehensive restatement of strategy and his focus on priorities; how far that melded and chimed on the ground in Baghdad, or indeed in Basra, and how it really felt there.

JONNY BAXTER: I was there. Well, I suppose the other bit of context I would like to put in is there's never that bit of quiet space that allows people to sit down and say, "This is the strategy". I remember a part of that Prime Ministerial visit, and really it was rush from one bit to another. General Petraeus had a discussion with him, and then was hearing some of the things he was saying as he was giving the press conference. There was a lot of people trying to fit the pieces together, and I don't think you should underestimate that as a reality of the life in Baghdad. I'm sure it's a reality of the life of a Prime Minister anyway, but I do get the impression that at the level

of the planning and risk and things that went into all these sorts of processes, everything happened very quickly. There wasn't any time for quiet chats in corners. Things got moved on.

So it would be hard to see that there was a sort of joined up discussion that then produced an outcome that then could be announced. But there were clearly good discussions at the Christopher level.

THE CHAIRMAN: I've got a question forming, but before I do I would like to know what you others think.

RICHARD JONES: I think from where we were sitting in Basra, just going back to your earlier question about the transatlantic relationship, it didn't look like a sort of fantastically bureaucratic set up. It was much more fluid than that, but it seemed to work. Issues would emerge and they would be thrashed out, and we would see through the records the fruit of the discussion between London and Washington as it affected us. And, as John says, similarly the senior level discussions in Baghdad as well.

As far as we were concerned locally, I think there were probably two main channels of communication. One was on the military net, with the Americans wanting to know what we were up to, and obviously the three GOCs

that I worked with had a crucial role in sort of explaining to their military superiors in the American system what was going on and convincing them that their strategy was right, and I think that worked pretty really. Re-reading some of the documentation, the number of times I have seen "Petraeus would trust the GOC's judgment on this point" is quite telling.

The other relationship that we had was with the US regional embassy office in Basra.

THE CHAIRMAN: That was quite substantial, I think I've recently heard. It wasn't just one man and a dog.

RICHARD JONES: Well, it was two men and lots of security.

ROB TINLINE: There were a lot of men.

RICHARD JONES: They were mostly Peruvians.

ROB TINLINE: And quite a few dogs as well.

KATHLEEN REID: It did all grow over time. So in the latter part particularly, as we were moving towards transition, it did increase quite substantially.

THE CHAIRMAN: But whatever its scale, it was nevertheless a channel through which you communicated?

RICHARD JONES: Yes, and they, rather like us, I think,

suffered from the physical constraints. They did their best to find out what was going on, but I think they were perhaps not as well informed as they would have wanted to be.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm remembering a good phrase we had from one of our military witnesses, which was there was a difference between situational awareness and situational understanding. I thought that was quite telling. Unless you are out on the street, on the pavement, circulating, it's very hard to get a feel.

RICHARD JONES: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Anything you want to add on this strategic envelope? Okay.

Well, one thing interests me, which is the up/down cycle and the timing, as well as the influence. Did you find in your dealings up and down the chain, if you like, Basra to Baghdad to London, that messages could go up and come back down, with any directional help or whatever, fast enough? In other words, is there a really sort of timely and reactive part of the machine in London which is capable of hearing something, assessing it and giving something back on it, or not?

JONNY BAXTER: I think in my experience there was, but I know that I had a boss who worked seven days a week like we did. That was part of the reality of it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

JONNY BAXTER: Yes, I think DFID had developed quite a well oiled machine in London to manage the whole sort of process side of things, the whole responding to queries or passing down queries.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's part of normal life for DFID, isn't it, with the great body of your staff out in the field?

JONNY BAXTER: Well, in the instance of Iraq it was reversed. We had the great body of our staff in London and small numbers of people in country, and interestingly, it's reversed now in Afghanistan for other reasons.

The other normal part of DFID life is that you have the devolution of authority to the country, which we didn't have in this context. So we did have to go back for more instruction than we would normally have done, which quite often created the space.

THE CHAIRMAN: For Basra, for the consulate general, does it happy to have our embassy in Baghdad by the

time we are talking about?

RICHARD JONES: Absolutely. It was a crucial relationship for us. As Jonny said, so much of what we wanted to do in Basra, both politically and economically, was dependent on Baghdad. There was an sensation that Basra was sort of too important for the Baghdad politicians to ignore, but not quite important enough for them to grip it. So what the guys did up in Baghdad to try to chivvy the Iraqi machine on was absolutely vital.

I think in terms of our communication between the two posts, I think it was extremely good. We had the latitude from the ambassador and the team up in Baghdad to report directly to London, consulting as necessary, but we never felt that we were waiting for Baghdad's approval or anything like that.

THE CHAIRMAN: London is having to do its own cross-departmental co-ordination, isn't it, in order to respond sometimes to purely vertical questions or needs that you've got?

JONNY BAXTER: And in some ways that was one of the most interesting things to watch. You were doing your own cross-departmental thing in country. Then you

would pass it up through your separate channels, and you knew that the same thing was happening in London. You would always have your own backchannels to hear how it was happening. At one level it seems sort of bizarre. I hadn't worked in London for quite a long time at that stage, so didn't really have a sense of how those systems worked. And I do think, sort of going back to this idea of what type of previous experience would be useful to go into this job, actually having an understanding of the Whitehall pressures.

You can learn the Whitehall system. That's fine. But you can never understand the Whitehall pressures until you have seen them and understand how they drive, and then why you sometimes get those things that seem absolutely bizarre and come out of nowhere. But you do the same back to them, because you have had a weird meeting on a Sunday when they are all having their weekend.

But it's this sense of trying to understand the dynamic and where these things come from, and having the flexibility to then manage that and work with that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

ROB TINLINE: From a PRT perspective, the American

Embassy were wonderfully easy bosses to have.

THE CHAIRMAN: Really?

ROB TINLINE: Yes. It may have been that all their angst was directed at the regional embassy office, but from a PRT perspective, they were really good. They gave us lots of resources and things and never really asked for much back, partly, I think, because the British Embassy and DFID office in Baghdad was doing such a good job of being the Baghdad office for the PRT in Basra, that they sort of felt like it was being covered. Now, there were wobbles on that process, but I think actually, from a PRT perspective, the British Embassy in Baghdad was absolutely doing everything we wanted and it allowed us -- I'm sure the Baghdad PRT got pretty good leverage out of the American Embassy, but we wouldn't have got that from the Americans.

THE CHAIRMAN: In your time you had a US deputy?

ROB TINLINE: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: How significant was that? Very? Somewhat? I suppose I'm asking: did the US machine see the Basra PRT as one of its things? It happened to be a Brit in charge.

ROB TINLINE: I think they would have seen it as semi-detached. I think they would have seen it as something -- if you like, if you've got a worry about X number of things, that is X plus 1 that you can allow the British Embassy to worry about. So I think they obviously had an interest. Whenever I went up to Baghdad, I always tried to see people, but I think they in this period were clearly prioritising Anbar and Baghdad, and that's where their energy was. They thought we were sort of covered.

THE CHAIRMAN: Kathleen, does that accord with your own perspective on it from the DFID angle in Basra?

KATHLEEN REID: Yes, I would say --

THE CHAIRMAN: That the PRT wasn't a problem really; it worked well, lots of American money?

KATHLEEN REID: Certainly in terms of daily emails, telephone calls that Rob or I got, there was a lot more that was coming from our respective departments in London than there ever was from the US.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's sounds almost paradisical. You're free to get on and do what you want.

ROB TINLINE: I don't know whether we'll come on to the

delivery challenges. There were plenty of people elsewhere in the system telling us what to do. But also I would say from my perspective, going back into the London system, again DFID was the key support for the PRT. DFID London really owned it and drove it in London in a way that my understanding of the formal structures is that it wasn't theirs. Very helpful.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. One thing to ask generally about the PRT in Basra, and that's PIC, before and after. Does it make much difference? It ought to.

ROB TINLINE: Well, as I told people repeatedly, we had our PIC in July 2004. That was the point at which everything we were responsible for was handed from Coalition control to Iraqi control.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

ROB TINLINE: We had been in overwatch for three years. For me, that was quite -- I mean, we can come on to it, but the expectation -- aligning expectation with potential achievement was my biggest task, and for all the time before PIC I was very clear that we had had our PIC three years ago, and we were working through the Iraqis, and therefore the expectations had to be knocked down.

THE CHAIRMAN: And did the Americans have that same feeling, sense?

ROB TINLINE: No, but as I say, I got surprisingly little pushback.

JONNY BAXTER: But they did get worried in the run up to --

ROB TINLINE: They did, around September, yes.

JONNY BAXTER: -- formal PIC. And this point about sort of where the Americans' laser visions come into it, it may have been on Anbar for a period of time. It may have been on Baghdad for a period of time. There was a period of time it came on to Basra. And in a sense there's a structural problem with that because they ought to have been looking across the piece all the time if they were going to do that in any co-ordinated fashion. Just picking a province -- sorry, selecting a province -- and focusing on it in a sense underlines some of the problems of the generic approach, which was not recognising that there was a system here and all different parts of the system needed to work for any one of it to work.

ROB TINLINE: But even when the laser came on, I didn't get that much pressure through the PRT system. If you

look at most of the things they were talking about, it was Umm Qasr, it was electricity, it was oil. It was things which are national issues, run out of Baghdad, that actually nobody in Basra, and certainly nobody on the Coalition side in Basra, was going to have much influence on, and being quite clear on that was one of my biggest jobs.

THE CHAIRMAN: Kathleen, you stayed until October 2008. So you saw quite a lot of the post PIC era. What is your experience after that? Does it shift in terms of US attitudes, in terms of free flow of policy making and resourcing?

KATHLEEN REID: Not related to PIC. PIC kind of came, it went, it was peaceful. The PRT likely went about business as usual. The big change was really around the Charge of the Knights, and that was the point where there then was a huge change, both in terms of US interest --

THE CHAIRMAN: A lot more Americans around.

KATHLEEN REID: Yes. But that was the point where it changed. PIC itself for the PRT didn't have --

ROB TINLINE: I wasn't there for Charge of the Knights, but looking at it from the outside, my sense was that

what Charge of the Knights changed was what you could legitimately expect to achieve, and so let's do more.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

ROB TINLINE: And that -- so that it wasn't PIC. It was the capability to achieve things had changed drastically.

RICHARD JONES: There was one respect in which PIC, I think, was relevant, and that was that there had been a debate in advance of PIC as to how we could be sure that the whole situation in Basra remained stable. The economy was identified as the crucial thing, and we had many hours of amusement discussing that in Basra with our military colleagues, the degree to which we could help.

So in a way the agenda that the Prime Minister set in October was the sort of flanking measure, if you like, for PIC. It was no coincidence that -- well, it seems to me, with the benefit of hindsight, there was no coincidence that the third Basra development forum took place about four days before the PIC ceremony. So in that sense of coincidence there was a relationship, but as Rob says, we had PIC-ed economically years before.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we are almost due a bit of a break, but before I do can I ask about two other international dimensions? One is NGOs and the other is institutions like the World Bank. Do these have any relevance or changing relevance in Basra?

ROB TINLINE: Baghdad is different. Basra -- they just weren't there. They couldn't be there. So there were some local organisations that we could work with, but just as I was leaving -- so it was sort of October 2007 -- we were beginning to entice the UN and some other organisations back in.

THE CHAIRMAN: With the security situation?

KATHLEEN REID: Yes, and that increased over the coming months. We did as much as we could in terms of political messaging, but also practically making it easy for them. We will give you somewhere to live, we will give you office space, anything we could do. So we did get UNAMI and we did UNDP as two of the agencies back in, and that's gone from strength to strength in the recent months.

THE CHAIRMAN: What about Baghdad?

JONNY BAXTER: The international bodies were essential -- this was a major part of our strategy, to

get the international bodies to do the kind of tasks that they would do anywhere else in the world.

THE CHAIRMAN: And they have forgotten about the awfulness of the invasion and the horrible death of Sergio De Mello?

JONNY BAXTER: No, they definitely haven't, and for very understandable reasons, both at an institutional and at a personal level.

THE CHAIRMAN: I was quoting, by the way, about UN attitudes.

JONNY BAXTER: From our perspective, it was essential that we had as good and a strong UN, and that was more likely to happen when Staffan de Mistura came in as a very strong SRSG.

The World Bank, I think, was a bigger problem for us or a bigger worry for us. There were a lot of political reasons for why World Bank, I think, found it difficult, and again, one can understand that. One can understand the context of it, but it created problems, and DFID spent quite a lot of time trying to get the World Bank properly engaged in Iraq. We gave the World Bank people pod space, living space in our embassy, and that was under the DFID headcount. We

were trying to encourage them to have, for example, an infrastructure person there, but it was very difficult to get that sort of engagement.

THE CHAIRMAN: And for essentially political reasons in the full sense of "political"?

JONNY BAXTER: Yes, the full sense of political. There were institutional reasons as well. They find it difficult to attract the right people and to get incentives right as well. In their system the incentives weren't there. It wouldn't have been seen as a good job to have done at that time.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I would agree with Jonny. I think obviously it was very important. Certainly we tried to -- we encouraged and we supported and we helped the UN to -- "re-establish" is the wrong word, but to move on from the tragedy of Sergio De Mello. Stefan de Mistura came in and gripped the UN operationally in Iraq and basically turned it round, you know, enthused staff, inspired them, and we saw real uptake in UN understanding of the situation and what they were able and what they were capable of doing.

As to the World Bank, when Jonny left, and by the time I left we were still struggling with the same

issues. In fact, I would say the World Bank were more absent than they were in Jonny's day, I'm afraid.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have talked to them a bit. Not here. I'm just wondering how far it's sort of institutional within the World Bank as an organisation, and how far it was political, given the governing body of the bank and the debt issues and all the rest of it.

JONNY BAXTER: My understanding is, having talked to individuals, it was a combination of the two. The people, for example, who we had there as World Bank representatives, World Bank people, were not core World Bank staff. They had been brought in on contract to do this job. There were not people in the bank system, employees, who would do this.

THE CHAIRMAN: Which meant their lines of communication back into the World Bank headquarters would be weak.

JONNY BAXTER: In part. They were very strong --

JOHN TUCKNOTT: And they were doing other jobs.

JONNY BAXTER: Yes.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Iraq was not the only role that they had. Certainly later on some of the people I knew, after Jonny's time, were actually doing other jobs in

the region as consultants. So they were probably spending less time in Iraq than they were during Jonny's time.

JONNY BAXTER: But I think this issue of what was happening at the World Bank board has to be taken into account as well. Other people would be able to give better, more direct information on that, but I know that our directors went forward and made this argument on a number of occasions, and we didn't get very far.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think it's useful for us to know that there was an awareness of that in theatre, in Baghdad.

JONNY BAXTER: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we might break for five minutes and have a cup of tea. Thank you.

(3.18 pm)

(A short break)

(3.26 pm)

THE CHAIRMAN: Rod, I think you want to start us off on delivery.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes, delivery challenges. Let's start with security, which is a minor issue, I think, and divide this into Basra and Baghdad, so we don't

have to go right across all of you saying the same thing, but do add.

So let's start with Basra. Kathleen, I think you said that you got out for the first time in a year. Did I hear you right?

KATHLEEN REID: Yes. Rob can tell you when.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Would one of you like to describe the situation in Basra?

ROB TINLINE: I will describe my best understanding of when things stopped, and Kathleen can describe her best understanding of when things restarted.

I arrived in February 2007. At that point, we still had a small number of police trainers based in the three non-Basra Palace bases in town. So they were having reasonably regular interaction with the Iraqi police.

The last time the PRT went into town, I think I'm right in saying, was about August/September 2006. You would have to check with people who were there at the time, but it was around that sort of area.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The PRT was based where?

ROB TINLINE: The PRT was established, as I understand it, in about May 2006. It was based at Basra Palace,

with the consulate, with some military, some other military in the Shatt Al Arab Hotel, Old State Building and PJCC.

Until, I think, the start of 2006, people were going out quite a lot into town. But this, as I say, was before my time, so it comes with caveats. I think that became -- throughout 2006 we gradually lost our local staff, as some of them were targeted. So that reduced our awareness. We then had a couple of incidents which meant we were going out less. So by the time it got to the real spike in mortar fire on the palace in the autumn, we were going out very little.

When that mortar fire spiked, we pulled the PRT back to Kuwait and then to the airport. Again, all before my time. And then I think the consul was probably still going out very, very occasionally in that autumn. But by the end of the year we had certainly ceased everything.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: End of year ...?

ROB TINLINE: 2006. So before I arrived we had ceased movements in town, apart from to go and get the policemen from the PJCC, Old State Building, Shatt Al Arab Hotel, and swap them around. They left in probably February/March 2007. We then did everything

at the -- we were still doing some meetings at Basra Palace until we left there in April or March 2007, and then we did everything at the airport throughout the remainder of 2007 until Charge of the Knights.

KATHLEEN REID: I don't know the exact date. Some time early April, post Charge of the Knights, Safr Al Safi had come down at Maliki's request, had remained behind, was in Basra. We, with the successor to Richard, Nigel Haywood as Consul General, were trying very hard to get a meeting with Al Safi. He came back and said, "I'll meet you, but you have to come to me, I'm not coming to you". That basically forced a decision. Our default had been, we don't go if we don't leave the COB. But it forced a decision. It was something that was so important, that there was so much pressure coming from Baghdad and from London, that we need to go and have this discussion with him. And at that point that went, I believe -- authority for me to go went back to my Permanent Secretary to get the okay, because it was turning around something that had been in place for so long and there was so much nervousness about it.

THE CHAIRMAN: How did you actually travel? In a Warrior?

KATHLEEN REID: No, it was a helicopter night-time move from the COB into the palace. There were military around there. They moved us around the palace in military vehicles. We had a meeting with him and we flew back. I was down there for maybe an hour.

What that did was started a discussion which was the default can't necessarily remain, and at the same time, you know, we were seeing and we were hearing lots of anecdotal evidence that security was holding. There was growing pressure as to this is a window of opportunity. Why aren't we out there? Where aren't we actually getting out and engaging better? We then through a process, I guess over the next three or four months, until I left, and certainly the people that came in after me, about trying to move to normalising that.

So by the time I left in October, decisions on moves to the palace could be made by the head of DFID Baghdad. They didn't have to go back through a lengthy chain in London. Decisions on some other road moves would still go through my boss back in London, but gradually that got moved more and more to theatre, became much more like the Baghdad experience of Red Zone moves. Certain moves were seen as more risky, but

you would put in a business case for why they needed to be done.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Richard, you left before Charge of the Knights, just before, so you were very much in the lockdown mode throughout your time there?

RICHARD JONES: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, in that situation, where you can't get out, apart from what it does to your sanity, what does it do to your ability to do the job? Where is the proportionality between staying alive and getting the job done? Can you express that in percentage terms? We are talking about delivery challenges. How much --

ROB TINLINE: Hard to do the job if you're dead.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: You can't do your job if you are dead. You are greatly constrained, obviously, in that situation. Could you do enough of a job that you, between you, broadly speaking, felt it was worthwhile being there, or was it a bit ridiculous?

RICHARD JONES: I would say it varied over the period. When we went through a very bad patch in, I would say, about June 2007, when there was a lot of incoming at

the airbase, there was a lot of tension down town with inter-sectarian violence, I think in that period we found it very difficult to get Basrawis, certainly to see me, and I think I'm right in saying -- well, I don't know whether I'm the only representative of Her Majesty who was held at QBP but absolutely no local attendance. No Iraqi would come to it. So that was --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Some of us wish we could do that.

RICHARD JONES: That was the idea. I think, for me on the political side, that was very much the exception. Personally I was very doubtful when I went there that the arrangement whereby Basrawis would come to call on me at the air station would work, and I was very, very surprised very quickly that it did, and actually they rather preferred to come to somewhere that was safe than to go to the palace, which was at that stage still being attacked very heavily.

Certainly by the time we had withdrawn from Basra Palace, by the time the military had withdrawn from Basra Palace in early September, we had absolutely no difficulty in enticing politicians to call on us. I think we could actually do our job, admittedly in a very unusual way, using mobile phones, using our previously locally engaged political adviser to go down

town and work for us on our behalf, but we could deliver the goods, I think, on the political front.

I think on the development and economic side, it was probably even better. But Rob ...

ROB TINLINE: Yes. I mean --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I should tell you that the line we have had from the sort of top end of the scale is that for delivery of development, innovative methods were used, so that we could do it by remote control and this was, by and large, successful.

Now, is that true, or did it feel differently when you're out there doing it?

ROB TINLINE: I think, given the circumstances -- I would say, given the circumstances, I think we did quite well. We found a place where we could meet them in the airport which was -- we saw a lot of them there. We took them away to Dubai and places for conferences quite a lot, so we could spend a bit more time with them and get to know them.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: "Them" meaning people you were trying to manage to implement projects?

ROB TINLINE: "Them" being more the provincial council and the technicians who were working to the provincial

council, the people in local government who we were trying to help run Basra better.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Is that capacity building?

ROB TINLINE: Yes, part capacity building, part funding. It was a range of things. Most of our effort was focused on building up Iraqi institutions. Initially, the provincial council and their sort of budgetary institutions; after the Prime Minister's speech, it focused increasingly on the economic institutions to promote development. But it was building up those institutions, talking to the people running them about how they needed to do it, how they could do it better, et cetera.

So we could see them quite a lot at the airport. We took them away quite regularly so we could really build some relationships with them. We had some local fixers in town who could work with them a bit and get stuff done in town, mostly, I think, paid for by the Americans, and we talked to them a lot on the phone and email.

Now, is that a perfect way of doing capacity building? Far from it. It would be enormously more impactful to do it how we do it everywhere else in the world, and to be sat in their offices all day every

day, seeing what goes on, really embedded.

Could we have an impact? Yes. So I would say -- and a lot of this comes down to using consultants who were far more ready to work in these sorts of ways, I would say, than --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Iraqi or --

ROB TINLINE: International consultants who were used to being a lot more flexible in how they work.

So was it as good as it could have been without the security constraints? No, far from it. Absolutely. Was it having an impact? Yes. Was that impact enough to justify the expense and risk of having us there? That's a pretty close run thing for me. In all honesty, from the time that -- throughout my time there, I felt we were very close to the line on, was the impact we were having justifying the expense and the risk that we were taking.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just leaving the risk out, the expense was huge.

Let's now switch focus to Baghdad and the Green Zone from the COB and Basra Palace. How was it for you?

JONNY BAXTER: Well, I got outside of the Green Zone

probably three times in my time there, out into the Red Zone, easier going down to Basra, and then one other visit outside of Baghdad into Anbar.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's three times in a bit under a year?

JONNY BAXTER: Yes. I think the better marker is probably the consultants we worked with. Again, I fully take the line that Rob has taken, but the constraints that our consultants were under, they would go, for example, into the Council of Representatives, into the Parliament, and they would be working with the Economic Affairs Committee. They couldn't have routine meetings. They couldn't set those meetings up particularly in advance. They couldn't stay there for longer than an hour or an hour and a half. Their transport bookings had to fit into a very complicated matrix of transport bookings and security patrols.

So we were trying to provide quite complicated and quite intensive capacity building under very, very constrained circumstances. But, as Rob has said, it was by no means perfect, but in those circumstances we were doing quite well.

I think the real thing though is that it did make you constantly make that calculation: is this worth it?

For every move that involved security you had to say: how important was this? Was it worth risking the lives of those people and the team that went out with them? So you actually did think through for many more activities than you ever did in any other context, what is the return on this?

You also did that for how many people you had in country, and that was most noticeable in about a week's period in March 2008, when there were 100 and something rockets landed in the international zone, three of which landed in the embassy. We went to a dress state -- dress states were how much body armour you have to have -- which meant that walking between your pod and the canteen, you had to wear your body armour and a helmet. And we -- John and myself and a few others -- sat down and said, "We actually need to work out a protocol for this. How many people is it worth having here under those sorts of circumstances?"

So this point about trying to make the calculation as to safety wise and expense wise, is it worth it, you are doing that much more explicitly in this context than anywhere else.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did you feel that these constraints were understood in London?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Yes, I think they did understand them. Certainly Iraq group understand them --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: People weren't complaining that you couldn't achieve more?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Absolutely not. That never came about. Jonny is right. DFID had a different security regime because you had to refer movements up through to your command the number of people in country --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So DFID's rule, but --

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Slightly different, Jonny.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was there a good reason for this difference? You're both British civil servants overseas.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: That's how I understood it.

JONNY BAXTER: I'm not certain it was different. The area where there was a particular level of concern was over the MOI, the Ministry of the Interior.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did you have the same rules in Basra?

RICHARD JONES: The question didn't really arise.

JONNY BAXTER: I think we need to be careful, because

I don't think we did have different rules. The formal line of approval within the DFID system was to me, to John, and then to the security manager, and we worked within that.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: We worked within that. It was a different thing. There were certain areas which I could allow FCO personnel or FCO consultants to go to which DFID were not happy about going to, if I can put it that way, MOI being the particular case in question.

JONNY BAXTER: And we had had a specific threat on a specific DFID consultancy group related to that.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Not just that DFID are actually more useful and valuable than FCO, and you don't want to lose as many of them because they know something; no?

JONNY BAXTER: John can comment on that.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I don't think -- I mean, it's part of the thing Jonny said. Obviously, as PSO, I took the security of the staff as paramount in my mind as it was in Christopher Prentice's. There were times when locally we and colleagues felt frustrated that we weren't able to do things because of the security situation, and we were being advised by our local security manager that actually, no, I don't want you to

do this, can you think that again, can you think this through again, can we not do it that day, can you do it another day? It's very difficult to actually organise the programme. You know, you might have to ring somebody up and say, "I can't make it tomorrow. Can I come the next day?" So that's frustrating.

Through a programme of attrition, I would call it, on the security manager -- it started happening after Jonny's time probably -- we managed --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: You sent the security manager out first?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: No. We managed -- we did a lot more, I think, after Jonny left than we were doing before, while Jonny was there. Red Zone moves became an everyday occurrence. Hardly a week went by when I didn't go out into the Red Zone two or three times.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: We are talking what period now?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I would say from after the Charge of the Knights until I left, it gradually eased off. Kathleen, you were there for some of that period of time.

KATHLEEN REID: I did five months in Baghdad, and we did probably three times more Red Zone moves in that

time than --

JOHN TUCKNOTT: So we were able to do more.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: This is a reflection of the surge?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: It was a reflection of our understanding of what was happening on the ground, through our own people working on the ground, an understanding of the facts. It was driven by the change of emphasis that was in train and was coming about. We were moving away from the military to a more civilian effort. We realised we had to get out more. We had to go and see people in ministries we had never been to.

When I first arrived, we used to try and pull people into the Residence and see people there, or we would go to the Al Rasheed Hotel on the edge of the Green Zone and see people there, but actually going to see people, saying we are actually going to come out to your office happened much less often. We were never stupid about it. We never did same route, same thing, and there were still areas where we had problems. We didn't go up to Sadr City, much to my regret. I think it would be quite interesting to go to Sadr City, but we didn't go to Sadr City.

We were always very careful about it, but gradually over time we were able to lighten the restrictions we had on staff, and where they were able to move to and what they were able to do.

It's very easy to ramp up security. What we found difficult was to persuade London to start ramping it down as the security situation, as we saw it on the ground and our experts saw it on the ground, improved.

JONNY BAXTER: But what had particularly ramped up security for us at the time when I started was the Ministry of Finance kidnapping. We were all very aware that there were a number of people being held at that time, and the other factor of that is a lot of the Embassy's effort was then directed at that. So the knock-on implications are not just on the horrible things for those people. It's then about actually you now have to allocate some of your embassy resource, which could have been doing political interaction or something else, to that issue.

ROB TINLINE: Just on the balance of risk, I don't think at any point in my time in Basra we were anywhere near going out to town. I think the risk calculation was so skewed.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: It was a no-brainer.

ROB TINLINE: The US Army Corps of Engineers used to go out in [redacted][3] throughout all our time, and they were something the military were looking at, thinking if they can do it, why can't we, and just after I left, [redacted][4] got hit by an IED and, as I understand it, got medivac-ed out, quite badly injured.

So I don't think we were anywhere near the calculation that might have had us going out doing something, and the military in Warriors and in Challenger tanks were drawing back as well.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Let's park security, not at this moment get on to people and money, because Sir Martin, I think, wants to discuss that with you, but very briefly, were there any other -- and if so what -- major impediments to delivery that we should take note of?

JONNY BAXTER: Well, there were practical impediments, which I guess in part are related to the security. But sheer pod space. The amount of people you could have

[3] Redacted on grounds of national security and international relations

[4] Reference to US service personnel redacted on grounds of international relations

living in the British Embassy compound at any one time was fixed, and that had to be agreed on a sort of fairly routine basis. So there were occasions when you would have to discuss, well, we are up to exceeding our pod space. Very practical things like that.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So the sort of resource, yes.

Iraqi politics, national and local; how much did that constrain you? Very complicated, but how much of a constraint?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I'm not sure they were much of a constraint. Just very complicated and very confusing.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Perhaps more of a constraint in Basra? The governor didn't have the best relations with the Prime Minister.

ROB TINLINE: He wasn't the governor -- well, there was a question mark over whether he was the governor for about six months of our year.

RICHARD JONES: It was sort of what I was there to do. So in a way the word "constraint" doesn't really apply. It was a sort of challenge, if you like.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And you were talking to Wa'ali, were

you?

RICHARD JONES: For the majority of the time, yes. There was a period where it looked as though the Iraqi Prime Minister -- well, the Prime Minister basically had issued an order to all government officials saying that he was not to be treated as governor, and that coincided with a period where the provincial council was trying to pretend that he didn't exist as governor, and therefore it was not appropriate to have meetings with him. But that period sort of passed with the ruling that came from the administrative court in -- I think it was issued on 30 September, and thereafter we were back in harness with him.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was this agreed policy across the board, or were other bits of the British Government machine of a view that we shouldn't be talking to Wa'ali, or not too much, not getting too close to him?

RICHARD JONES: During that period, my recollection of the sensation was we were reporting what we were doing and we were not being gainsaid by colleagues in London, and therefore, you know, for as long as that period lasted, I assumed that we were doing the right thing.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That was your marching orders?

RICHARD JONES: Yes. Over time I think we all got to understand Wa'ali and Fadhila a bit better, perhaps, than we had done to begin with. I think throughout the period there was a sense that it was not our job to pick winners. We had to deal with the politics as they were sort of served up to us.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Martin, over to you.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to turn now to both human and financial resources. You mentioned the ever-changing cast of providers a few months ago.

So my first question is: did you feel you had sufficient human and financial resources? And, perhaps as important, did you receive them when you needed them?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I certainly felt that the team in the embassy was properly staffed. We had the bodies we required. We had the resources that we required in terms of monetary, financial resources. Obviously everybody would like to have more, but what we had was adequate for what we were trying to do, not only in terms of programmes and projects, but also in terms of keeping a complicated compound and a complicated

operation, a manageable operation going. We were able to do that very successfully, I believe.

Yes, there were more things we would like to have done if more money had been available, but it wasn't. We were able to do what we needed to do.

Staffing levels, I think, were correct. In my view the greatest challenge was managing the change round of staff. What was frustrating was, because of either a technical failure or because of the weather, people would get stuck in Kuwait for five days when they were supposed to be back in. If they were swapping over with somebody, because somebody had managed to get out, but they weren't able to get in, so there was no cover. So some people had to even triple up their job, to make sure everything was being covered.

That was frustrating. It didn't last long and you understood the reason for it. That was the only real issue that I really had.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And in Basra?

ROB TINLINE: I felt that we had enough staff, UK staff. We didn't have any LE staff by this point. We had one political adviser and some sort of hired labourers who came in. So there was a big, big constraint in our inability to get LE staff, but that

comes back to security again. So you're off to the same thing.

On budgets, we got a lot of money from the US. So we were pretty well served for resources, but it wasn't an HMG decision.

The one budget that I would single out was DFID -- I can't remember what we called it now, but there was a DFID budget line that essentially allowed us a contract with Coffey Consulting that allowed us to get in extra people and to do very quick projects pretty much on local authority. It was quite a -- it was hundreds of thousands, I think. It wasn't millions. But it allowed us to do things very quickly on our own authority, and that was absolutely invaluable.

As I say, given the security constraints, you could have cut things in any number of different ways in Basra and it wouldn't have made a huge difference. But the one thing that I think under slightly different security constraints would have been a big issue is, if you like, the way that budgets are done. If, if you like, the Foreign Office wants to fund an extra person in Basra, it's got to cut about five people in Paris. If the military want to get an extra 100 people in,

then it's an operation, so it's funded differently.

So you were always in the position where, if you wanted something done, the pain and suffering of doing it through the Foreign Office budget line was always infinitely greater than the military doing it. So you always skewed the operation to the military doing things because they could find the people and the money, whereas the Foreign Office, and DFID indeed, would struggle to do it and would have to cut somewhere else to be able to do it.

Now, I don't think it made a big difference in Basra, but if we had had an easier operating environment, I can imagine that that would have ended up militarising a mission that should have been increasingly civilianised.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of critical skills and experience, and we are very much a lessons learned Inquiry, what lessons did you learn about the skills and experience needed during your time in Iraq, and how they were provided?

ROB TINLINE: I don't think we did badly. In my period, as we have talked about the consultants, a lot of them had been there for a long time, so had real local experience, which was very, very valuable.

As I say, this DFID contract we had allowed us to change consultants quite quickly and kind of draw in a specific skill very briefly if we wanted to, but I think that was absolutely invaluable on the PRT side.

So I don't think we did it badly. The mix of -- I think I had about six nationalities, seven nationalities in the PRT, three British Government departments, some military, some consultants, some police. It was a real sort of mix, and I think we did quite well actually.

Whether that was true in 2003, from the go, I don't know. But by the time I got there, I thought it was okay.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And your experience?

KATHLEEN REID: I think you're probably spot on there. It's always a challenge to find people, particularly in some of the very technical roles that we were looking at, when we were working on things like investment promotion, trying to find someone that's got that real experience, and is willing to come to Iraq, and has the interpersonal skills to be able to do it, is a big challenge. There's a limited pool of people out there, and if you want to tick all of those things, it's quite difficult.

I think the consulting firm we used -- and we deliberately built in the kind of flexibility that Rob talked about, to allow us to respond to changing priorities -- I think they did very well for us, actually, in being able to identify some high quality people that were able to come in and do that.

ROB TINLINE: Just thinking about it, the one skill that I might highlight is Arabic. We were very, very light on Arabic.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: That was my next question.

ROB TINLINE: My sense -- and I could be being unfair -- is that everybody who is an Arabist in the Foreign Office who wanted to do Iraq had been through Iraq and wasn't going back, thank you very much, with the noble exception of Dominic Asquith.

So we were really light on Arabic skills, and that was probably true of the consultants as well. Any sort of regional consultant who wanted to do Iraq had had four years to do it by then. So we struggled on Arabic.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: How many of you spoke Arabic? Two?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were you able to learn at all while you were there? Did you pick any up?

ROB TINLINE: The level of my interaction with -- no. No. Pretty much every interaction was a business interaction that we had a limited time to do, and we had to do it. There wasn't that scope.

As I say, if the security constraints had been less, I think a lot of these things would have been far bigger issues. Because the security constraints were such, we didn't actually need that much staff. We couldn't actually do that much. So the sort of lost opportunity was in fact minimal.

RICHARD JONES: Just to chip in on this, I seem to remember Rob and me having long conversations about have we got the numbers down as far as we can get them down. So it's a rather different experience from John's for the duty of care/security side of life. I think we were as ruthless as we could be on that.

ROB TINLINE: Until August, maybe until July, I was still writing the plan for how we got out in the next six months. It was still -- that was the assumption.

JONNY BAXTER: Just on the skills side, the one time I think we were missing or in danger of missing particular skills was actually this balance between consultants and civil servants, and the consultancy

structure allowed us to pull in experts very quickly and swap them over quite quickly, and that was very flexible. But there were lots of times when we actually needed to draft something that went back to the UK, and much as it might be nice to ask the consultants to do that, it rarely works. So it did need a combination of actually core Civil Service skills, as well as these consultants who brought in technical skills.

The other skill that I would like to raise as well, I think, is just the premium on personal capability, personal adaptiveness, resilience. All of those sorts of things were at a premium, and if you didn't have them, you were found out very quickly in those sorts of contexts. And it was quite difficult to check in advance whether people did. But then the consequences of not having them could be quite significant, depending on how it then emerged that someone didn't have that skill set.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: My last question in a curious way relates to that. We had been in Iraq for four years by the time you came. Were we using our corporate memory and our experience that we had? How did that impact on what you were doing? That's quite a long time for

experience.

JONNY BAXTER: Certainly while I was there, there was something of a sense that every week is different, the context is different. There seemed to be so many changes that I don't think we did use the corporate memory very well, and it was quite difficult to see an obvious way of bringing it in. We clearly had a lot more experience within the institution, and certainly from a DFID perspective, than I think we formally drew out.

In some accidental fashion we managed to incorporate it because the team back in London quite often had people who had been based in either Basra or Baghdad. So that was useful. But I don't think we went through a more formalised process, and it would have been useful to do that.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Again, the southern --

ROB TINLINE: I remember when we moved from the palace, we got rid of our -- we had two tiers. We had the confidential area and our unclassified area. We didn't need an unclassified system anymore. So it went back to London.

Now, I could have gone through it and the team gone

through it at some length and extracted all the value out of it. But was that why we had people being shelled in Basra? Well, no, to be frank. They were there to do other things. But there was no mechanism for sending it back to London and having somebody capture that. The PRT IT system, we just bought it off a shelf and used gmail, which worked very well. But occasionally I suggested that we might want to try and find a way of capturing this, especially when we wound down the PRT, and there was simply no system for doing it, and no particular -- I was surprised by how difficult it was to find an owner for our corporate information that would have, yes, required a lot of resource to get off in a useable form from the IT systems that we had and that we were ceasing to use.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Back to another human aspect.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Indeed. I want to talk about the support that you and your teams had. What support were you offered in preparation for living and working in Iraq, and after you ended your tours? Were you offered any help and support?

KATHLEEN REID: I'll kick off, if you want. There was -- before we even were kind of encouraged to apply

for jobs, certainly for me, I had a very lengthy three or four-hour conversation with people that had either just come back from Basra and were able to talk through the realities of it, and then I was going out to Basra at a time that you were being rocketed quite heavily, and they wanted to be very sure that it was someone that was aware of what that might actually be like in reality.

Everybody that went out, whether it was consultants or civil servants, we had to go through a four-day hostile environment training course which I think had some value. I'm not sure it was as valuable as it could have been, and I think there are certainly things that could be tweaked to a specific environment. There were lots of things in there -- for example, I spent an afternoon running around the hillsides in Hampshire with a map and a compass. If I end up anywhere in Basra with a map and a compass, something has gone quite badly wrong. So there are things that would have been quite useful to have. We sat through things that were around doing soft skin vehicle moves. It was never going to happen in the time that we were there.

So I think, you know, it was well intentioned and it did give some good overview on understanding your

drills, understanding actually the value of your body armour, understanding the vehicles and things that we would move in, but it was trying to cover people going to a whole range of different environments, not just to Basra or Baghdad, and I'm not sure that was --

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Are you saying it wasn't tailored towards --

KATHLEEN REID: It wasn't tailored, and I think there's certainly work that could be done to make that more relevant to people going out.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you give feedback? Did it improve or change in the light of your experience?

KATHLEEN REID: I gave feedback. My understanding from people that arrived certainly in the following year was that that had not changed. But it may well have done since.

JONNY BAXTER: I've done it again recently and it hasn't changed.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You are still running around Hampshire with a compass and a map.

ROB TINLINE: I had done press work on Iraq for a year beforehand. So I knew enough about Iraq, and I had

been out there with a minister. So, if you like, I felt like I knew what I was going into. I knew all the statistics. I went on a course and had a similar experience. This is probably more useful in Kenya than it would be in Iraq in some ways because it's about checking your vehicles and getting out of situations. Well, I've got a team of people to do that for me in Iraq.

But there was a lot of help on offer, and I think the thing for me is I never particularly felt like I needed help.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Is this before, during or after?

ROB TINLINE: During and after, and even before. I could have -- there was help there if I wanted it, and I knew how to get it. I didn't particularly feel I needed it. So I didn't ask for it. But I'm pretty confident it was there if I needed it.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What is your experience?

RICHARD JONES: Very similar to Kath and Rob. Like Kath, I discussed what life was like in Basra with a very good friend in the Iraq unit, and so I had a good idea of what I could expect. Very similar

experience of the hostile environment training course.

We had medics embedded with us in the FCO compound who sort of had a very gentle watching brief to check that we weren't going off the rails. And, as Rob said, I knew that there would be help available, and indeed, I think we had a discussion as to whether post Basra counseling should be made compulsory, and we decided it shouldn't. We decided it should just be there for people to use if they wanted to.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: It's available?

RICHARD JONES: It was available.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Post Basra?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were you aware of anybody taking it up?

RICHARD JONES: No, I'm not actually.

ROB TINLINE: You would have to ask --

RICHARD JONES: There's no particular reason why we would know, I suppose.

So I didn't have any sort of qualms on that front myself. I think, at the risk of sounding colossally out of touch with the staff, I'm not aware of any particular, particular problems. Everyone's experience

is different, but I don't think anyone --

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What you are saying is your preparation and the support you were given didn't have any impact on your delivery objectives as such?

RICHARD JONES: No.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What was your experience?

JONNY BAXTER: I would agree with all the systems having been put in place. One of the things that -- I was one of the first people in DFID to go through this. We had a three-hour interview with a psychologist, and that was meant to be institutionalised. It was meant to be this process where you had that interview pre-departure, and it was meant to actually do two things: one, for DFID to decide whether you should be going there, but also for you to better understand yourself and what your own personal risks would be.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You said earlier that you had to be resilient. Was that part of this assessment?

JONNY BAXTER: Yes.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That assessed whether you were suitable?

JONNY BAXTER: Absolutely. You sort of worked through how you dealt with certain situations and they looked at their view of how that would fit in the circumstances.

You were meant to have that at six months, and you were meant to have one afterwards as well. And it did worry me in my sort of role as a head of an office, responsible for individuals, that we did find people coming through who hadn't even had the initial discussion. So the things were set in place, but then the systems weren't automatically there for people to go through them.

The second concern I had was that, in as much as it happened, it happened much better for the core DFID staff. But in the same office we had people who we were employing as consultants, and initially we had no idea whether they were being looked after in a similar way at all, and for a set of reasons, we had cause to go and find out, and we then improved our level of control over that.

But I do think it's not an insignificant issue. I think it is a concern. It's something institutionally our institutions ought to worry about, and maybe ought to worry about a bit more than they do.

This sort of sense that -- I do slightly disagree with the idea of the volunteerism. I think if you take yourself voluntarily to see someone when you come home, that probably means you are fairly self-aware. There will have been a number of people who have gone through these experiences who haven't been as self-aware.

I think maybe the risk in Baghdad was slightly greater because the number of people was slightly larger. I can imagine in a much smaller unit, there is much more intense -- people watching you and people looking out for you. But I do think in the Baghdad context, you could imagine people slipping through that net. There were medics there looking out. I think all of us senior managers felt it was our responsibility, but at the same time -- I don't know -- there were 100, 150 people on that compound.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you have any observations?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I think that, you know, the Foreign Office put in place -- has got the systems there. Perhaps they should be more compulsory than they are. I mean, certainly when I came back to the UK -- before I had extended past my 12 months, -- to do a third six months --I had to go and see one of our medical advisers, a doctor who asked me various questions and

pronounced me fit. But it was a half-hour interview. There was no psychometric testing or anything like that.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But then you've got the Iraq Inquiry doing the same to you.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: There again, I've got previous on this. I did the last two years of the Lebanese Civil War with no duty of care whatsoever. So as soon as I put my hand up to be DHM in Baghdad, they said thank you very much.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were there differences between FCO and DFID in the approaches to duty of care? Did that make a difference on the ground?

ROB TINLINE: I wasn't aware of anything particularly. As I say, there were consultants, core civil servants and then obviously a military-civilian division. But I don't think there was any ...

JOHN TUCKNOTT: DFID, FCO there was no difference. No light between us.

ROB TINLINE: MOD civil servants were --

JOHN TUCKNOTT: They were slightly different for those who weren't actually in the Embassy. The MOD civil

servants who were in the Embassy were not any different to any other Government department. But when they were embedded with the military, like the Political Adviser to SBMR-I, they were different.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: One of the issues raised with us is the question of a duty of care, that you couldn't get people out to deal with that. Was that an issue in terms of people on the ground?

ROB TINLINE: As I say, given all the circumstances in Basra, fine judgments on duty of care, I don't think, were going to make a big difference to achieve our objectives.

The US went down the compulsion route. If you worked for State, you were expected to go to Iraq. We clearly didn't, and obviously I'm very grateful for that.

I think we got a sensible mix of incentives and care which meant people wanted to go. And, importantly, the people who were there, wanted to be there. That is pretty important if you are going on one of these operations. If you start compelling people -- so I think we got it more or less right.

As I say, if the environment had been a bit more benign, then you could have had an argument over

whether we should have been going out a bit more and taking a few more risks, but it was so non-benign when I was there that I think we got the people we needed and we protected them well.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I think Rob makes a very important point. Certainly when I became DHM, I made the point of saying to people, when they were interviewing or considering people for posts, they had to convince the interviewers that they were coming for the right reason. And the right reason was because they believed that we were doing a job that we needed to be doing, that it was important to do it, and they wanted to do that job.

The right reason was not money. Certainly not money. They had to be there for the right reason. The questioning, certainly during interviews and the application, had to try and draw out what their reason was. That was very important to me.

JONNY BAXTER: Within DFID, we actually had to proactively go out within the organisation to get people to apply. I tend to agree with Rob. It worked. There were times when we carried gaps, but it wasn't disastrous. Enough people came through.

I sort of wonder about the impact of having

Afghanistan and Iraq at the same time, and if it goes on for much longer and we have another similar context, how do we manage that? Because at the moment there's more of a sort of -- this is probably slightly unfair, but a wing and a prayer bit of it. It has worked so far.

But I do worry about the risk of there being a group of us -- and I'm one of them -- who goes between those two conflicts. I think we do as an institution have a responsibility for the longer term career path, how you then fit back into your organisation. Do you then become a stablisation cadre type person? Do you only focus on conflict? Are you a conflict junkie?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Are these issues being fed in and being logged? Are there improvements as lessons are being learned?

JONNY BAXTER: They're certainly being discussed. People are aware of them. I don't think there are easy answers to them. I think if we had good and easy answers, we would have implemented them.

The will is definitely there, and we have tried a number of different things. There was the example of the golden ticket and people applying for their

following jobs. It was an FCO thing, and I understand it didn't necessarily work. But the institution is definitely trying to make it work. It is a very, very complicated issue.

ROB TINLINE: And there was an enormous amount of effort in London put into how you get that balance right.

JONNY BAXTER: Yes.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: But it isn't -- one of the various concerns I had about people leaving is people leaving that didn't have a job to go to, and six months later they were still in the Corporate Pool and they still weren't able to pick up a job, despite doing a fantastic job in a very difficult environment, and the effect on their morale was enormous.

ROB TINLINE: There are no easy answers. But it's a big issue of: are you going to give somebody a job who is not quite as good as the candidate who has just won because they have been in Iraq? As you say, with the golden ticket we have gone "yes", and then "no", and moved between it. In the end, my personal view is that we got it about right.

The package to go to Iraq in reward and interest

and staff and protection was about right, and then after that you bid for your next job with everybody else.

JONNY BAXTER: I agree with almost all of that, apart from the fact, at the point when I was there, and certainly towards the end of it, the balance within the Civil Service: Afghanistan was a better thing to do than Iraq. That was a risk. How do you pull people in actually when the weight of Parliamentary interest is shifting? You still need to have your good civil servants wanting to go to that for the right reasons.

ROB TINLINE: I agree.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. You have flagged up some interesting issues.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Why did you volunteer? Can I ask?

ROB TINLINE: Me personally --

THE CHAIRMAN: You can give us a private note afterwards.

ROB TINLINE: For me, the job was absolutely fascinating. It was a step up from running a team of

four in London to running basically a PRT of 30 and being deputy in a mission of 100.

My wife was currently deputy in Jerusalem. So it actually meant with the holidays I got to see more of her than I would in London. It paid more than it does in London. I thought it would be a good thing for my career. It was a fascinating, politically high profile thing to do. There are all sorts of reasons, but put them all together -- and I didn't really think I was going to die -- put them all together, and I think most people would be a mix of those things.

You don't want it to all be about the money, but I think we would be naive to suggest that wasn't one of half a dozen, ten issues that said, "Actually this is a good thing for me and my career".

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Jerusalem and Basra must have been an interesting and regular commute.

ROB TINLINE: It's not that easy to fly from Basra to Tel Aviv.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do we have any other motivational volunteers or should we move on?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think we move on. I think one conclusion from this is that keeping civil servants on

very low pay in London is good for getting recruitment to difficult places overseas.

I also note from what Jonny just said about Afghanistan where he is now serving or what he's now in charge of, clearly a good careerist officer.

We are going to let you out of this overheated bunker quite soon. I would just like to ask, from my perspective, three general umbrella questions, which again we might divide between Baghdad and Basra.

Let's take the Basra one first. To what extent did you feel that your views, your reporting, your opinions on the situation on the ground, were feeding into the policy making machine back in London and being understood, heard and having an impact on the policy?

Let's divide that between the development and the political side. Richard?

RICHARD JONES: I think I come back to the remark I made before, that for me it felt very much as though we were providing very regular reporting of what we were doing with the politicians, and if we didn't get a message back from London that we were doing it wrong, then what we were doing was right. So it was, if you like, a sort of --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Silence procedure?

RICHARD JONES: Exactly. Exactly. That's sort of expressing it quite starkly, and obviously there was a policy debate going on in London about our overall posture in southern Iraq, to which we were contributing. But that was sort of their job to do, and it felt to me that my job was to deliver the right political environment for the tasks that were before HMG in the period that we were there, and PIC in particular.

So I felt I had a lot of flexibility and a lot of latitude from London in what I was doing.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And you weren't being given instructions which ignored the ground truth that you had been describing?

RICHARD JONES: Precisely.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Kathleen, was your reporting influencing the DFID strategy?

KATHLEEN REID: We had some slightly confused reporting lines, I guess. I mean, there was regular reporting back from the PRT that Rob led on as head of the PRT.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I thought he was reporting to the Americans.

KATHLEEN REID: He also reported to the Americans, but it went to lots of people in Whitehall, some of which read and quite a lot didn't, I would say. That incorporated almost all of the DFID piece in Basra, because what DFID was doing in Basra sat within the PRT.

So we ended up with some slightly strange routes, where Rob would be getting requests, rather than me, from DFID in London, but we were very joined up. We kind of talked before we did things back, and generally with Richard, we would agree what was going back between us.

But I think it was informing it. I didn't always feel that I was aware of the big picture of what was going on in terms of the whole HMG strategy. But the bits that were pertinent to what we were doing or being asked to do, I did feel that we were being listened to, and it was reflected in what went into the planning and strategy.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Would you endorse that?

ROB TINLINE: Yes. I mean, I saw my PRT role as understanding more or less what all the different centres of power that I in theory reported to in some way wanted, and bringing it together into a coherent

whole that I could believe in and could sell to all the different bits, and I was pretty comfortable with how that worked.

Occasionally -- Prime Minister's announcement in October -- you would have a clear, "Actually we want you to focus on this", which would shift us a bit, rather significantly. But as Richard, my job was to go --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But that was an announcement that made sense on you in terms of the work you were doing and the reporting you sent back?

ROB TINLINE: Yes. The Prime Minister didn't write it. Well, he may have done. There was a lot of work that went into it that produced a set of things that were far more ambitious than we had had, but were in line with the things that we were trying to push.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: You were party to those?

ROB TINLINE: Yes. So yes, as Richard said, it was a sort of silence procedure. If you can do what you believe is the most likely to have the most positive impact in Basra, and persuade all of your various stakeholders that that's what you are doing, that's success.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Same true in Baghdad?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Yes, I think we played our role, and a proper role in the development of the overall strategy in Iraq during the time I was there. The messages we were sending back were listened to. Some areas of Whitehall didn't always necessarily understand Iraqi politics and the delays and what Maliki was thinking and Maliki changing his mind and how his advisers got at him, et cetera, et cetera. So we would explain it again, and the message would finally get through. I was quite happy with the relationship that we had and our impact on the strategy.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So, broadly speaking, not a huge gulf, as there shouldn't be in this day of modern communications, between headquarters and the troops on the ground in terms of strategy and conceptual thinking.

Next broad question. In the period that we are looking at now, which is the last two years before we withdrew the troops, roughly speaking -- and in a sense you made a remark in our last conversation that had some bearing on this -- how much did you feel that Iraq mattered to HMG, and specifically those of you in the south east, how much did Basra and the south east

matter to the HMG? Did you feel that they were really there focused mainly on the military exit or transition or reposturing, depending on which euphemism you choose, and that what we were doing on the civilian side was to make it respectable to set our exit in the most positive context we could?

Let's start with Basra and then move to the bigger picture.

RICHARD JONES: I hear what you are saying, but it didn't --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm asking you a question.

RICHARD JONES: It didn't feel actually quite as black as that, if you like.

Obviously we were very alive throughout the period to the sort of line of attack that we were running away and what the consulate and the PRT were doing was to provide respectability for that. But to me it didn't feel like that. It felt as though we were genuinely doing something positive, and doing what it said on the tin, making Basra a better place, and on the political side, trying to encourage the Basrawi politicians to a place where they actually owned the process and they were more modern in their politics and, for want of

a better word, more democratic, more respectful of what their electors wanted.

Through the period that I was there, we were looking forward to -- but I wasn't there for them -- the provincial elections, which we thought would produce a more representative bunch of politicians on the provincial council.

How far it mattered -- I think it mattered a lot, actually. The sensation that we had -- and again, as Rob said, we probably would say this, wouldn't we -- we felt there was a lot of attention being given by senior politicians to Basra. We had four Cabinet ministers visit in the space of three weeks in December 2007. So I don't think we felt neglected.

There was a sensation that Afghanistan was coming up the track, and that was obviously through the military prism as well. But nevertheless, I don't think we felt we were in a far-off country of which Britain knew nothing.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: You hadn't become an irrelevance?

RICHARD JONES: No.

ROB TINLINE: Coming out with Britain and the British Army's reputation intact was clearly very important.

But I don't think that translated into: let's make this a fig leaf. I think that translated into: Basra must be better. So you can try and work out people's motivations, and you have clearly asked all of the key ministers themselves, but I got the sense that ministers genuinely wanted Basra to be better, and it wasn't about a fig leaf. In fact, my biggest challenge was trying, as I said earlier, to get expectation about how much better we could make Basra down to something that I thought was realistic.

So yes, clearly reputation was key, but that was one motivator to actually try to do the job well, rather than turning into a fig leaf.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Do you buy into that, Kathleen?

KATHLEEN REID: Yes. I think, certainly for the time we were talking about, there was so much interest that it felt very much that it mattered. It was a constant barrage. It may feel different for John and others that were there later on, and those in the PRT that were there in the final months before it did move towards closure, but certainly for the time I was there, we had so much attention, overwhelmingly so at times.

In terms of the DFID programme, they had been set

up before the PRT was there. Most of the work that we do on capacity building is a time-bound thing. It was showing the results that we had hoped it was going to show. I think that probably would have come to a natural end, give or take some months either side anyway.

Having that kind of regional DFID office down in Basra is not our usual way of working, and the discussion in my latter months was about moving towards a more normal relationship, the whole of Iraq approach, which started being talked about much, much more, focusing at the centre of government, making the links between some of the experience of the province and using that to influence what we were doing at the centre, taking some of the work that had been piloted in Basra, and seeing where that could potentially be replicated.

So I think that all felt quite comfortable from where I was sitting, and that it was a natural process. Maybe from Baghdad it was different.

JONNY BAXTER: From the Baghdad end, following up on that, the key for us was to try to get Basra in the context of Iraq, because there were times when it seemed as though it was Basra in isolation. I think

from our perspective, certainly from a DFID perspective, it was important to actually have that whole Iraq view, and then see improvements in Basra, for Basra's sake, absolutely, but in the context of actually a wider system. I think that was a change that came in slowly over time.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I would agree there. I think Basra remained important, remained important for the whole time I was there, but the messaging that was coming out of London, which we were conveying to the Iraqis, was that we wanted to move, and this was the message that Gordon Brown gave to Maliki in December 2008 when he visited. You know, we are talking about a whole Iraq policy now. We want to do things with you which we haven't been able to do before. We want to move on to a proper footing, again a less military footing.

The problems that we had in the embassy was persuading some parts of Whitehall, some Government departments, to recognise that we were moving to this, that we wanted to increase trade, that it was important that visas were issued to students. Part of Prime Minister Maliki's education scheme was to send 10,000 postgraduates or undergraduates to go to overseas universities to study. We need to provide

a proper visa regime, not the one that we cobbled together.

So that was a difficulty we faced, actually getting that message out to the wider Whitehall machinery, that Iraq is moving forwards, and if we want to play an important role in this process, we had to move with it.

Messages did get through in the end. We have got a trade and investment section now, investment section - Poor old DFID were doing their best in their absence - and it's working.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: We are on the way to a more normal type of relationship?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Absolutely. We used to talk -- when I used to go and see politicians with Christopher, when anybody, went to see politicians in Baghdad, we used to talk about the normalisation of our relationship with the Republic of Iraq. That was what we were talking about. We were moving to a normal basis.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did I read in the newspapers that part of that normalisation was going to include the closing of the consulate in Baghdad?

ROB TINLINE: In Basra.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: In Basra?

ROB TINLINE: There was a piece in the Times saying that we mustn't do this.

JOHN TUCKNOTT: Merely speculation.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Foreign Office lobbying against it in advance -- okay. That's beyond the period of our Inquiry. I think I'll stop there.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is indeed a warm place and it would be nice to escape.

Any final comment that any of you is bursting to make before we close?

JOHN TUCKNOTT: I would just like to say that in 30 years in the Foreign Office, my experience of Baghdad is one of working in the most joined-up team that I have ever worked in, working together. And I personally feel very proud of serving with such dedicated colleagues throughout Whitehall.

JONNY BAXTER: It is quite interesting that people focus on the lessons to learn to do it better. Actually there are some positive lessons to learn out of the Baghdad experience. I think DFID being in the Chancery in this context worked really well. Now, that

may be a slightly heinous thing to say in some circumstances, but that concept of really the Government departments pulling together, it did work better than in most places.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks. We are, by the way, very conscious as an inquiry that it is not a story of mistake, failure, deficiency by any means at all.

Anything else? Okay.

Well, then, thank you all very much indeed. I really mean that on behalf of my colleagues. It's proving an extremely, for us, valuable and informative kind of session.

If you have any further thoughts after leaving this building, please feel free to send us anything if you want to in writing. There is a risk we will want to put it on the website, but nonetheless.

Then coming to the transcript, we need you to review the transcript. I don't think there's anything that's been said this afternoon which deserves oversensitive treatment.

If you could let us, our secretariat, have a preferably confidential email address, we can then send you the draft transcript for correction.

We probably will want to use it, if we can,

Margaret, in about ten days' time in terms of publication. So if you could give us that kind of turnaround, that would be very helpful.

With which I'll close the session. Thank you all very much again.

(4.38 pm)

(The hearing adjourned)