

1 (10.15 am)

2 RT HON DR JOHN REID

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning again ladies and gentlemen and  
4 good morning, Dr Reid.

5 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Good morning, Sir John.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: In this session we are hearing from the  
7 Rt Hon John Reid MP former Secretary of State for  
8 Defence and the objective of this session is to examine  
9 key discussions and decisions taken on Iraq and their  
10 implementation within the Ministry of Defence and the  
11 government during his period as Secretary of State for  
12 Defence and also wider reflections on the Iraq  
13 experience. But the session is directly concerned with  
14 the period May 2005 until May 2006, when Dr Reid had  
15 this direct responsibility.

16 Two things I say at the start of every bit of  
17 hearing: we recognise that witnesses are giving evidence  
18 based in part on their recollection of events, and we  
19 can cross-check what we hear against the papers, and  
20 I remind every witness that they will later be asked to  
21 sign a transcript of the evidence to the effect that the  
22 evidence given is truthful, fair and accurate.

23 I wonder, Dr Reid, if we could begin by taking your  
24 sense of the situation in Iraq when you took office and  
25 what the strategy was to cope with the situation as it

1 was.

2 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Well, I became Secretary of State  
3 in May 2005 and it is always difficult to distinguish  
4 between the decisions and conclusions you are reaching  
5 because of hindsight and how you felt at the time. So  
6 I have done the Committee the courtesy of trying to go  
7 back through some of the notes at the time and,  
8 objectively, looking back, it was a fairly critical  
9 period. I won't use the word "crossroads" but there had  
10 been a conventional war, which had lasted six days, and  
11 in terms of conventional war gone very well. It was the  
12 next six years which were to prove difficult, and we  
13 were about two or three years into that with all of the  
14 problems of post-conflict planning that your Committee  
15 has already discussed.

16 There had been a number of elements to which you could  
17 refer, I suppose, as progress. First of all, on the  
18 steps forward, there had been elections some four  
19 months before I came in, with a high turnout. So there  
20 had been, if you like, an advance on the democratic  
21 credentials, established in extremely difficult  
22 circumstances. There had been a beginning of  
23 post-conflict training on the security side of the Iraqi  
24 security forces. There had been some degree of  
25 restitution of infrastructure and so on. Having said

1 all that, the politics were very slow moving, because,  
2 after the January elections there was a sort of  
3 interregnum period during which very little happened  
4 apart from canvassing for who might form part of the new  
5 transitional regime. There was a four month delay.

6 On the post-conflict reconstruction, some of the  
7 areas that obviously hadn't been looked at in the  
8 attention -- with the attention that they ought to have  
9 been, were becoming obvious. The nature of the  
10 shattered infrastructure, that had perhaps been  
11 underestimated -- I don't just mean physically, I mean  
12 in terms of skills -- was becoming obvious and the  
13 disbandment of the bureaucracy and the self-disbandment,  
14 I suppose, of the army, meant that along with the  
15 political interregnum, there was a sort of social and  
16 structural vacuum. And then there were ethnic tensions  
17 which all had developed.

18 So in that sense, there was, contextually, the  
19 beginnings of a vacuum into which various forces were  
20 either entering or being sucked, in internationally or  
21 locally. So that is the local context in which we found  
22 ourselves having to set our military and security  
23 priorities.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Could you say something of the flavour of  
25 that situation in terms of risks, possible risk, even of

1 strategic failure, possible prospect of eventual success  
2 but reduced as against our original aspiration?

3 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I think, on reflection, it was  
4 a critical period for that, because there was growing  
5 tension between the ethnic groups into which was  
6 injected a degree of violence during this period,  
7 suicide bombers, the beginning of IEDs, which was awful  
8 but wasn't mindless, because much of it was  
9 intentionally directed towards causing a provocation,  
10 a backlash from the Shia.

11 Samarra, I suppose, was the perfect example of that,  
12 and, therefore, there was a genuine possibility that  
13 this could get to the extent of not just sectarian  
14 killing but potentially a civil war.

15 Indeed, I think one of the reports I read from the  
16 military in Basra was from a commanding officer there  
17 who was complaining that elements of the British press  
18 were almost salivating at the prospect of a civil war,  
19 so often did they repeat the assertion that it was  
20 there.

21 Now, it didn't get to that, thankfully. There was  
22 widespread sectarian violence, but there was a degree of  
23 resilience and maturity, already built up within the ISF  
24 and within the political establishment and to some  
25 extent the religious establishment.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: With Ayatollah Sistani, for example?

2 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Sistani in particular, yes,

3 I think, but I think there were also some elements among the  
4 Sunni themselves.

5 But to directly answer your question, yes, this was  
6 a period during which the strategic direction of what  
7 was happening could have -- in retrospect, looking at  
8 it - could have gone one way or the other; and of course,  
9 I suppose, just to briefly mention, this is in terms of  
10 the global context that Sir Roderic raised during the last  
11 discussion, where there were the two elements of threat  
12 out there, globally, which was the intention to commit  
13 damage and human murder on an untrammelled and  
14 unconstrained scale, which was evident after 9/11, and  
15 over in this corner the capability to do that through  
16 biological and chemical weaponry; and, in a globalised  
17 world, the prospect of proliferation, of one coming to  
18 meet the other.

19 So it was a very difficult situation tactically,  
20 operationally, within Iraq, and indeed strategically,  
21 Sir John.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I'm not sure whether it is simply  
23 a matter of semantics, but, had the coalition, by the  
24 time you took office in May 2005 -- was it recognised  
25 that there was more than sectarian conflict going on,

1 but, rather, there was a genuine insurgency which has  
2 a different military significance, I suppose?

3 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes, I think there were two -- if  
4 I could call them burgeoning - realisations. One was that  
5 although there were different elements to the security  
6 situation - there was basically criminality, there was  
7 disorder, and the third one was terrorism/insurgency - but  
8 there was a degree of coherence to this which was more  
9 than just individual acts of terrorism; that there was  
10 indeed an insurgency.

11 The second realisation which I think was growing  
12 during that period, including, not unimportantly, in the  
13 United States, was a recognition that, having pulled  
14 down the pillars, this was not going to rise again, this  
15 state, like some phoenix from the ashes; that there had  
16 to be a far greater degree of intervention from the  
17 coalition, both in security and politics, including  
18 outreaching to the Sunni, because that cross-related, of  
19 course, to the insurgency.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, thank you. I would like to ask one or  
21 two questions about the British military objectives and  
22 strategy and how you saw it at that time, in the sense  
23 that we were heavily engaged militarily, actively,  
24 operationally in the south, but we also had a role  
25 across Iraq as a whole. We had the deputy commander of

1 the whole show. It was an American chain of command,  
2 essentially.

3 The question really is: on which foot does one lean  
4 more heavily, the operational commitment in the south or  
5 the total responsibility with its very heavy American  
6 dominance, but which we couldn't, as it were, just  
7 ignore or be ignorant of? Could you say something about  
8 that?

9 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: If you are asking for my point of  
10 view, as Secretary of State, how did I see the various  
11 levers here, well, it was horses for courses. The  
12 Senior British Military Representative in Baghdad was  
13 also the deputy commander of the coalition forces, but  
14 it wasn't actually an operational role, and, therefore,  
15 whether it was Brims or Rob Fry later on, that was an  
16 influence into the strategic thinking of the coalition  
17 on an Iraqi-wide basis when it came.  
18 But that commander didn't actually  
19 command anything. The commander was actually sitting in  
20 Basra; and, therefore, Jonathon Riley or Cooper or  
21 whoever, that was the person who was commanding the  
22 British troops there, and, therefore, that was the one,  
23 the person to whom you would speak and give weekly  
24 reports -- I actually got weekly reports from both -- in  
25 terms of how the British troops were doing. He was also

1 the person that you would discuss the tasks that we had  
2 to do, and I mentioned the three tasks earlier, which  
3 were the framework security, within which you then had  
4 a further subdivision on criminality, order and  
5 insurgency, counterinsurgency.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, we have heard from a number of witnesses  
7 that, ultimately, looking at the whole coalition task,  
8 project responsibility, it was Baghdad and the centre  
9 that really mattered, but, on the other hand, we had, if  
10 not exclusive, at any rate very much the leading role  
11 and responsibility, for the south-east.

12 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Admittedly, it was a multinational thing, but  
14 we were dominant. Again, it is the same question,  
15 I suppose: how did one balance those two interests, two  
16 responsibilities? For example, would you have a direct  
17 interlocutory relationship with the Secretary of Defence  
18 in Washington?

19 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: With Donald Rumsfeld?

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

21 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes. I would meet Rumsfeld  
22 occasionally. I would meet him either in Washington,  
23 I would meet him at NATO. I think I met him once in  
24 Singapore. We would speak on the telephone, quite  
25 often meet Condoleezza Rice and various other United States



1 interlocutors. That's why I said I think that there was  
2 a growing recognition that, where they had started from,  
3 which is, "We don't do state building", had been  
4 inadequate. I might offer you an opinion on that which  
5 you may or may not agree with, Sir John.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: We need to listen to it.

7 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I have listened carefully to the  
8 contributors, the witnesses that you have interviewed,  
9 some of them much more learned and experienced than I am  
10 in some of these specialist areas, and they have spoken  
11 about the reasons why they believe the United States did  
12 or did not fail to prepare for the post-conflict era,  
13 and they have seen it in terms of personalities,  
14 arguments, discrete departments, power struggles and  
15 turf wars - all the things that we are familiar with in  
16 Whitehall, but perhaps with a multiplier on it.

17 I think you cannot truly appreciate the  
18 United States' approach to this without also recognising  
19 the legacy and the inherited culture of American  
20 military doctrine from Vietnam onwards; because between  
21 1975 and 1991 the United States took a view, as a result  
22 of Vietnam, soldiers are not going to get dragged into  
23 supporting political structures again. We are not going  
24 to do low intensity. We are not going to do nation  
25 building, we are not going to do nation propping-up

1 because of the failures of Vietnam. And the terrible  
2 mistake, I think, was not to recognise that Iraq was not  
3 Vietnam. Afghanistan is not a Vietnam.

4 In Vietnam, they were faced with a national liberation  
5 struggle and so on. However, the inheritance of that  
6 was " American soldiers fight on the battlefield." That's  
7 what they did in 1991 - " We are not going to Baghdad. We  
8 are going to fight in the battlefield and stay away  
9 from it; we don't do nation building, we don't get  
10 involved in politics."

11 Some of the guys who came in to Iraq, Tommy Franks  
12 and so on, came from a Vietnamese war background where they  
13 had that. I think that, unless we just reflect on that  
14 legacy of American military doctrine, we won't fully  
15 understand why they weren't too keen, in advance, on  
16 detailed nation building. Of course, there were other  
17 things - the CPA reduction of the bureaucracy, the  
18 de-Ba'athisation programme, the disbandment of the army -  
19 but I do think that an understanding of where they were  
20 coming from helps us to realise why they got to where  
21 they were.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: I would very much like to follow up with two  
23 questions on that. One is we have heard from a number  
24 of witnesses, including military ones, that the  
25 Americans learned that big lesson really quite quickly.

1           They did turn around over two or three short years.

2   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Absolutely. I think they have  
3           learned it. I think they are better at learning than we  
4           are. I think they are better, if I might say so, at  
5           critical self-assessment than we are. I think they do  
6           that in a way which, in this country, is turned into  
7           a stick to batter everyone with. In the United States  
8           they do it to truly learn lessons, and in  
9           counter-insurgency I think they came from behind us.  
10          I think they are now ahead of us. I think we could  
11          learn a lot from the way the Americans are now  
12          approaching this.

13   THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That leads neatly into what was  
14          my second and perhaps my last question.

15                 Looking at our responsibility in the south, we  
16          thought, when we went in, accepting the responsibility  
17          for the south-east box, the civil as well as military  
18          responsibility, we knew how to deal with situations like  
19          that, very strong legacy for us, quite unlike Vietnam,  
20          of success in Northern Ireland and other places. We  
21          thought we knew how to do it. Did we overestimate our  
22          powers, our capability?

23   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I think we missed the paradox at  
24          the centre of it, and this paradox I would put this way:  
25          our objectives there were to help the Iraqis develop

1 their own democratic sovereignty, their own security  
2 forces and their own economy. When you are helping  
3 someone to develop their democratic and sovereign  
4 authority, every inch you go is an inch less in your  
5 power, and, therefore, if you wanted to tackle some of  
6 the problems of security in Basra, increasingly you had  
7 to recognise that the Basra provincial government and  
8 the central government had more and more power. But you  
9 don't develop a perfect democracy; or you don't develop  
10 it, even here, after hundreds of years, so you certainly  
11 weren't going to develop it there after two or three  
12 years. So the democratic institutions that are  
13 developing centrally in Baghdad and locally in Basra  
14 have connections, politically, in sectarian terms, in  
15 ethnic terms and sometimes in criminal terms, with the  
16 people who are causing your security problem.

17 So the longer you go on, the first problem you have got  
18 is the connections between the burgeoning power that you  
19 are seeking to develop and the security problem that you  
20 are seeking to resolve.

21 The second problem is the normal one, the longer you  
22 go on, as a visiting force of soldiers in any country, the  
23 less the tolerance is, unless people can see very rapid  
24 social advances And, of course, they couldn't, not  
25 least because the insurgency was undermining them.

1           So those two circular paradoxes I think didn't  
2           really apply in many of the other cases from which we  
3           drew our experience. I think we quickly developed our  
4           operational concept. I think we learned. But I think the  
5           Americans learned quicker and faster and better than us,  
6           and hopefully it is one of the things that will come out  
7           of this Inquiry, Sir John.

8   THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I would like to turn to  
9           Sir Roderic Lyne to pursue the question. Just before  
10          I do, I can't resist -- I have learned a military phrase  
11          in the course of these hearings about "the enemy has  
12          a vote when you engage with an enemy". It is also true,  
13          your paradox, your would-be friends have a vote, and you  
14          can't ignore that.

15   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Probably the best military phrase  
16          is, "No plan survives the first contact with the enemy",  
17          and we found that out in every war we fought and this is  
18          another example of it.

19   THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks. Sir Roderic?

20   SIR RODERIC LYNE: Critical self-assessment is probably the  
21          best description we have heard of what this Inquiry is  
22          trying to do and, as you say, not only is Iraq not  
23          Vietnam, but it is also not Northern Ireland, it is not  
24          Malaysia, it is not the UK.

25   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Absolutely.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I just want to ask you a couple of quick  
2 questions about the transition and force levels.

3 When you took up your post as Secretary of State in  
4 May 2005, Jaafari's transitional government had just  
5 been sworn in about the day before.

6 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What, at that point, were we planning to  
8 do in terms of timelines for transition to Iraqi control  
9 and what then happened in your period as Secretary of  
10 State to these timelines?

11 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: You are right, the first -- the  
12 interim transitional government, Jaafari had taken power  
13 the day before I came in And Maliki of the final  
14 government took power, I think, the day after I left.  
15 So perhaps that was the problem in the middle here  
16 because things started to move before I came and  
17 afterwards.

18 The timeline which was -- and remember at this stage  
19 we are acting under the United Nations Security Council  
20 Resolution 1546, which not only endorses our presence  
21 there at the invitation of the Iraqi Interim Government  
22 but also sets down an endorsement of the timeline  
23 programme - from memory, it was January 2005, before  
24 I came in, the election of the -- correct me if my  
25 terminology is wrong here, but there are so many names

1 given to the various stages. I think that was the  
2 Interim Transitional Government. It wasn't actually --  
3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It was Transitional, the Interim had been  
4 the one before. We went Interim, Transitional and then  
5 finally Maliki. So the Transitional government elected  
6 January --

7 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: January. It takes four months, as  
8 you said, for Jaafari to be actually appointed. The  
9 next stage was 15 August from memory, which was the  
10 scheduled date to have a referendum on the constitution,  
11 I think as the next date -- and there had to be an  
12 Assembly of people brought together, hopefully  
13 inclusively with the Sunni, in order to achieve that.

14 The next date is around December, when you get the  
15 final elections for the government. That was the  
16 scheduled date. I think the referendum actually  
17 slipped by about three or four weeks.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: 15 October was the referendum on the  
19 constitution.

20 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Seven or eight weeks.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The national election was 15 December.

22 So what did that do to your timelines for  
23 transition, and, indeed, for drawing down the troops?  
24 Because force levels, when you arrived, were around  
25 8,000, and obviously we were looking to reduce these and

1           make the transition. How was that affected by what  
2           happened in Iraq, both in the political calendar there  
3           and also the security situation on the ground?

4   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: It wasn't really affected by the  
5           political calendar, and indeed, I would go so far as to  
6           say it wasn't really affected by any calendar. Of course  
7           we have an indicative timescale in our heads, we know  
8           what we would like to achieve, but the important thing  
9           is -- and every single person from the President down  
10          said and certainly on every conceivable occasion I said it--  
11          this will be a condition-based withdrawal. We are there  
12          as long as we are needed and not one hour longer. And  
13          when I did a press conference here with the  
14          Prime Minister Jaafari, when he visited the country, he  
15          was asked about six times by a journalist, a very  
16          persistent journalist:

17                 "Do you want the British there?"

18                 He answered, I think five or six times, "We need the  
19                 British there", and I intervened to say, "And we are  
20                 only there as long as he needs us, and as soon as that  
21                 is finished, we will go".

22                 How did we judge when we were needed? We judged  
23                 when we were needed - and when we were no longer needed -  
24                 when the Iraqi Government themselves decided that they  
25                 had sufficient security forces in terms of numbers and



1 capability to allow us to go.

2 Was that an ad hoc process? No, it was a rational  
3 process. A committee was established in order to judge  
4 the criteria. The criteria were set down to judge the  
5 capability and numbers of the Iraqi forces. And it was  
6 also a staged criteria.

7 So it went in four stages from an Iraqi partnership  
8 with us - called assistance to the Iraqi security forces -  
9 to tactical overwatch, which was their ability to do  
10 certain tactical things with our assistance; to  
11 operational overwatch, which was a greater degree of  
12 autonomy; to strategic overwatch. Once they had reached  
13 strategic overwatch, and, therefore, they could,  
14 virtually on their own - they probably needed some  
15 intelligence support, they probably needed some  
16 strategic headquarters support - but at that stage, we  
17 would leave, not before it. And at that stage it would  
18 be a joint decision between us and the Iraqi Government  
19 themselves. So it was not a time-driven or a timetable  
20 politically-driven phenomenon.

21 Of course, one of the things we had to do in order  
22 to achieve those conditions was to train up the Iraqi  
23 security forces, but we also -- and we were most  
24 insistent on this, and that is why, similarly, when we  
25 came to consider Afghanistan, that you may want to speak

1 to me about later, I was most insistent that we, and I had  
2 an assurance that involving ourselves in the south of  
3 Afghanistan would not require us to draw down in Iraq,  
4 and I think in a document that was declassified this  
5 morning, you will see that I got that assurance.

6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think Sir Martin want to get on to that  
7 in a couple of minutes' time. If I can just stick with  
8 the drawdown, on the criteria you have just described,  
9 by March 2006, you were able to announce that there  
10 would be a small reduction in our forces from just over  
11 8,000 to about 7,200, which was going to take effect  
12 in May.

13 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But at the time you did that, the  
15 security situation down in MND (South East) was getting  
16 worse and the training was proving -- the training of  
17 Iraqi security forces, including police, was turning out  
18 to be a pretty slow process. So how were you able to  
19 announce that reduction at that time?

20 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I haven't got the figures here, so  
21 I'll talk from memory.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It is not the numbers that are important,  
23 it is the process that we are trying to explore.

24 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: It is not the process either, it is  
25 the substance.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes.

2 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Let me just deal with the  
3 substance. First of all, after Samarra, which I take it  
4 is your reference to the situation getting worse in the  
5 aftermath, it was not the judgment of the British  
6 commanders on the ground that the situation had got  
7 worse. Indeed, the interesting, though again apparently  
8 paradoxical thing, is that the response and reports  
9 from people on the ground re the Samarra incident, was  
10 that it had illustrated, not the fragility, but the  
11 maturity and depth of both the Iraqi security forces,  
12 politicians and the religious leaders; and I mean, I was  
13 interested to read the reports at the time. Perhaps  
14 I can just give you a flavour of what was said at the  
15 time.

16 This is -- this one here is, I think, from DOP(I),  
17 from the Defence and Overseas Policy. This was briefed  
18 to me by the Ministry of Defence, that:

19 "The destruction of the Golden Mosque in Samarra two  
20 weeks ago was calculated to trigger a massive emotional  
21 and violent reaction --"

22 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm so sorry, could you speak a little more  
23 slowly for the quote, for the transcript?

24 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I beg your pardon. The combination  
25 of the speed and the accent is probably causing the

1 problem.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We are getting pretty used to the accent,  
3 it is the speed.

4 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: "The destruction of the Golden  
5 Mosque in Samarra two weeks ago was calculated to  
6 trigger a massive emotional and violent reaction and to  
7 move the country into civil war. Civil war is not  
8 either imminent or inevitable. There remains a danger  
9 that sectarian violence could escalate, but the  
10 assessments I have received point to commendable  
11 restraint on the part of religious and political leaders  
12 and to an impressively mature response by the Iraqi  
13 security forces across Iraq."

14 Now, that was my summation, but you will want,  
15 yourselves, to look at what was being said from the  
16 commanders on the ground, and I can assure you, from  
17 what I have seen, this is what was being said: Sistani,  
18 the religious leaders, the political leaders, and indeed  
19 the Iraqi security forces, did not allow themselves to  
20 be provoked into a major spike in violence at that  
21 stage.

22 The second thing is the drawdown from 8,000 to  
23 7,200, I think, from memory, was not done for any other  
24 reasons than the fact that, one, some of the security  
25 sector reform tasks that we had been doing could now be

1 done by the Iraqis themselves. Specifically, they were  
2 now guarding their own barracks, they had their own  
3 trainers, whom we had trained, and had efficiencies  
4 brought about, not least in the logistics and  
5 engineering side.

6 So just as the year before we had increased the  
7 troop numbers, from 8,000 to 8,500 at one stage in  
8 order -- I think that's the figures -- in order to carry  
9 out the security sector reform tasks and training, so  
10 now, when some of those were completed, we were able to  
11 reduce from 8,000 to 7,200. We had made that decision.

12 Then Samarra happened. We then said: what is the  
13 effect of Samarra? The immediate response was showing  
14 the maturity, strength and resilience of the Iraqi  
15 political and security establishment, even at this  
16 inchoate stage, and that is why we went ahead with it.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: During your time as Secretary of State,  
18 the MoD took over responsibility for the police  
19 training. It already obviously had the lead  
20 responsibility on the army training in Iraq. But we  
21 have heard from other witnesses that there were  
22 essentially two problems with the police training.

23 One was that it was difficult to get enough police  
24 trainers out from the UK, and the other described to us  
25 was a question as to whether we were training on the

1 right model of police force for Iraq, whether we weren't  
2 using the model of the British bobby, where the Italian  
3 Carabinieri might have been more appropriate.

4 What was your sense of that at the time, that MoD  
5 became responsible for police training, and did you  
6 indeed feel that your department was the right  
7 department to have to lead on police training, in an  
8 overseas country, when obviously it was somebody else's  
9 business in the UK?

10 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Well, I didn't go looking for the  
11 lead on police training, Sir Roderic. The  
12 Prime Minister was kind enough to give me the  
13 opportunity to deal with it, although I think  
14 technically, it always stayed with the Foreign Office.

15 The second thing is, whoever said that there were  
16 two problems associated with the training of the Iraqi  
17 police was a master of understatement.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm summarising the evidence we have had,  
19 which went into quite a lot of detail.

20 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: One of the first things I did was  
21 ask a policeman in whom I had tremendous respect,  
22 Ronnie Flanagan, to go and give me his assessment -- his  
23 interim assessment. I might just point to one or two  
24 things he said. He said:

25 "There was no single national blueprint for the

1 security sector reform."

2 He said:

3 "There was insufficient attention being paid to the  
4 need to prepare the Iraqi police for  
5 counter-insurgency."

6 He said:

7 "The organisation for the police had a sub-optimal  
8 intelligence function. The Ministry of the Interior was  
9 insufficiently robust for rooting out undesirable  
10 elements", and so on and so forth.

11 To which you might add sectarianism. For 30 years it had  
12 been largely ignored by Saddam Hussein. He had other  
13 methods of dispensing what passed for justice.

14 Criminality, political connections and a Ministry of the  
15 Interior, which its critics would have said was rather  
16 sectarian in its own approach. You will remember that  
17 at one stage there was a basement full of prisoners  
18 found in Baghdad.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So I think we need to make a distinction  
20 between the state of the police, which obviously  
21 Ronnie Flanagan was describing like that, and which  
22 other witnesses have described very much in those terms,  
23 and the task that those responsible for the training,  
24 how they carried it out, how they improved it from this  
25 pretty difficult baseline.

1 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I was coming on to that, because,  
2 again, there are far more than two. First of all, it  
3 was fragmented, the training. Some people were trained  
4 outside the country in Jordan. Some people were  
5 trained, I think, in Baghdad. Some people were  
6 contractors. Some people were ad hoc brought across.  
7 The Italians were training, I think in Dhi Qar, because  
8 they have Carabinieri, and some of them were British  
9 bobbies, I think, a very limited number, but that's  
10 hardly the sort of training you need when you come out  
11 of the position that Iraq was in.

12 The big lesson I think in this -- and I may come  
13 back to this at the end if you allow me -- we have  
14 a desperate need to have an integrated surge capacity  
15 to deploy, not just military but civilian skills; right  
16 across the range; and one of most important in  
17 preventing conflicts or in post-conflict reconstructions  
18 precisely Sir Roderic as you say, the training of  
19 police.

20 This is not just an operational difficulty. I think  
21 it is probably true that, whenever you come out of  
22 a conflict of this nature, the last body to be accepted  
23 by communities as being reformed is the police. Witness  
24 the fact we are still arguing about the devolution of  
25 law and order to Northern Ireland. Witness the fact



1 that in Bosnia, even when the three ethnic groups had  
2 an army made up of regiments of the Serbs, the Croats  
3 and the Bosniaks themselves, they still couldn't agree  
4 on policing.

5 So it is a very difficult problem, because it is the  
6 people at the end of the street with lethality, and the  
7 people living in the street with long memories and long  
8 histories. So it is particularly problematic and it is  
9 particularly short of resources for training because  
10 there are not many nations, particularly in western  
11 Europe, that have a paramilitary style police force.

12 There are some French Gendarmerie, there are the  
13 Carabinieri and there were the RUC. But there is  
14 a desperate need to have that skill as part of a deployable  
15 skills base for a post-conflict or even conflict  
16 prevention purposes, along with plumbers, electricians  
17 and so on, but we may come on to post-conflict later on.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Right, let's turn to Sir Lawrence Freedman.  
20 Lawrence?

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just following up where Sir Roderic  
22 was taking us with those interesting questions, we had  
23 very particular problems, didn't we, in Basra, with the  
24 police and the militias, in particular the incident at  
25 the Jamiat police station in which two British

1           servicemen were taken hostage and released  
2           in September 2005.

3   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP:   Yes.

4   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   What impact did that have on the  
5           ability of British forces to influence the security  
6           situation in Basra?

7   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP:   Well, because of the action we  
8           took, the Basra Council, or elements within it, didn't  
9           like it and they broke off relationships with us for  
10          a period of time. I think that was unfortunate, but, on  
11          the other hand, I think that the protection of the two  
12          British soldiers who were taken prisoner was of absolute  
13          paramount concern, certainly to me and to the chiefs and  
14          the commanding officer.

15                 You may remember what happened here is that two  
16                 British special forces in plain clothes, monitoring as  
17                 part of the counter-insurgency operations, I think, were  
18                 approached by two men who appeared to be not only  
19                 wearing but brandishing guns, I think. I can't remember  
20                 the exact details, but certainly there was a gunfight.  
21                 The two British were then taken to a police station.  
22                 That was worrying enough, given some of the elements  
23                 that we believed were present in the Iraqi police  
24                 service in Basra, but then we discovered during  
25                 negotiations, when we had sent some armoured vehicles --

1 do you remember the pictures in which somebody threw  
2 some form of petrol bomb, I think, and the pictures of  
3 the young soldiers who behaved very bravely with great  
4 courage coming out in the midst of 200 or 300  
5 protesters?

6 They were surrounding the police station and then we  
7 discovered that the two soldiers had been moved and they  
8 had been taken away by one of the sectarian gangs it  
9 appeared, and at that stage we authorised activity with  
10 the purpose of getting them back, quite frankly. And we  
11 did, and we did it in a fairly robust fashion and the  
12 Provincial Council in Basra withdrew its cooperation.

13 This wasn't an unusual thing. The  
14 Provincial Councils in the four provinces of  
15 MND (South East) from time to time would withdraw. So  
16 it had unfortunate consequences, but I do not think,  
17 quite frankly, we had any alternative.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In the circumstances in which you  
19 found yourself, that's probably true, but it was sort of  
20 symptomatic of the position that we were now in, that  
21 our forces had to put as much effort into looking after  
22 themselves as being able to do very much for the local  
23 people in Basra.

24 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I think that's right. As I said,  
25 increasingly, as the Iraqi establishment and

1 institutions became more and more powerful, and we had  
2 to recognise that, it became more and more difficult for  
3 us to operate without them. Certainly my memory is --  
4 my recollection throughout that period is, if you wanted to  
5 carry out activity, it wasn't a straightforward matter  
6 getting the support via the central or the local  
7 government.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In a sense we were often caught in  
9 the middle between them.

10 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Pardon?

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We were caught in the middle between  
12 the central and the local government.

13 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Not so much caught in the middle,  
14 it is that the central government had political  
15 connections in the south, because the south was a big --  
16 in Basra it was a big Shia area, the Shia were the  
17 majority, therefore, they tended to have, you know, more  
18 of the ministerial posts including their own area.  
19 Though, to be fair, the Ministry of Defence was Dulaimi,  
20 a Sunni, originally, but the Ministry of the Interior  
21 which controlled the police tended to be  
22 Shia-controlled.

23 That had connections in Basra and in Basra they had  
24 connections with political groupings, and, obviously,  
25 within the Shia, there were also some paramilitary

1 groupings and sectarian groupings. So some of these  
2 people were the people that you were trying to arrest  
3 for reasons of criminality or security or whatever, but  
4 they were connected politically; and, therefore, when  
5 you wanted to move, increasingly you had to have some  
6 form of agreement and partnership in Basra and the other  
7 provinces and it wasn't always straightforward to get  
8 that.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That goes back to what a number of  
10 witnesses have told us about the real problem was  
11 politics, was moving the political situation amongst the  
12 Iraqis forward so that they would be prepared to take on  
13 the militias and be much more ready to accept the  
14 dangers of criminality in key ministries and so on.

15 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Absolutely. The key to this was  
16 the recognition that, ultimately, not only was it our  
17 strategy to give the Iraqis sovereign control and the  
18 means of defending that, but it was also our exit  
19 strategy, because, ultimately, nobody could defeat the  
20 insurgents and the terrorists other than the Iraqis  
21 themselves.

22 We could hold the fort, but, ultimately, it is the  
23 politics of this that comes through, and although there  
24 is no template you can take from one place to another,  
25 the truth of the matter is that force, military force,

1 has to quote Rupert Smith, "no utility unless it is in  
2 the accomplishment of political objectives".

3 So whether it is Northern Ireland or whether it is  
4 Iraq, the soldiers hold the fort for us to try and find  
5 the political solutions and the political solution in  
6 Iraq was in the hands of the development and emergence  
7 of a democratic Iraqi Government themselves.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I now want to move on to the  
9 question of funding, with which I'm sure you spent quite  
10 a bit of time as Secretary of State. By the time you  
11 became Secretary of State, we had been in Iraq for over  
12 two years.

13 Can you explain the impact that that two years of  
14 intense operations had had on defence funding?

15 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes, it was very draining.

16 However, unlike almost every other department, the  
17 Ministry of Defence budget, which is granted -- you can  
18 argue whether it is high enough or low enough, but at  
19 the end of the day -- and this will -- it always seem  
20 incomprehensible to people outside the  
21 Ministry of Defence -- all of that money that you give  
22 doesn't actually finance you to fight a war. All that  
23 does is maintain the power to fight a conflict.

24 There are three elements of that power. The first is the  
25 planning, which is the people that you pay for to think

1 through strategy, tactics, operational concepts,  
2 doctrine and so on. The second is the physical one,  
3 which is the physical resources and so on; and the third one,  
4 which is far more difficult to define, but actually  
5 I think, for this Committee, is worth, in your  
6 consideration, later thinking about it, is the question  
7 of morale - and whether or not it is possible to sustain  
8 a conflict in western democracies in the way that might  
9 have been the case before 24-hour-a-day media and so on.  
10 Certainly our enemies don't think it is.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I want to come back to that later.

12 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Okay, so those three things, are,  
13 if you like, static forces, but then, when you go into  
14 a conflict, you have an application for extra money and  
15 urgent operational requirements and all the discussions  
16 that you had with Geoff Hoon. And I think the cost to us  
17 of this extra was of the area of £1.1 billion per annum. I'll  
18 stand corrected if somebody has different figures, but  
19 I think it is around £1.1 billion per annum, and that  
20 was given to us from the Treasury in order to fight this  
21 particular conflict.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So we have heard a lot about the way  
23 that the money for actually fighting the war was  
24 protected and the role of UORs. One of the consequences  
25 of UORs is that you may take on equipment to deal with

1 an operational setting but once that equipment has been  
2 procured, it is part of your normal kit. So it still  
3 has longer-term implications and will have to come out  
4 of the rest of your defence budget. So that's another  
5 part of the sort of gradual squeeze?

6 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes, I wouldn't disagree with that.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Could I interject? You are also using up  
8 your existing materiel at a much faster rate, if you are  
9 fighting a campaign, aren't you? Your tanks are doing  
10 higher mileage --

11 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: You are, absolutely -- although, the  
12 key here, I think, is balance. I mean, I had the --  
13 I had the privilege of working under George Robertson  
14 when we did the Strategic Defence Review. I think  
15 probably we got the direction right, but the rate of  
16 change dreadfully wrong. It just went faster than we  
17 ever thought.

18 But one of the things I discovered there was that,  
19 when, in 1997 -- and it bears exactly on this point --  
20 we asked the Ministry of Defence how much money they had  
21 tied up in capital -- I don't mean in big ships, I mean  
22 spares and so on: (a) they didn't know, because it was  
23 before we went on to resource-based accountancy, and you  
24 didn't have to know that; and, secondly, when we found  
25 out, it was of the order, from memory, of



1 16 billion pounds. 8 billion of that I think was arms  
2 and weaponry, ammunitions, which you may think you would  
3 have on the stock, but the other 8 billion pounds which  
4 was tied up, nobody quite knew what these bits and  
5 pieces were for, at the end of the day.

6 So there is a fine balance to be achieved between  
7 tying up masses in case something happens for every  
8 contingency, and ordering everything at the last moment,  
9 and then finding you have got a stock of stuff which is  
10 counted among your assets. I think the point that  
11 was -- you know, it comes into your baseline budget  
12 which is the point I think Sir Lawrence was making.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You just mentioned your role in the  
14 Strategic Defence Review as Minister of State, and we  
15 have just heard from Sir Kevin Tebbitt his concern that  
16 it was probably underfunded. He said perhaps half  
17 a billion, perhaps more. Was that your sense as well?

18 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I didn't actually deal with the  
19 negotiations -- this is not a cop-out, but I didn't deal  
20 with the negotiations on that. Indeed I may, by the  
21 time this was all finalised, have left. They moved me  
22 from Armed Forces Minister to be Minister of Transport  
23 and called it promotion. I didn't quite see it that  
24 way. They kept telling me I was going to the Cabinet.  
25 I would much rather have stayed where I was and seen it

1 through.

2 It would have been tight, but I ask you to remember  
3 where we were coming from, because, before the Labour  
4 government came in. Some years before it was the  
5 policy of the Labour Party to cut defence expenditure  
6 by, I think it was 6 billion at one stage We  
7 gradually changed that, so it became an additional  
8 amount that we got.

9 It was a tough negotiation, because, if I remember  
10 correctly, we had promised that we would keep to the  
11 conservative spending limitation. But if there was  
12 a diminution, it was as of nothing compared to the ten  
13 years prior to us coming in as a government. I think if  
14 you check you will find that there was a 29 per cent cut  
15 in real terms in defence expenditure throughout the  
16 1990s, including the so-called "Options for Change" which  
17 destroyed our medical services, and I don't think we  
18 have ever recovered from that since then.

19 So it would have been tight, but it was the  
20 beginning of the end of the massive cuts that we had had  
21 up to that stage, Sir Lawrence.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Those cuts were in part the result  
23 of the end of the Cold War and a shift away from the big  
24 war scenarios with which we had been preparing before,  
25 but let's move on to your time as Secretary of State.

1           We have heard from Kevin Tebbitt about the debates  
2           that we had with the Treasury in 2002 to 2004. What  
3           sort of debates were you having with the Treasury about  
4           getting sufficient resources for your defence budget  
5           more generally as well as for operations?

6   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Well, in the period during which  
7           I was there, the two big considerations were Iraq, where  
8           it was funded, and the preparations for the move to the  
9           south in Afghanistan. Those were tough, but I have to  
10          say -- I might be the only witness you have got who is  
11          saying this -- that both the Secretary to the Treasury,  
12          who subsequently became Defence Secretary, and the  
13          Chancellor, who subsequently became Prime Minister, and  
14          is Prime Minister now, gave us what we needed.

15          I insisted, for instance, on Helmand, on three  
16          conditions, the first one of which was that the  
17          configuration that was chosen by the Chiefs of Staff as  
18          being necessary for the mission was funded in full by  
19          the Treasury. And the then Chancellor, now  
20          Prime Minister, provided that.

21   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about the defence budget as  
22          a whole?

23   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I wasn't involved in negotiations.  
24          You know, it works on a three-year cycle. So I didn't  
25          find myself at the centre, during the period I was

1           there, of negotiations on the defence budget as a whole.  
2           So you had better to ask others. I think probably  
3           Geoff Hoon before me and John Hutton after me.

4   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We have had some discussions with  
5           them. Did you get a sense within overall government  
6           priorities where defence appeared at this time? Was  
7           there a readiness to take a longer view of defence needs  
8           and priorities?

9   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: It is very subjective - not as high  
10          as I would have wanted it to. I just believe that if  
11          you are asking young men and women to do what we ask  
12          them to do, even when they are not in conflict, they are  
13          living in circumstances that most of us would not accept  
14          living in. You know, abroad in difficult circumstances  
15          and so on. So I have always felt that we ought to put  
16          more towards that than we do. And it is true that we  
17          have been increasing in real terms the amount of money  
18          but we have been decreasing it as part of our national  
19          expenditure, our GDP and we have also been increasing  
20          what we ask them to do in terms of commitments. So  
21          I suppose not as high as I would like it to be,  
22          Sir Lawrence.

23   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: During this period, there was a lot  
24          of concern about -- the contract with the services in  
25          terms of -- given what we were asking them to do, making

1           sure that they had decent housing --

2   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Absolutely, the housing -- I have  
3           to say the housing -- when I became Armed Forces  
4           Minister, the housing was a disgrace and it is going to  
5           take, I think it was 12 years to try and get it into  
6           something decent. There was no Veterans Agency at all.  
7           I established the Veterans Agency.

8           I can remember talking to staff at that time, the  
9           families and forces organisation, and they felt  
10          completely excluded. I had to insist we brought in the  
11          Gulf war veterans, into the Ministry of Defence. For  
12          some two years before it, they had not been allowed in.  
13          You will remember the -- what we went through then in  
14          trying to discover what exactly might have caused this  
15          group of symptoms, and, incidentally, one of the big  
16          worries was that it might have been chemical weapons  
17          that Saddam had during the Gulf war; and just I mention  
18          that because I know you have had lots of discussions  
19          about whether it was rational in the run-up to the  
20          second Iraq war -- whether it was rational to have the  
21          view that perhaps he had chemical weapons.

22          I volunteer the view -- and I say this as  
23          a historian - I think everyone else you have spoken to  
24          has been a lawyer, almost without exception -- I find it  
25          difficult, given what we knew about Iraq and the use of

1 the weapons and the discovery of them during the 1990s  
2 and all the intelligence reports -- I find it difficult  
3 to see how anybody could have come to any other  
4 conclusion than that there were -- this guy had the  
5 intention and the capability of having them.

6 Now, we haven't discovered them, I fully accept  
7 that. But it is difficult to see how rationally we could't  
8 come to that conclusion and certainly, with the Gulf  
9 war veterans, one of the issues that the families were  
10 interested in, it was a big worry that perhaps they had  
11 been contaminated with it. So, yes, there were big  
12 inadequacies and I don't think they have all been  
13 remedied, Sir Lawrence.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think that is a good time to break  
15 because there are some equipment questions I want to  
16 come on to.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Shall we break for ten or fifteen minutes?  
18 May I observe, as we break, that there are no lawyers on  
19 this panel and at least two historians.

20 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Thank you. Had this occurred to  
21 you: Geoff Hoon, John Hutton, Des Browne, Tony Blair?  
22 I mean, it is just (inaudible).

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We've noticed.

24 (11.14 am)

25 (Short break)

1 (11.24 am)

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, let's continue, if we may, where we  
3 left off. Lawrence, I think you were in the middle --

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I wanted to quickly go through  
5 issues of equipment. We heard from Sir Kevin Tebbitt  
6 earlier that, given the pressures on the defence budget  
7 that there had been during this past decade, especially  
8 these early years, and the need to fund operations and  
9 so on, the thing that had suffered most, he said, had  
10 been aspects of the equipment programme. Was that your  
11 experience as well?

12 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I think so, and I don't think it  
13 has gone away. Obviously, there are huge problems with  
14 the present capital expenditure as well as recurrent  
15 expenditure, so, yes, equipment, not just because there  
16 are cuts, but equipment gets more and more expensive,  
17 whether you are in the medical profession or in the  
18 profession of conflict and war. The rate of inflation  
19 is very high.

20 Secondly, it gets -- the cycle of improvement is  
21 faster than ever before, because so much of it is now  
22 involved with technology, and that's one of the reasons  
23 that you get delays, incidentally, when people set  
24 a specification. It was all right in the days when  
25 there was a ten-year cycle of renewal of ideas. Now,

1 everything is changing so quickly that, by the time you  
2 have actually got to the production process, the  
3 technology has changed and the armed forces want the  
4 best there is at any given point in time. So you change  
5 the specs.

6 So yes, there is pressure all the time on the  
7 budget, as there is in every department budget, but  
8 particularly because of those things that I mentioned.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Could I just interject to ask:  
10 interoperability with the Americans means that the  
11 Americans set the technological pace, I guess, which in  
12 turn we simply have to react to, and that's expensive.

13 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: It is expensive if you go to  
14 operate in partnership with the United States. You have  
15 to have systems that can speak to each other. On the  
16 other hand, I think the Americans don't always share the  
17 top technology, even with their closest allies. Indeed  
18 they don't always share it even when their President is  
19 telling them to share it.

20 In a democracy, unfortunately, even if the President  
21 says, "These are our allies, give them this  
22 information", you have a legal system and you have to  
23 democratic system in the Senate and the House and so on  
24 where they may say no and oppose the wishes of the  
25 executive wing. That's, as you know, the way the



1 American Government is split up, because it was designed  
2 as a system that wouldn't work.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This was mentioned again by  
4 Sir Kevin Tebbitt this morning, I think in relation to  
5 the joint strike fighter, in fact mentioned in relation  
6 to Chinook.

7 Now, going back to questions that were also raised  
8 this morning about our expected or hoped for influence  
9 within the United States, how big an issue was this,  
10 that on key elements of capability we just weren't  
11 getting the support that we needed?

12 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Well, they didn't actually affect  
13 the operations in Iraq or anywhere else. So I'm not  
14 implying that they did, but, yes, it is a source of  
15 irritation. I can't speak on Chinook as regards the  
16 exchange of technology. I can speak on the joint strike  
17 fighter, because it is something that I actually raised  
18 at the highest level in the United States, as did the  
19 Prime Minister.

20 The highest level in the United States, which was  
21 the President and Donald Rumsfeld beneath him, to the  
22 best of my knowledge, authorised that certain things be  
23 shared that ultimately weren't shared. The reason is  
24 that, as I said, you have got a legal system and you  
25 have got a democratic system there that just can't be

1 ordered in the way it could be in dictatorial countries.

2 So ...

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Or even in the United Kingdom. We  
4 could share in the other direction possibly more easily  
5 than they could share back.

6 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes, their worry is never -- their  
7 worry is genuinely not that they can't trust the  
8 British; their worry is that, in the course of trade,  
9 that we get things which are classified, we incorporate  
10 them in something we are doing and we sell that to  
11 someone else.

12 So it is a natural worry about the sell-on of highly  
13 classified technology. So it is an irritant. I don't  
14 think it is a strategic problem.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: On particular equipment -- we have  
16 discussed quite a bit in these hearings helicopters, and  
17 there has been this Public Account Committee report  
18 in February 2005 about the alarming gap in the number of  
19 helicopters and some evidence that this position had  
20 been made worse by the discussions between the Ministry  
21 and the Treasury in 2003/2004. What measures were you  
22 taking to try to remedy this gap?

23 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: All right. The 2003/2004  
24 decisions, which, as I understand it, meant there was  
25 pressure to take money out of the budget, and it was the

1 general area of helicopters it came out of. That  
2 actually doesn't feed through quickly. That's separate from the  
3 Public Accounts Committee report in February 2005, which  
4 points to the existing problems.

5 So there is such a lead time on helicopters that the  
6 2003/2004 is interesting for the longer term, but  
7 doesn't actually affect the period during which we are  
8 discussing.

9 The Public Accounts Committee was a contemporaneous  
10 analysis of needs at the time and they used figures  
11 which varied, from memory, from 20 to 38 per cent. Actually  
12 the figure -- I'm not diminishing it at all, the figure  
13 in which we are probably interested is less than that,  
14 because I think I'm correct in saying that, when it came  
15 to support helicopters, battlefield helicopters, it  
16 was 17 per cent, I think.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think that's right.

18 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Okay, so if it was a 17 per cent  
19 shortfall, obviously we had to do a number of things to  
20 try and cope with that. One of them is to get people to  
21 do more flying hours, which means that in terms of the  
22 harmony rules, which are basically - for the uninitiated -  
23 the rules which are the ideal in terms of care of your  
24 servicemen and women, it means that the number of  
25 people -- the proportion of pilots who would be

1 breaching that would increase.

2 I think throughout this period it probably increased  
3 from about -- I'm talking very rough figures, maybe  
4 5 per cent to 10 per cent, something like that, in terms  
5 of the RAF. So the first thing is that would happen.  
6 In Iraq, we also had some surge support from the north,  
7 came down. We had a rigorous prioritisation of tasking  
8 to make sure that we used them very efficiently. We had  
9 a flexible use of helicopter types across tasks. And on  
10 occasions we said no.

11 I mean, on all of these things, my benchmark is:  
12 what are the views of the Chiefs of Staff? If you want  
13 legal advice, you ask a lawyer, if you want to ask  
14 about military decisions, you ask the Chiefs of Defence  
15 Staff. And, therefore, when the United Nations, for  
16 instance, would ask us for a helicopter use,  
17 unfortunately at some stages we had to say no.

18 When the Foreign Office asked us, say, for  
19 assistance in travel in Iraq, we had to say no as well.  
20 I remember on one occasion a Conservative MP complained  
21 to me in the House of Commons that there was a shortage  
22 of helicopter hours there, and I only remarked to him  
23 that part of the reason was MPs were flying about in  
24 helicopters, including himself. So we tried to cut back  
25 on that. So in the short-term we took a series of

1 measures of that nature.

2           However, when General Jackson went to Iraq, the  
3 Chief of General Staff in, I think, the second half of  
4 2005, the first six months I was in, he did say to me,  
5 "Look, it is very tight over there in terms of  
6 helicopters", and we instituted a sort of review of  
7 that, and, as a result of that, or partly as a result of  
8 that, we tried to find a way to get extra helicopters  
9 without incurring the lead time that was necessary,  
10 because, as you know, when you order a helicopter, it  
11 can take, six, eight, ten years, in order for it to come  
12 through.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Or even longer with the Chinooks.

14 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Indeed, even to refit. So what we  
15 did is we discovered just after I left that the Danes  
16 had ordered some helicopters some years before and we  
17 did a deal with the Danes and they allowed us to take  
18 their place in the queue, and we got six or seven there  
19 and we also initiated a renewal programme for the  
20 Chinooks that we had purchased some time before, I think  
21 eight in number, which, for some bizarre reason, the  
22 specification had never been appropriate to the task and  
23 we had to refit that, but even that took a bit of time.

24           So there was -- I did look quite closely at this  
25 and, indeed, on Afghanistan, when, if you are talking

1 about that later, I asked for a personal assurance from  
2 the helicopter commander on the operations in  
3 Afghanistan, that he was satisfied he had enough mission  
4 hours to complete the mission he had been given, and the  
5 answer then was yes. But, yes, you are right, it is  
6 tight and tough.

7 Can I just make one point about Iraq, though? It  
8 became increasingly a matter that I would look at and  
9 the reason was this, that up until relatively near the  
10 time that I came in as Secretary of State, first of all  
11 there was a factor which continued, which is we were  
12 involved in counter-insurgency which, in British  
13 military doctrine, involved a lot of boots on the  
14 ground, premium on the people on the ground, especially  
15 in a place like Basra, because, if you are deploying  
16 helicopters in those situations, it isn't always  
17 commensurate with the sort of thing you are trying to  
18 do, which is to win over hearts and minds and so on.

19 You only need to talk to some of the people in  
20 Northern Ireland about what happened when Chinooks or  
21 the helicopters were flying above them in places like  
22 Armagh. It became a source of animosity.

23 So it wasn't as if helicopters were suitable for all  
24 tasks. Secondly, up until relatively late, 2004, the  
25 main threat to our troops was not coming from IEDs,

1       improvised explosive devices, bombs, with the shaped  
2       charges and sophistications that became the big threat.  
3       It was small arms fire, it was rocket-propelled  
4       grenades, RPGs, and, therefore, there wasn't the  
5       vulnerability in armoured vehicles that later became the  
6       case. There wasn't the same level of vulnerability.

7             The third thing goes without saying, that,  
8       tragically, even helicopters and air frames are no  
9       guarantee of safety, and it is always the safety of  
10      troops that are our primary concern. Tragically, the  
11      biggest loss, I think, just before I came in was ten  
12      people in a Hercules C130K aeroplane and the next  
13      biggest, the day after I went, the day that Des Browne  
14      took over, was a Lynx helicopter where I think five  
15      people died. So between those two we had 15 tragic  
16      death. I merely make the point. We were looking for  
17      more helicopters, more helicopter hours, but that in  
18      itself -- there is no guarantee of safety for the men  
19      and women who are out there on the front line.

20   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But it did mean there was a lot of  
21      dependence on the quality of the land transport?

22   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: It did.

23   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: A lot of casualties were taken as  
24      the IEDs got more sophisticated with the Snatch  
25      Land Rover.

1 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: That's right. You will know this  
2 better than anyone, from the studies and the work that  
3 you have done, that -- and it comes back to the cliché  
4 which we used earlier, that "no plan survives first  
5 contact with the enemy" -- there is a constant struggle  
6 between the two sides, with one developing protective  
7 measures for itself and the other trying to find ways to  
8 ensure they could get through those protective measures.

9 What was happening here was that there was a degree  
10 of sophistication which we assume came from Iranian  
11 sources, possibly via Hezbollah in the nature of the  
12 bombs and shape charges that were being used that were  
13 making our armoured vehicles more vulnerable to these  
14 than had previously been the case when we were using  
15 rocket-propelled grenades or just guns.

16 Therefore, the Snatch Land Rovers which were, even  
17 in 2009, assessed as being mission critical. I mean, we  
18 need them for this type of counter-insurgency operation.  
19 Nevertheless, we upgraded them, I think in  
20 2005/2007/2008, but, because we needed something  
21 heavier, we then developed out of an older vehicle,  
22 reinforcements and so on. I think General Mike Walker  
23 was talking about this the other day, the Bulldog was  
24 one of them. Then Mastiff, a new armoured vehicle, and  
25 then Vector, but none of these give the guarantee of



1 safety. That's why it takes a lot of brave men and  
2 women to be at the front in these, but we did try to  
3 upgrade and to get better and better armoured  
4 protection, and we did try to get means of more flying  
5 hours in helicopters in the short-term and more  
6 helicopters in the long-term.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This illustrates the very demanding  
8 requirements of an operation of this sort and one that  
9 is enduring over some time. Was there ever any sense  
10 through this period when you were Secretary of State  
11 that it was going to be difficult to sustain this for  
12 much longer, that the pressures were growing, or else  
13 that a -- that what we could do in Iraq would have to be  
14 cut back, because the risks -- the operational risks  
15 would be too great to do much more?

16 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I don't think I ever lacked  
17 confidence in our armed forces and I think, being as  
18 self-critical as we are, that some of the criticisms are  
19 unwarranted about the end in Basra, because, in my own  
20 view -- but you will take your own view on this from  
21 Des Browne and John Hutton - but in my own view, one of the  
22 biggest obstacles to them doing that which they probably  
23 wanted to do was the increasing political sovereignty of  
24 the Iraqi Government itself. So I never lacked  
25 confidence in them, from the Chiefs of Staff downwards.

1           I did recognise, however -- and probably from the  
2           start -- that the exit strategy, ie the way you get out  
3           of this, was by the build-up of the Iraqis themselves.  
4           And what was difficult was to explain to the public  
5           through elements of the press, who couldn't conceive of  
6           a struggle, or a conflict that didn't end with  
7           a victory parade on a given day, because they didn't  
8           actually understand the nature of modern conflict, which  
9           I'm sure will be one of the lessons that you will look  
10          at.

11          You know, the idea that there wouldn't be a conflict  
12          with a defined end on a defined day when somebody would  
13          pull up a flag and all the insurgents would be dead and  
14          we would declare the war over. The idea that that  
15          wouldn't happen seemed inconceivable to some of the  
16          people who were writing about this in this country and  
17          it was one of the problems that we had, trying to  
18          explain, "No, it is not that type of conflict".

19          So when a soldier said, quite properly in the  
20          context of the new conflict, "Look, there is no victory  
21          of that nature", we got all sorts of people writing,  
22          "Oh, someone has admitted we are going to be defeated".

23          So the explanation of what it was we had to do,  
24          which ultimately was to empower the Iraqis themselves to  
25          fight the terrorists, the recognition that it wasn't

1 going to be a perfect world -- I think in a speech  
2 I said, "We have to be honest with everyone. This is  
3 not going to be Hampshire or New Hampshire," you know,  
4 this is going to be Iraq and there may be continuing  
5 insurgency or terrorists, but we will celebrate the fact  
6 that the Iraqis themselves will be defending it with  
7 their own armed forces under the control of  
8 a democratically elected Iraqi Government."

9 In the long run, that's not only our exit strategy,  
10 because they are doing it themselves, I believe in the  
11 long run that will be the arbiter of whether or not we  
12 look back and regard Iraq as a success; because if we do  
13 have a largely Muslim, almost entirely Muslim, largely  
14 Arabic, democratic government in that strategic area,  
15 when the Islamist extremists are saying, "It isn't  
16 possible. It is alien. These values are evil", that is  
17 the strategic decision that in retrospect will  
18 shape whether this war is a success or not a success.

19 So I never had any illusions or any lack of  
20 confidence in our armed forces. We were tight in terms  
21 of the military equipment, but, at the end of the day,  
22 the people who would make the difference are the Iraqi  
23 people themselves, and some day, some people will  
24 actually ask them their opinion about whether or not  
25 they wanted to stay with Saddam Hussein; or whether they

1 think they are better off, despite all of the sacrifices  
2 that have been made. I would rather listen to them.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's an issue we are going to have  
4 to address, but I think Sir Martin probably has only  
5 questions now.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's turn to Afghanistan. Can I just say  
7 I wouldn't like any impression to be formed that this  
8 Inquiry is extending its reach into Afghanistan per se.

9 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: You are keeping that for the next  
10 one?

11 THE CHAIRMAN: But it is essentially relevant to our  
12 Iraq Inquiry. So turning to you, Sir Martin.

13 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Some ten months before you became  
14 Secretary of State, the Prime Minister had announced  
15 that the Allied Rapid Reaction Headquarters, the ARRC,  
16 would be deployed to Afghanistan, and six months after  
17 you became Secretary of State, the decision was made to  
18 deploy into Helmand province.

19 Before we look at the Iraqi dimension of this  
20 decision, we have heard mixed evidence about the reasons  
21 for the subsequent deployment of Helmand and wonder if  
22 you could tell us what you saw as the key drivers which  
23 led us to take on this extra military commitment?

24 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Would it be helpful if I gave you  
25 a sort of chronological audit trail? Because your

1 chronology isn't exactly correct and I think we ought to  
2 get that correct first of all.

3 It is true that, as regards the ARRC deployment,  
4 that's the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps Headquarters,  
5 which, as Mike Walker said the other day was sitting  
6 there without any items on its agenda, let's all agree  
7 that that was fine and that was announced.

8 It is true that was announced on 29 June 2004 by  
9 Prime Minister Blair standing beside Karzai in Istanbul,  
10 and it was confirmed three days later by the  
11 Prime Minister's official spokesman in his lobby  
12 briefing.

13 However, it is also true that the decision to go to  
14 Helmand doesn't exactly start in December 2005. It  
15 starts in 2004. I think Mike Walker, General Walker,  
16 alluded the other day to the fact that there was  
17 a British battalion sitting somewhere between Kabul and  
18 Mazar-e-Sharif, which I think he said wasn't living up  
19 to the capabilities that the British could bring to this  
20 intervention in Afghanistan.

21 During 2004, NATO was wondering how they would  
22 accomplish the next step on the ISAF operation.  
23 Basically, what had happened is they had decided --  
24 there were two operations in Afghanistan. One was  
25 called Enduring Freedom, it was the counter-terrorist,

1 anti-terrorist mission led by the Americans. This was  
2 the one that went chasing people and trying to get into  
3 the Bora Bora mountains and find Osama bin Laden and  
4 shoot them up and kill them and so on. The other one  
5 was the reconstruction mission, which was under NATO,  
6 ISAF. Yes? They went to the north. They then decided  
7 that they would go anti-clockwise round Afghanistan as they  
8 were cleaned of terrorists. So they then went to the  
9 west, and then they turned their mind, during 2004, as  
10 to how and where they would go to the south. Right?  
11 Those initial discussions took place during 2004.

12 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Before you became Secretary of State?

13 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Before I became Secretary of State.  
14 And in January 2005, before I became Secretary of State,  
15 the Chiefs of Staff agreed that the then  
16 Defence Secretary should reiterate the UK's support for  
17 Afghanistan through the planned deployment of the ARRC  
18 and indicate our willingness to refocus our military  
19 effort from the north to the south; in January 2005.

20 In April 2005, which is the month before I became  
21 Secretary of State, the Chiefs of Staff agreed to  
22 preliminary operations from September. They agreed the  
23 date - before I became Secretary of State - from September,  
24 associated with the handover of UK activity in the  
25 north, but required further work before deciding on

1 a range of options for deployment to the south,  
2 specifically to Helmand province, the month before  
3 I became Secretary of State.

4 So I just thought we would get the chronology right  
5 because there has been some confusion, I think, in some  
6 of the evidence that has been given, so I went to the  
7 trouble of looking it up in the Ministry of Defence for  
8 elucidation on that, Sir Martin.

9 When I arrived, therefore, at the MoD in May 2005  
10 we had already offered to NATO the HQ ARCC which, as  
11 you said was done on 29 June, for the period 2006, May,  
12 to February 2007. The chiefs had also agreed in  
13 principle to a proposal that we would refocus our  
14 military efforts from the north to the south of  
15 Afghanistan.

16 I was then asked on the advice of the chiefs, which  
17 I always take, to reiterate our commitment in these  
18 terms at the NATO ministerial meeting on 9 and 10 June  
19 which is why I was discussing it during May.

20 When I was asked, I said I didn't care what decision  
21 had been taken on principle. This Secretary of State  
22 was laying down certain conditions. I remember it was  
23 a rather interesting meeting. When you are told, as  
24 Secretary of State, "Oh, the decision has been taken",  
25 I think you have an obligation to say, "Yes, well,

1 unless the conditions I lay down are satisfied, you had  
2 better find another Secretary of State".

3 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What were those conditions?

4 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I did actually use that wording,  
5 yes.

6 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What were they?

7 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: The conditions were threefold.

8 First of all, that the military configuration which had  
9 been decided upon by the Chiefs of Staff, was financed  
10 in full by the Treasury.

11 Secondly, that the configuration of troops around  
12 the British that had been promised by NATO, was  
13 delivered. That's important. I'll come back to that in  
14 a second.

15 Thirdly, that the alternative incomes, money, be  
16 produced by DFID, and \$100 million the Americans were  
17 already spending there, stayed there. Because I did not  
18 want us to go in trying to take away poppy money from  
19 farmers, giving them nothing in return, and, therefore,  
20 turning them into subversives against us. Because, in my  
21 experience, people do not elect to starve to death in  
22 a state of grace. So if you take away their income,  
23 they will demand an alternative one.

24 So those were the three conditions. Two of them  
25 were met by the September/October period because the



1 Treasury had said, "Yes, we'll fund it" and because we  
2 had established a group, learning the lessons of Iraq,  
3 which I chaired unusually. It would normally have been  
4 a Foreign Office lead, but the Prime Minister asked me  
5 to lead it to bring together DFID, the Foreign Office,  
6 Treasury, MoD and so on to work down from the concept,  
7 strategic concept, right down to the operational level  
8 and DFID were involved in that. That was met. The  
9 problem was we were supposed, from memory, to go in,  
10 make announcements in September -- go in  
11 September/October.

12 The Dutch would not give the guarantee they would go  
13 to Oruzgan province to the north of us, and I said --  
14 despite the fact I was getting heavily lobbied by some  
15 of our active soldiers who wanted to get out there,  
16 I said that I would not give the decision to deploy  
17 British forces unless our northern flank was covered,  
18 and that accounts for the delay. Because we didn't go in  
19 the September, October, November, December or January,  
20 but only on 25th/26 January, I was told that the Dutch were  
21 just about to agree and I therefore announced in the  
22 House of Commons that we would deploy to Helmand.

23 So that's the full story, as far as I can give you  
24 it, and you will want to check that against the records  
25 and I'm happy to ...

1 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Can I turn to the Iraqi dimension in --  
2 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Can I mention one other thing? It  
3 is very relevant to what you are doing. I also -- and  
4 it was declassified this morning -- when the three  
5 conditions were met, I was also slightly worried that  
6 although there was a chronological coincidence with the  
7 downturn in Iraq, the downsizing of forces and the going  
8 into Helmand, I did not want one to be reliant upon the  
9 other, in case we couldn't get out of Iraq. I did not  
10 want our soldiers in danger in Helmand province itself  
11 and, therefore, I asked for insurance that we could  
12 carry out the Afghan deployment without downsizing in  
13 Iraq, and you may have seen the documents which were  
14 declassified this morning.

15 On 12 September I wrote, basically -- and I'll just  
16 read it in:

17 "The Secretary of State recalls that during his  
18 meeting with CDS for an operational update on  
19 1 September, he queried whether in the event of a slower  
20 than expected drawdown of United Kingdom forces in Iraq,  
21 our planning assumptions for deployment in Afghanistan  
22 would be achievable. His recollection is that CDS  
23 confirmed to him that our current commitment in Iraq  
24 would be sustainable when set against a deployment to  
25 Afghanistan."

1           It finishes with my private secretary saying:

2           "I would be grateful for your confirmation that CDS  
3 would be content for this to be recorded as the formal  
4 position as at the meeting in September."

5           As you will see from the reply on 19 September after  
6 an introductory paragraph the Chief of the Defence Staff  
7 said:

8           "The short answer is yes, but to provide further  
9 reassurance for Secretary of State we have taken advice  
10 from the Chief of Joint Operations. He is clear that  
11 our plans for Afghanistan are deliverable, even if  
12 events slow down our Iraq disengagement. Furthermore,  
13 DCDS, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Commitments) has  
14 factored the possibility of such a slippage into the  
15 MoD's strategic planning for Afghanistan and our  
16 strategic intent for future commitments."

17           They then point out the pinch points that we have  
18 already mentioned on helicopters and one or two others.

19 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Pain and grief, the pinch points that  
20 would be, pain and grief?

21 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: That's the pinch points, yes, the  
22 ones we have discussed earlier, and then they say:

23           "But our ability to fulfil our plan in Afghanistan  
24 is not predicated on withdrawal of such capabilities  
25 from Iraq, and notwithstanding these qualifications, in

1 the event that our conditions-based plan for progressive  
2 disengagement from southern Iraq is delayed, we will  
3 still be able to deliver our DOP(A) mandated force  
4 levels in Afghanistan."

5 Obviously I had asked for that reassurance because  
6 I was worried, as you, as a Committee are, that one  
7 would be dependent on the other.

8 Final comment on the pinch points. As late  
9 as March, I still wanted reassurance on that. So  
10 I asked, because I had been discussing this with someone  
11 outside the military over the helicopter shortage that  
12 Sir Lawrence raised -- I asked for a guarantee from the  
13 helicopter commander on the ground that he had  
14 sufficient flying hours for the mission in Afghanistan  
15 and I therefore wrote to the -- and it is recorded in  
16 the Ministry of Defence:

17 "On the matter of helicopter availability, I am  
18 reliably informed that the commanding officer of the  
19 helicopter force is content with the number of flying  
20 hours available to him for the prosecution of the  
21 mission."

22 So I set down the conditions. I then tested the  
23 withdrawal. I then tested the pinch point. At the back  
24 of this, of course, was the question of harmony, but  
25 I was aware that we were downsizing in Northern Ireland

1 and we had just completed the reformation of the tour  
2 plot of the infantry under General Jackson And the  
3 percentage, the percentage of soldiers operating outwith  
4 the harmony guidelines did not increase as we went into  
5 Afghanistan, it actually decreased from a high of around  
6 18 per cent down to about 10.3 per cent.

7 This is not to say that among that 10.3 per cent  
8 there weren't people whose harmony guidelines had  
9 dropped considerably, as Mike Walker said the other day.  
10 So basically, as General Walker said, they gave me the  
11 advice and I followed it, so they didn't have any  
12 difficulty with that.

13 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Did you have any concerns? We have  
14 just heard from Sir Kevin Tebbitt with regard to this  
15 undertaking to Helmand at that stage of our Iraqi  
16 commitments, that he, as he put it, was very concerned  
17 about a new commitment:

18 "I felt that it could be a mission too far."

19 But he went on to tell us:

20 "I did not press my objections fully."

21 Were you aware of his doubts and what they were?

22 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Up until he was sitting in front of  
23 you an hour ago, no. Actually, just before that,  
24 because he did tell me before he came in. I think he  
25 was -- he said that he had shared this with the Chiefs

1 of Staff.

2 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Not with you.

3 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: He didn't say he shared it with me.

4 I have no recollection. There is nothing in the notes  
5 that he did. I took the military advice because, on  
6 these occasions, as Mike Walker said, he has no  
7 difficulty with it, because I asked the military and  
8 I tried to outline the precautions I took to satisfy  
9 myself, because I would want you to be assured -- you  
10 will want this yourself -- that you don't take these  
11 decisions lightly.

12 You did ask me why I thought the British did it.  
13 I think Kevin Tebbitt covered this. First of all, this  
14 was a United Nations entry into Afghanistan, unlike Iraq  
15 and a very important one. Secondly, our national  
16 security was at risk, we believed. And, certainly, along  
17 with the United States I think our Chiefs regarded us  
18 as one of the better armed forces in the world to take  
19 such a step.

20 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were you concerned, given the  
21 uncertainty of all military operations, that there might  
22 either be a call for an increase in the force levels in  
23 Afghanistan, or indeed the increase in force levels in  
24 Iraq, which would then make this balance unbalanced?

25 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I wasn't concerned about Iraq

1 because I thought things were likely to move in the way  
2 that they did, but with some time slippage in Iraq. But  
3 more importantly, because I had been assured that  
4 Afghanistan was not dependent on Iraq. Obviously, there  
5 is always a concern that you get what is called mission  
6 creep and all I can say is that I took the best military  
7 advice, and when we sent that number of troops in, that  
8 is what the chiefs said was necessary and I procured the  
9 funding for it.

10 It is true that not long after I left I think the  
11 mission changed. I think the mission changed. I think  
12 from the day that we went to Sangin province, that  
13 mission changed, and, therefore, the demand for troops  
14 became much greater, and whether or not the resources  
15 were supplied for that, I think is a question. I'm not  
16 saying they weren't, but it is a question I can't  
17 answer. By that time, I wasn't Defence Secretary.

18 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: This problem wasn't one which was in  
19 your mind --

20 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: As far as your Inquiry into Iraq is  
21 concerned, there wasn't a concern in my mind that this  
22 would result in a diminution of our resources in Iraq  
23 personnel or otherwise. Why? Because I had asked that  
24 specific question and been told, "No". Indeed, I had  
25 been told, "It has been built into our consideration

1           that that might be a delay".

2   SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was there also an element, given the  
3           defence planning assumptions, that what we were now  
4           doing, by taking on two medium-scale operations, that we  
5           were in fact breaching the assumptions? Did these  
6           assumptions still hold?

7   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Actually, if I can just again just  
8           correct that slightly, because I saw this -- and this is  
9           a technical change rather than anything else. The  
10          strategic defence review, which I had the privilege of  
11          being involved in with George Robertson back in 1998 did  
12          not say that we couldn't conduct two medium-sized  
13          operations.

14   SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Long-term?

15   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: That's right. What it said was two  
16          concurrent medium-scale operations. One a relatively  
17          short, war-fighting deployment, which is usually a big  
18          one, unlike Iraq - it lasted six days at that level,  
19          not six months - and the other an enduring,  
20          non-war-fighting.

21                 However, having said that, whatever the  
22          technicalities, the guideline here, is, Sir Martin,  
23          isn't it: is this overstretching you? The way I would  
24          put it is I think we were stretched. I think we were  
25          taut, but my military advice is: you are not



1 overstretched. We can do this.

2 I always rely -- I have the greatest respect for  
3 people like General Mike Walker, General Mike Jackson.  
4 If they say, yes, fine. If they say, no, I didn't do it.  
5 I wouldn't do it. If they said, "Yes, but it is  
6 a challenge", it was my job to say, "What are the  
7 challenges, what are the conditions, and how can I meet  
8 them?" And that is why I laid down conditions.

9 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was this a concern that you put to  
10 them, the concern that it might be overstretched?

11 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I didn't use those words, but  
12 I asked, in writing, for an assurance that we could do  
13 one without debilitating the other. That's the letter  
14 I gave you earlier on.

15 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: With hindsight, you don't feel that  
16 there was a danger that we had undertaken something that  
17 might not be capable of --

18 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: You are asking me to get into an  
19 area where you are using words like, "There was a danger  
20 that we might", with the virtue of "hindsight". There is  
21 only one perfect science known to man and that's  
22 hindsight. But we are, I believe, sustaining a very  
23 dangerous, a very difficult task to protect the security  
24 of this country there, and I have utmost respect for the  
25 people who are doing it for us.

1 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I would like to turn to  
3 Baroness Prashar now on, in particular, machinery of  
4 government questions.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you Chairman.

6 Dr Reid, we have changed the subject now and we have  
7 been to Afghanistan and Iraq and come back to London,  
8 the capital, which is the MoD itself.

9 Do you think enough resources were being devoted to  
10 Iraq within the department? Because you have been  
11 talking about those on the ground, but what priority was  
12 being accorded to Iraq within the department's own  
13 machinery?

14 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Do you mean financial resources?

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Both.

16 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I think when you are in an  
17 operation like this, the one thing the  
18 Ministry of Defence does very, very well is it  
19 prioritises. I mean, it does a number of things very  
20 well. It has an intellectual rigour to its conceptual  
21 analysis, more than any other department I have been in  
22 in government. Not to diminish anyone else, but they do  
23 that very well. And they prioritise. When you have got  
24 an operation, that is prioritised. Why? Because it is  
25 usually a matter of national security, and, secondly,

1 because you have got men and women who are risking their  
2 lives. So you prioritise the ones who are doing that to  
3 the best of your ability.

4 So I think, in terms of finances, whatever the  
5 overall envelope is, the department --

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So when you were there, you actually  
7 made sure that it was accorded the priority it deserved?

8 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes, well, I hope so. That was my  
9 responsibility, Iraq, Afghanistan, we had some soldiers  
10 in Kosovo, and, you know, there are people in there,  
11 just as there are at the front, who work night and day  
12 and so should the ministers, and the  
13 Permanent Secretaries and the officials.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You were talking earlier, when we  
15 were discussing the question of learning lessons, you  
16 said that the United States soldiers learned lessons  
17 better than we did. I mean, there were various  
18 opportunities and the Ministry of Defence could identify  
19 learns to be learned.

20 What importance did you attach, during your time, in  
21 terms of lessons that could be learned, and were these  
22 implemented?

23 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Absolutely. I place a great  
24 importance on it. Basically because, in the nature of  
25 what we do, we have to be -- I would use the term

1 permanently revisionist. The world keeps changing, and  
2 unless we keep changing with that world, which includes  
3 our enemy, then we will lose And nowhere is that loss  
4 greater, if we don't keep up with it, than in the  
5 Ministry of Defence. It is true of all departments of  
6 government, but in defence we are talking about young  
7 men and women who may lose their lives. So, yes.

8 Therefore when, for instance, the House of Commons  
9 Defence Select Committee would come out with criticisms,  
10 as it did I think in March of the year I went in,  
11 particularly in the post-conflict reconstruction area  
12 and the lack of co-ordination and so on, we would take  
13 them very seriously.

14 What I was suggesting, it is not that we got  
15 everything right, even with revision, but I think we  
16 learned the lessons, or some of the lessons, of the lack  
17 of co-ordination in the run-up to Iraq through the  
18 Afghanistan preparations.

19 Now, I'm not going to come in on what caused that  
20 lack of co-ordinated effort between departments, but  
21 certainly we tried to make sure that DFID and the MoD  
22 worked much more closely together, but there were  
23 frictions, as you know, but certainly -- around the Iraq  
24 preparations --

25 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you said earlier that you were

1 given a responsibility by the Prime Minister to chair  
2 this strategy group which was looking at strategy on the  
3 operational side. When did you take over?

4 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Probably around September --  
5 around -- this was for Afghanistan?

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: This wasn't for Iraq?

7 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: No. On Iraq, the preparations, the  
8 preparatory phase had been -- you have spent a lot of  
9 time discussing that -- had been while I was, I think,  
10 in Northern Ireland dealing with the decommissioning  
11 issue over there. So I didn't -- sorry if I didn't make  
12 that clear, Baroness, that wasn't as regards Iraq.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That was in relation to Afghanistan?

14 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes. But what I tried to do was  
15 learn some of the lessons, because whatever the rights  
16 and wrongs of what happened and the run-up to it, in  
17 terms of process and co-ordination and friendship --

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: In terms of learning lessons, did  
19 you at any stage re-evaluate our strategy, because, as  
20 the situation was deteriorating, you know, the security  
21 situation in Iraq, did you at any stage re-evaluate our  
22 approach?

23 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes, I think we were doing it all  
24 the time. If I had to be asked, "What was it that was  
25 changing when I came in there?" I think, first of all,

1           there was the recognition that this was  
2           counter-insurgency. Yes? I think that was the big one  
3           in terms of military doctrine and concept and so on.  
4           I think by and large that was accepted how we should  
5           handle it. I was interested to see the evidence given  
6           to you by General Sheriff. I think that was an abnormal  
7           view, that this would be solved with masses of troops  
8           and guns charging into Basra. I don't think that was  
9           the general view re Counter-insurgency.

10          Secondly, the stress on the  
11          build-up of the Iraqi security forces. They are the  
12          people who can solve this, not us. Thirdly, the  
13          absolute essential of inclusive government, absolutely  
14          essential. I mean, on every occasion I saw the  
15          Prime Minister speaking to anybody in the United States  
16          or here, the Sunni inclusion, inclusive government. ISF  
17          training and so on.

18          So those things were becoming apparent, and I also  
19          hope during that period that working with DFID, with  
20          Hilary Benn, myself, Jack Straw and so on, I think they  
21          were -- that was becoming more cohesive.

22   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Is that what was being described as  
23          the comprehensive approach? People have talked about  
24          it. Is that a term that was around when you were there?

25   RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Absolutely. I know people have

1 invited you to look at 2010, I'll invite you to look at  
2 2020.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: At the moment, I want to stay in  
4 2006 and 2007.

5 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: It arises precisely from then. It  
6 arises from the lessons of Iraq, and that is there will  
7 not be a conflict fought by conventional means and some  
8 transition at some stage towards post-conflict  
9 reconstruction. That will occur almost simultaneously.

10 Secondly, unless you can provide the means of giving  
11 law and order, justice, prisons, decent services,  
12 mentoring for police and all those non-military skills,  
13 almost simultaneously. That's the comprehensive  
14 approach.

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: It is comprehensive, but what  
16 I really want to know was: was it adequate, was it  
17 working, was it having the necessary impact?

18 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: No.

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: It wasn't?

20 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: No, that's what I'm saying. When  
21 I went there, there was an increasing recognition on  
22 this because planning had been done, planning had been  
23 done, and -- but it hadn't taken into account the state  
24 of degeneracy of the skills and infrastructure. It  
25 didn't take into account that somebody was going to

1           disband the whole of the bureaucracy of the state, the  
2           disbandment of the army and so on. So, in a sense --

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: By the time --

4 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: -- we had created a vacuum and we  
5           didn't have sufficient plans operationally, or the  
6           cohesion, to go in quickly enough. What I'm saying is,  
7           by 2005, we had learned those lessons and were beginning  
8           to do that, Baroness.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you think, by that time, we had  
10          regained the initiative? Because the planning was  
11          inadequate and the plan was being written as events were  
12          unfolding, by the time we got there, you think we had  
13          regained the initiative?

14 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I go back to my very first comment.  
15          I think the jury was out. I think that period was the  
16          critical period. I think insurgency was developing and  
17          being recognised. I think they were trying to create  
18          a civil war, and it was an open question as to whether  
19          that would occur, and I think we were beginning to  
20          realise that the end-game here was truly empowering the  
21          Iraqis themselves, in terms of democracy, security and  
22          economic development, and all of us were working pretty  
23          closely together in that.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Des Browne told us that he was  
25          actually the lead minister for Iraq.



1 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Sorry, who told you?

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Des Browne, he was the lead minister  
3 for Iraq. When you were there, who was leading on Iraq?

4 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: The Prime Minister.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: The Prime Minister?

6 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes --

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So he was the one ensuring that  
8 everything was being co-ordinated?

9 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: The Prime Minister, yes. Now, he  
10 obviously, like any leader in those circumstances, would  
11 devolve decisions to those beneath him. General Walker  
12 explained the other day that he had absolutely no doubt  
13 about the Prime Minister's commitment and clarity and so  
14 on, but he sometimes felt that as it devolved downwards  
15 to certain departments, perhaps the Prime Minister's  
16 wholehearted enthusiasm wasn't being displayed in the  
17 way it might have been. You will have to make your  
18 judgment about that.

19 I don't think he was talking about the Ministry of  
20 Defence, either under myself or Des Browne or  
21 John Hutton or Geoff Hoon. But the PM was leading. He  
22 was the one who, as the chief representative of this  
23 country, was deeply, deeply, concerned about the  
24 possible coming together of untrammelled intention to  
25 commit terrorist acts on a massive scale and

1 untrammelled capability through weapons of mass  
2 destruction.

3 While that was potentially possible through  
4 proliferation in a number of areas, there was one  
5 country which was already in desperate breach  
6 continually of the United Nations authority and  
7 resolutions, and the only person in the world alive at  
8 that time, to my knowledge, who had actually used these  
9 weapons of mass destruction. So the Prime Minister was  
10 leading this --

11 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I'm talking about leading the  
12 co-ordination of the delivery --

13 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: -- and then making sure --

15 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: The Prime Minister spoke --

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you think --

17 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: -- to the President of the United  
18 States. His adviser was speaking to the White House  
19 advisers. Everyone else, to the best of my knowledge,  
20 who was leading in the departments, was copied into  
21 this. When I was there, the Defence and Overseas Policy  
22 Iraq Cabinet Subcommittee was meeting -- I don't know  
23 exactly, but once a fortnight. The Iraq Strategy Group  
24 was meeting, a communication group was established, but  
25 all of this was under the leadership of the

1 Prime Minister.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I ask one final question?

3 I mean, you have been in government over this period and  
4 we have heard from a number of witnesses about how the  
5 Cabinet system wasn't working and most of the planning,  
6 pre-invasion and post, was done in ad hoc committees.  
7 Is that your experience?

8 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Well, I was in Northern Ireland for  
9 part, and then I was, I think, Leader of the House  
10 and -- let me put it this way, Baroness: I never --  
11 I was never refused any information that I wanted.  
12 I was given every opportunity, as were other members of  
13 the Cabinet, to ask questions. I could have asked  
14 questions of the Attorney General.

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were you at the Cabinet meeting --

16 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes, I was, and everyone was  
17 allowed to speak at these meetings. I don't  
18 recognise some descriptions of some of the least  
19 quiescent of my colleagues claiming to have been  
20 rendered quiescent. But I don't know about the  
21 processes. I think people are perfectly entitled to  
22 take a different view.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you think you were given  
24 opportunity to fully look at the legal opinion in its  
25 totality or were you content just to be presented

1 with --

2 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I was given the opportunity, but  
3 I didn't particularly want to look at some long,  
4 "balancing" legal opinion. If wanted to know "is what we  
5 are about to do lawful, or is it illegal?" -the same way  
6 I would ask the chiefs, "Is this do-able or is it not?" -  
7 then I asked a lawyer, and the primary lawyer of the  
8 land. The Cabinet was full of lawyers. I'm sure  
9 various departments were full of lawyers, but as far as  
10 I was aware, the constitutional convention and legality  
11 in Great Britain for the Cabinet is dependent on the  
12 judgment of the Attorney General.

13 I think that the access that I had -- and I'm sure  
14 my colleagues -- for, for instance, to intelligence.  
15 I asked to meet twice with C, I think I met David Omand  
16 as well. I discussed it with him. I read the JIC. So  
17 let me put it this way: people are perfectly entitled to  
18 have their own point of view, but I don't actually think  
19 it was worthy to suggest that almost everybody else in the  
20 Cabinet is lacking in wisdom, intelligence, courage,  
21 integrity, guts. I don't think that's a worthy  
22 criticism of my colleagues. I don't think they did lack  
23 in them.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But from your point of view, you  
25 think the Cabinet system was working?

1 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: I'm not somebody who can give you  
2 a judgment on that. I'm not an ex-civil servant. I'm  
3 not a constitutional lawyer. I don't know whether the  
4 process and the systems were working, in that sense,  
5 I wasn't in every department; I was in mine. But I do  
6 know that I have never felt any inhibition whatsoever,  
7 telling the Prime Minister --

8 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you have enormous experience of  
9 having served in different departments.

10 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: -- can I just finish this --  
11 telling the Prime Minister when he was wrong and asking  
12 him questions and openly discussing; and nor, to the  
13 best of my knowledge, did any other Cabinet ministers.  
14 Some Cabinet ministers were constantly telling him he  
15 was wrong - and telling everybody else they were wrong.  
16 And if, by that, you mean, "was there the ability to  
17 debate and discuss?" Yes, there was. But I'm not  
18 qualified to say that this is a process -- you know,  
19 some of the people on the panel are better qualified to  
20 know the exact intricacies of the Cabinet processes than  
21 I am, Baroness.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think a last set of questions.  
24 Lawrence?

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes. I'll try to keep this brief

1 but it is a big subject.

2 In a speech you made, in fact, to the students at my  
3 college in February 2006, you said that:

4 "Our adversary will try to achieve his aims by using  
5 our very freedoms against us. It sees the free western  
6 media as a virtual battleground in itself where the  
7 swaying of public opinion away from support for our  
8 campaigns can be the path to a swift victory; a quick  
9 way of undermining our public morale and endurance."

10 I'm sure you remember the speech.

11 I'm just interested in your views, as Secretary of  
12 Defence, on the importance of public support for  
13 a campaign such as this, and, without spending a great  
14 deal of time on it, the issues with the modern media,  
15 which you raise a lot in this speech, and how that may  
16 affect that public support.

17 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: It is absolutely crucial. The  
18 third element of fighting power is morale. Morale  
19 depends on people believing in the legitimacy of their  
20 cause, in the trust of their leaders, in the fact that  
21 there is a cohesion and a unity behind it. So it is  
22 naturally an area that your opponents and your enemies  
23 try to undermine and divide.

24 Point 2: it is much easier to do that in a democracy  
25 than it is in a dictatorship. When our media

1 institutions were putting microphones beneath the face  
2 of the gentleman jokingly referred to as "Comical Ali" -  
3 who was part of a regime that was burning women and  
4 children from the inside out by dropping chemical  
5 weapons on them - there was no public opinion behind that  
6 to be swayed one way or the other.

7 Fascist dictatorships, or any form of dictatorship,  
8 find it much easier to avoid the problems of questioning  
9 and so on in democracy. So in the short-term, it makes  
10 it more difficult. In the longer term, I have no doubt  
11 whatsoever that democracy gives you an enduring  
12 commitment to a cause which cannot be reflected in  
13 fascist dictatorships, but it is much harder to maintain  
14 that because there is a constant inter-reaction, a  
15 questioning with the public and so on and so forth. But  
16 I have no doubt that some of our enemies, in the form of  
17 Islamist terrorists, take the view that we are not  
18 capable of sustaining a long campaign, because, if you  
19 don't have endurance, then your opponent will win, and  
20 they believe, rightly or wrongly, that we are so  
21 materially comfortable, we are so liberal and  
22 individualistic, we have a set of values, which we call  
23 freedoms and they regard as licence, which are  
24 degenerate, and, therefore, we will never sustain  
25 a long-term struggle because it involves sacrifice and,

1 tragically, it involves deaths.

2 That's why they say in the words of some elements of  
3 the Taliban, "You may have the watches, but we have got  
4 the time", because they believe that they can outlast  
5 us. Therefore, they may not defeat us with the first  
6 element, planning and strategy; they may not defeat us  
7 with the second element, which is resources, funding,  
8 money and equipment; but they will beat us in the third  
9 element, they believe.

10 Now, that is an open question. But it is much more  
11 difficult to maintain that in a multimedia 24-hour-a-day  
12 news cycle than it was, say, a hundred years ago. That  
13 is not a bad thing in a democracy; it is a good thing  
14 that people should know the harsh reality of the sort of  
15 conflicts we are in, but I think it is a difficulty,  
16 Sir Lawrence.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just follow that up with  
18 a point that has been put to us quite strongly by some  
19 of the families of those who have lost their loved ones  
20 in Iraq? It goes something like this, that they  
21 understand that forces go to fight and what people sign  
22 up for, but the problem in Iraq was that our forces went  
23 in on a false premise, that they were going in to find  
24 weapons of mass destruction that turned out not to be  
25 there, and that, when they got there, the problems that



1 were faced had not been properly anticipated, that there  
2 had been inadequate planning for the situation in which  
3 our soldiers had to fight, and that this, therefore,  
4 went on for far longer than anybody had anticipated and  
5 it became a more enduring conflict, and that this was  
6 therefore much more difficult to support and to  
7 understand than other conflicts.

8 So my question is: was there an enduring problem  
9 that we faced, that the circumstances in which we went  
10 to war left public confidence undermined and less  
11 willing than in other conflicts to give us the support  
12 our troops would have liked to have had?

13 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Yes, around one central question,  
14 and I understand the feelings of the families, and it is  
15 this: if people believe that we told the truth, that we  
16 made the best judgment in terms of the evidence, the  
17 suffering won't go away - because they have lost their  
18 loved ones - but they will not believe that they were in  
19 a sense betrayed. So at some stage there may be  
20 closure.

21 If people believe that we intentionally lied, that,  
22 for some bizarre reason, all of these people in the  
23 Cabinet made it up about weapons of mass destruction,  
24 there will be no such closure and there will be even  
25 greater anger to add to the grief. I understand that.

1 I know what members of the Cabinet saw. I know the  
2 history of Saddam Hussein. I know what he did to women  
3 and children with chemical weapons. I know that he used  
4 chemical gases against the Iranians that even Hitler  
5 wouldn't use because it would blow back on his troops.  
6 I know what sort of man he was. I know the evidence  
7 that was presented to us. I know what our intelligence  
8 service said, which is he had the precursor chemicals;  
9 10,000 litres of anthrax, 4 tonnes of VX gas, I think  
10 I remember. I know we queried people about it. I know  
11 the whole history of the 1990s, of him pushing out the  
12 inspectors. I know that he was saying that he had the  
13 things, and I know that the weight of evidence, though  
14 it is fragmentary - all intelligence is fragmentary -  
15 though it is not complete, no body of evidence is  
16 complete. All of that suggested to otherwise rational  
17 and neutrally-minded people, who had to take these  
18 decisions, that he had this stuff. And, in the wider  
19 context that I mentioned already, it was very dangerous  
20 for our security.

21 People will make their judgments on that. I am  
22 content with my conscience that I made a judgment in  
23 good faith and in truth.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I just want to emphasise that it is  
25 not just a question of whether the judgments were made

1 as you say they were made, it is also a question of the  
2 perceptions afterwards about how they were made, and it  
3 is a question of whether or not you felt at the time  
4 that your task with public opinion had been made that  
5 much more difficult because of the beliefs of the way in  
6 which we had gone to war, whether you feel these beliefs  
7 were correct or not?

8 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Well, they had obviously made the  
9 task more difficult, and still do. I mean, there are  
10 families who hurt grievously. It is bad enough in any  
11 conflict when there is a loss of life. When there is  
12 a loss of life and a question at the back of your mind  
13 as to the nature of the entry into that, that must make  
14 the heart all the more. I don't think that is the least  
15 bit non-understandable. It is perfectly understandable  
16 and that means it is more difficult.

17 If people, however, believe that this was done in  
18 bad faith, I think that's where the capacity to stand up  
19 against foes in future becomes much more difficult. Of  
20 course it does, and that's why it is so important that  
21 we have this open questioning here, so that people can  
22 see that this has been conducted in a way where  
23 questions have been asked and difficult areas like this  
24 are being given.

25 That's why I have no difficulty in having this

1 discussion, because people's lives depended on it. It  
2 is just that I happened to have the belief, and still  
3 do, that the greatest threat to my children and the  
4 future generations of children, the greatest threat - of  
5 a magnitude that is almost unimaginable - is the coming  
6 together of people who are unconstrained by any  
7 morality, indeed driven by a perverse morality that  
8 says that there is no distinction between combatants and  
9 civilians, that murdering thousands or tens of  
10 thousands, it doesn't matter.

11 Now, we have had these regimes before, like the  
12 Nazis, but they were constrained by the nature of their  
13 technology. They were constrained by having to use the  
14 exhaust fumes of vehicles or canisters of Zyklon B.  
15 Nowadays, there is no such constraint on the capability.  
16 So that unconstrained intent comes together with the  
17 unconstrained capability.

18 God help the future generations, and that is part of  
19 what was at the back of our mind when we were making  
20 these decisions.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Dr Reid. I would like to ask my  
23 colleagues if they have any last questions before I turn  
24 to you for your own fine reflections?

25 Well, can I ask -- we have two things, I think, in

1 mind. One is: is there ground which we have not been  
2 able to cover so far this morning that you think would  
3 be relevant and useful; and the other is any more  
4 general reflections? You have given us a number in the  
5 course of this hearing, but if you would like to give us  
6 a summation, the time is now.

7 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: At risk of -- you know, I think the  
8 most important one I have made is the one that I made  
9 here, which is perfectly understandable in matters like  
10 this, that we all have deep divisions in this country,  
11 because it is a democracy and you should never, ever  
12 embark on something that risks the lives of your young  
13 men and women without having thought this through.

14 If nothing else, I hope that these will illustrate  
15 that, rightly or wrongly, in the end, we did try to  
16 think these things through.

17 One, the coming together of unconstrained intention  
18 to murder with unconstrained capability to do so in  
19 a world where globalisation is bringing proliferation  
20 nearer to us all is the context in which your Inquiry  
21 takes place, Sir John, and I hope that that in some way  
22 is illustrated by the questions you ask and the  
23 conclusions you come to.

24 Secondly, the nature of conflict has changed. The  
25 nature of conflict has changed. The idea that there

1 will be a conventional war under agreed, legal rules  
2 where both sides will respect the rights of others for  
3 a determined piece of land for a determined period of  
4 time, at the end of which there will be a defined  
5 agreement and we will all go home, that has changed.

6 There is a battle which is not about territory. It  
7 is an argument sometimes, sometimes, coming into  
8 conflict about sets of values. 100 years ago, we didn't  
9 have to look at other people's values because we didn't  
10 have television, we didn't have 24-hour-a-day media. We  
11 had colonial interventions here and there, but now it is  
12 impossible to avoid a situation where people have to  
13 confront these different values. We have to find a way  
14 of resolving that without violence.

15 Thirdly, if we are going to do that, we have to find  
16 a way of deploying other than guns, and, therefore, when  
17 we think of mobilising an army, we have to find a way of  
18 building on the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit, on  
19 the Stabilisation Unit, on all of these new ideas, in  
20 a big sense, so that we can deploy to some areas in the  
21 world, in order to prevent these things, the services,  
22 at however high a level, and the decent common values  
23 interpreted into a better life for many more people than  
24 we do, because poverty, ignorance, failed states and so  
25 on are the root causes -- they are the soil in which

1 this sort of thing flourishes.

2 Fourthly, the question about our capacity to endure.  
3 I leave that open.

4 Fifthly, I wouldn't like to leave without recording  
5 formally my lasting appreciation, my admiration and my  
6 deep, deep respect for every single person who, in our  
7 armed forces, became involved on behalf of this country  
8 in these conflicts. They are not part of the  
9 controversy. They are not part of the big argument  
10 about right or wrong. They just do what they are asked  
11 to do, and they do it for one reason, and that is they  
12 want to protect the security of this country.

13 So for those who fought and those who fell, I just  
14 want to record my respect and admiration and deep  
15 sadness at the loss of life.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Dr Reid, thank you. I thank you and I thank  
17 those who have been here in this room this morning.  
18 I will close this session now. At 2 o'clock this  
19 afternoon we will resume the hearing, when Ann Clwyd  
20 will be giving us testimony. So thank you all again  
21 very much.

22 RT HON DR JOHN REID MP: Thank you, John.

23 (12.35 pm)

24 (The short adjournment)

25

FINAL