

1 (2.00 pm)

2 LORD TURNBULL

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon.

4 LORD TURNBULL: Good afternoon.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, let's open this last session of the day
6 and welcome Lord Turnbull, Cabinet Secretary
7 from September 2002 to 2005. The objectives of the
8 session, following on from the session with
9 Alastair Campbell yesterday and Dr Shafik this morning,
10 are to look at important aspects of the ministerial and
11 official level, at both levels, offering advice, taking
12 decisions and ensuring decisions were carried through.

13 We will also be examining whether the government had
14 the capability, people, skills, resources and processes
15 to achieve what objectives Ministers set.

16 I say this to every witness, we recognise that
17 evidence is being given based on their recollection of
18 events, and we, of course, cross-check what we hear
19 against the papers to which we have access.

20 I remind every witness that they will later be asked
21 to sign a transcript of the evidence to the effect that
22 the evidence they have given is truthful, fair and
23 accurate.

24 With those preliminaries, I will ask Sir Martin to
25 open the questioning.

1 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Could you please set out for us briefly
2 the role of Cabinet Secretary during your time of tenure
3 with particular regard to foreign policy, security,
4 intelligence and defence?

5 LORD TURNBULL: Okay, I will start one stage back, if I may,
6 which is the role of the Cabinet Office itself. On its
7 website it says it is supporting the Prime Minister in
8 leading the government; supporting Ministers
9 collectively; providing the fora to take their
10 decisions; resolutions of disputes, co-ordination, using
11 the five secretariats; it is development of capacity in
12 the Civil Service; and it is the guardian of the rules of
13 propriety.

14 It is the first two that are relevant. What is
15 distinctive about the Cabinet Office is that it is not
16 a conventional department. It has few powers, few
17 people, though they are all very -- generally, very,
18 very good, and even less money. So it is not equipped
19 to run an operation directly. It has to do that through
20 the people that do have the powers, the money and the
21 organisations.

22 Now, the role of the Cabinet Secretary. That has
23 changed over time. Sometimes the Cabinet Secretary and
24 the Head of the Civil Service have been combined and
25 sometimes separated, but I think they are really -- when

1 I was, in a sense, making my pitch to the Prime Minister
2 to get the job, we identified three components of the
3 role: there is the Cabinet Secretary, the Head of the
4 Civil Service, and the Accounting Officer of the Single
5 Intelligence Vote.

6 One of the changes that was made on my arrival was
7 to create a separate post for the Security and
8 Intelligence Coordinator, David Omand, who would sit on
9 JIC and would deal, not with operational intelligence
10 issues, but with -- in a sense, the framework of
11 intelligence, how the agencies collaborated, and
12 generalised issues like transparency of their
13 legislative framework.

14 Now, that left me being guided by the
15 Prime Minister. He wanted a step change in the work on
16 delivery and reform, which I hope I managed to give him.

17 Now, what is the -- how does the Cabinet Secretary
18 work? You come in and you are -- even with the two
19 roles that you have, head of an organisation of half
20 a million civil servants and in some sense co-ordinating
21 a public sector of about 5 million people. You have to
22 make choices as to where you make your effort, and
23 I think the policy I followed was not to take an issue
24 over from someone to whom it was delegated simply
25 because it was big and important, but you have to make

1 a judgment as to whether it is being handled
2 competently, whether that particular part is, in
3 a sense, under pressure, whether you think they are
4 getting it wrong in some sense, or they are missing
5 certain important things.

6 Now, I arrived at a very interesting transitional
7 phase in this whole story, the first week of September,
8 the first two or three weeks of September 2002. This
9 was, I would say, the conclusion of the strategy phase.
10 The strategy was basically set following Camp David.
11 The idea that Saddam Hussein would be confronted, that there
12 would be an approach to the UN in alliance with the US
13 and a justification would be put into the public domain.
14 All that happened within days of my arrival and was
15 explained at the Cabinet meeting, the very first one
16 that I attended, on 23 September.

17 So we moved into a phase, a different phase, a more
18 operational phase. The military planning continued and
19 we then got into overdrive on the diplomatic effort and
20 that was when we began the planning for the --
21 the post-conflict phase.

22 Now -- so, as I say, the strategy was largely set
23 and, on arrival at my desk, there were two documents
24 really in that first couple of weeks. One was the
25 dossier, another was the IISS report. And what did I do?

1 Basically, I was a consumer of that rather
2 than a producer of it, so I didn't question that.

3 There is a residual role for a Cabinet Secretary,
4 which is where you think there is some wisdom being
5 missed and maybe -- and, of course, there is the
6 discussion we were talking about, things that could have
7 been done better. But what I was observing was
8 a process that actually was going well. We had made
9 a second change to the structure of the Cabinet Office
10 or -- I say "we", this was before my time. This was the
11 arrival of David Manning. You have heard from
12 John Sawers about the creation of the four-star role,
13 the opposite number to Condi Rice and
14 Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, and so on, and being the
15 head of the OD Secretariat. You almost certainly want
16 to explore what were the pluses and minuses of that.

17 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: We will come back to that, I believe,
18 later. I would like to take you up on a point which you
19 mentioned about the Cabinet Office structure. You said
20 a few people, and we have heard from a number of
21 witnesses about the problems of the small number of
22 staff in the Cabinet Office working on Iraq 2002/2003,
23 all of whom were under considerable pressure, it has
24 been a recurring theme of witnesses.

25 Were you satisfied that I suppose what you might

1 call this light touch co-ordinating was effective?

2 LORD TURNBULL: I don't know I accept that it was light
3 touch co-ordinating. This was quite heavy duty
4 co-ordinating and these people were indeed working very,
5 very hard. There is a characteristic in the
6 Civil Service that people prefer, in some ways, to work
7 hard rather than calling in lots more people, expand the
8 enterprise, introduce a lot more problems of management
9 and co-ordination, and that is really the culture of
10 many parts of Whitehall, but particularly the Cabinet
11 Office. Were they saying, "Please help me, we really
12 aren't getting enough people in"? I really don't think
13 they were.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: David Manning said there was a fatigue factor
15 at work, and however enthusiastic and full of stamina
16 people are, fatigue shades judgment over time; yes?

17 LORD TURNBULL: Whether that was the case in September,
18 I would have thought possibly at the peak of the
19 diplomatic effort.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: David Manning is talking about the whole of
21 2002/2003.

22 LORD TURNBULL: Yes, but they had come back from Camp David
23 very much encouraged. They had scored what they thought
24 was a major triumph. They had got Bush on to the
25 United Nations track and had got some understanding of

1 the strategy. So -- there wasn't this sense of, "God,
2 we are really struggling and this isn't going well"; the
3 sense was it is actually going extremely well.

4 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: But Sir David Manning's point, which he
5 made, was in terms of, as he put it, sustaining people
6 who were dealing with the -- in other words, in a way
7 not being sufficiently resourced for the task in hand,
8 the new task.

9 LORD TURNBULL: He was the head of OD Secretariat.

10 Admittedly, he was working incredibly hard himself, and
11 that may be one of the disadvantages of it, but if he
12 had said, "I need more resources", we would have found
13 more resources. I'm confident of that.

14 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: So you weren't aware of him actually
15 making this comment?

16 LORD TURNBULL: No, we knew that they were working a very
17 punishing schedule, but when you are doing well, I think
18 you carry on doing it.

19 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to turn now to another
20 issue which has been raised by a number of witnesses,
21 and that is the restrictions which were placed because
22 of the nature of the military planning and political
23 problems relating to it, the restrictions that were
24 placed on departments to conduct visible preparations
25 for any possible conflict.

1 Were you aware of these restrictions and how they
2 were impeding planning in either the Ministry of Defence
3 or DFID.

4 LORD TURNBULL: I was aware of the dilemma and the -- there
5 was a report of the International Development
6 Committee, which says there were a lot of things that
7 were, in a sense, undercooked and played low-key because
8 the government didn't want to give the impression
9 that -- and the words were that "war was inevitable" or
10 imminent¹.

11 Now, there were restrictions, there were -- I have
12 seen from the evidence -- MoD moving to a phase where
13 one started to actually place orders with suppliers, the
14 Defence Logistics Organisation, people asked to go slow
15 on that. DFID was asked to hold back on discussions
16 with the NGO community or the UN, but things -- as we
17 moved past September, those restrictions began to ease.

18 There was one point in which -- this is a sort of
19 classic way in which the Cabinet Secretary intervenes,
20 we get to December, I think, and the DFID come to me
21 for -- I think invoking my help, saying "We are not
22 satisfied that we are learning enough on what is going
23 on in the military planning", and at the same time
24 Clare Short raised it with Lord Boyce and the
25 Prime Minister and it was very quickly sorted out. But

¹ Note by witness: the Fourth Report of the International Development Committee (2002-03) said, "The UK Government and the UN have been reluctant to plan openly for fear that this would be seen as condoning military action or accepting it as inevitable".

1 that was the dilemma that was faced all the way through.

2 Whether the right moment was chosen in each case to
3 relax that constraint, you may say: well, we could have
4 done it earlier. I think this will be a theme of the
5 afternoon: how many of these changes that were made
6 eventually could have been done earlier.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: As Cabinet Secretary, you were on the
8 receiving end of these complaints and these requests to
9 have greater participation; for example, DFID's request
10 for greater participation in the planning.

11 Did you take a particular point of view or were you
12 able to --

13 LORD TURNBULL: One of the key changes was the creation of
14 the Ad Hoc Officials Group. That's capital A, H,
15 Ad Hoc, because a subset of those officials had, in
16 fact, been meeting, but that was an important step
17 forward because it brought in a much wider range of
18 officials from departments to look at, not the military
19 planning or the diplomatic effort, that was still being
20 dealt with and being led from Number 10, but a whole host
21 of other contingency issues that were being thrown up.

22 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was that something you, yourself, took
23 a lead in, took a particular stance?

24 LORD TURNBULL: I think I would probably give the credit to
25 Desmond Bowen. He is -- something I naturally

1 supported, and I think you have heard evidence that
2 people thought it was a very useful group.

3 Again, could we have done it earlier? It is
4 difficult, I would say, because I think the strategy
5 wasn't -- if you said: well, given that we couldn't have
6 done it in August, could we have done it in July?
7 I think on the papers you have seen, there were still
8 too many uncertainties about what the basic strategy
9 was. Once that was settled, once that was announced,
10 reported to Cabinet at its first meeting of the term,
11 the autumn term, and, incidentally, my first meeting as
12 Cabinet Secretary, these things began to be unlocked.

13 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Can we start with interdepartmental
15 structures inside the Cabinet Office in a bit more
16 detail? You have described David Omand's role which you
17 set up on arrival.

18 Can you say a bit about the relationship between
19 John Scarlett, as Chairman, and David Omand, as
20 Permanent Secretary level, with responsibility for
21 co-ordinating intelligence policy?

22 LORD TURNBULL: Although David Omand sat in on the JIC and,
23 you might argue, had kind of one more star than John
24 had, John was the Chairman of it and the reporting of
25 the JIC's work through to Number 10 and Ministers was

1 John's responsibility.

2 David looked at -- I suppose the jargon term would
3 be meta issues; issues of structure around the
4 intelligence community as a whole. He spent a lot of
5 his early weeks on an initiative called "CONTEST", which
6 was a major advance in the way we look at
7 counter-intelligence, the four Ps: pursue, prevent
8 protect and prepare, and created an extremely useful
9 framework for departments to think about the whole issue
10 of counter-terrorist issues. So in no sense did David
11 subsume the responsibilities of John Scarlett.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: But he was John's line manager, if you like?

13 LORD TURNBULL: He was John's line manager, so at some
14 point, you come to the end of the year, you have to
15 assess people's performance. And at various times these
16 posts changed. He was invaluable in leading the
17 selection process for a successor, but he also really
18 proved his worth, I think, that, when we got into the
19 two inquiries, we had someone who was, in a sense, one
20 level above, not quite so involved in the day-to-day,
21 who could co-ordinate the case for Hutton and our
22 response for it, likewise the Butler Report, and he
23 chaired BIG, the Butler Implementation Group.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: I think there is one other line of
25 questioning which Lawrence Freedman would like to ask

1 you apropos that.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes. In the sense of what those
3 inquiries were about, I just want to get clear the
4 chronology of your first days in office, as it were.
5 What day did you formally take over?

6 LORD TURNBULL: Whenever, I should think -- whenever was the
7 first Monday in September.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Fine. As you say, about that time
9 decisions are being taken, both to recall Parliament for
10 24 September and to produce the -- to publish the
11 dossier.

12 Were you consulted at all in your very first days
13 that this is what the Prime Minister wanted to do?

14 LORD TURNBULL: I knew it was what he wanted to do, but
15 I had no part in the preparation of the dossier or the
16 Parliamentary presentation of it. One point that didn't
17 come out yesterday was that this was not an initiative
18 that started in the first week of September. There was
19 a previous version of this -- was
20 developed -- it started around March and then there
21 are going to be three parts, WMD, the human rights
22 record --

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think this did come out yesterday.
24 There was the Foreign Office non-proliferation paper,
25 there were a number of papers --

1 LORD TURNBULL: It was described as -- John Scarlett is
2 described as "refreshing" the WMD chapter. That's
3 a word which appears --

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think if you look at the evidence
5 we received yesterday, you will find it was made clear
6 that this was a fresh start, that what had gone before
7 was not -- they could refer to it, but that it was
8 explicitly a false start, and that the key thing about
9 this new start was that the -- it had to be a JIC
10 product and that meetings were held on the 5th and 9th,
11 and I was corrected yesterday when I said they were in
12 the Cabinet Office, they were held at Number 10 to
13 discuss how this should be done. So were you aware of
14 that process?

15 LORD TURNBULL: I was aware that process was going on, but
16 I was not involved in it.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you have any views about it as
18 a process? We heard that it was an unprecedented
19 situation.

20 LORD TURNBULL: Coming to Baroness Prashar's point,
21 propriety and -- issues of propriety and -- was that
22 constitutional or -- I don't think it was an issue of
23 propriety. This was a perfectly proper thing to do.
24 I don't really think it was a constitutional issue. The
25 important thing was that there was a proper

1 accountability for it.

2 The idea of a dossier with a ministerial foreword
3 was shown to Richard Wilson back in March and he had
4 commented on the earlier piece, that it looked like
5 a very good piece of work, and he was pleased to see
6 that so much of the case could be released. So the idea
7 of that kind of dossier had already been discussed in
8 the Cabinet Office before my arrival.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I just make one thing clear:
10 when I was raising the question of propriety on the
11 constitutional issue yesterday, it wasn't so much about
12 the production of the dossier itself, it was the
13 cardinal principle of keeping the intelligence
14 information totally separate and what use is made of
15 that, and the process, to some extent, brought the two
16 things together, because it was innovation, and were the
17 implications of that thought through? That was the
18 point I was trying to make yesterday.

19 LORD TURNBULL: I would say they were aware of the need to
20 do that and that is why there is a JIC document and
21 a Prime Ministerial foreword. Whether they made this
22 distinction as clear as it should have been, well,
23 I think history says probably not and various comments
24 were made in the Butler Report about the governance of
25 an exercise of this kind. But the idea of having, in

1 a sense, a two-part document, one was, in a sense, what
2 the intelligence system produced, and a ministerial
3 foreword, there was some debate as to whether it should
4 be two Secretaries of State, Defence and Foreign
5 Affairs, or the Prime Minister -- that distinction
6 exists from as early as March.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But that is true, there were
8 documents around, the idea was around, but the
9 particular method of production and the fact that this
10 would be led from Number 10, in presentational terms,
11 but from the Joint Intelligence Committee in substantive
12 terms, meant a quite new relationship and that the --
13 and it is a question of how that relationship was to be
14 managed.

15 Now, do you think it might have been better if the
16 Cabinet Office, rather than Number 10, had had more
17 ownership of that process?

18 LORD TURNBULL: With hindsight, that may well be the case,
19 but I think people thought at the time they had made an
20 adequate separation and I think history tells us that
21 they probably hadn't.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When you saw the final product, how
23 did -- were you aware, as you looked at it, that there
24 had been changes that had been made that had hardened it
25 up, made it stronger, made it tighter?

1 LORD TURNBULL: No, I hadn't followed this draft by draft
2 and, indeed, it was pointed out at the time that the way
3 it was received at the time wasn't greatly different.
4 What I had seen at the time was the -- the IISS report,
5 which looked remarkably similar. Indeed, at some
6 points, had even shorter timelines.

7 This -- I was, as I say, a consumer of this
8 product, I thought that this was the authoritative
9 version and I was not aware that a process of kind of
10 granny's footsteps had taken place between -- starting
11 right back in MI6 -- the information coming in, what
12 leaves MI6, what goes to the assessments staff, what
13 gets put in the dossier. At each stage, you can see
14 another little sort of tweak of the dial. That was only
15 really revealed to me by the Butler Report.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Indeed. Can I just ask one more
17 question on this? One of the issues with your -- that
18 would have been raised often with your predecessor,
19 Richard Wilson, had been about the relationship with the
20 special advisers.

21 Did it concern you that on such a major area of
22 policy, somebody who was clearly -- whatever powers he
23 had been given, initially a political appointment, had
24 such a significant role?

25 LORD TURNBULL: I took comfort in the fact that

1 John Scarlett was leading this, and the -- I don't think
2 he claims that he was leant on, certainly John didn't
3 come to me and say, "I'm very unhappy with this, can you
4 help me? I would like to escalate this as a problem".
5 That didn't happen. The fact that he was there -- where
6 the final presentation work took place, I didn't attach
7 that much importance to it in the knowledge that it
8 wasn't a case of Number 10 and people with special
9 adviser status taking the document, drafting it and then
10 sending it back to the JIC. It was done together.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But I mean, my question is in
12 a sense about the concession of authority, of role from
13 the Cabinet Office to Number 10. This was a signal
14 about where this particular competence was going to lie,
15 not just of that issue, but in the future.

16 LORD TURNBULL: I still think the JIC, and John Scarlett in
17 particular, thought that they had control of the
18 substance and content, whether they were, in
19 Lord Hutton's phrase,
20 subconsciously influenced or whatever it was -- well,
21 again, that's hindsight.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The question again is where power
23 lies within the system, I guess.

24 LORD TURNBULL: I think it's -- we wouldn't want to do it that
25 way. Indeed, there had been a quite significant rethink

1 about whether these two posts should ever have been
2 designated. I think Robin Butler is on record as saying
3 he was trying to kind of make honest men of them, and he
4 thinks it was unhelpful, and I hope some time in the
5 next Parliament it won't get repeated.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Roderic, do you want to come in on this?

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The March draft paper, as we have been
9 told by others, covered the general problem of WMD,
10 proliferation, looking at four countries, of which we
11 have also been told the Foreign Secretary, at the
12 23 July meeting, said that Iraq was the fourth in the
13 queue, not the one at the head of the queue, because,
14 among other things, it didn't have a nuclear weapons
15 capability.

16 Did you feel that singling out Iraq so that in the
17 end there was a paper written only about Iraq and
18 ignored the other three, distorted the intelligence
19 picture that had -- that the JIC had put together in the
20 original version of the dossier?

21 LORD TURNBULL: I'm making a judgment entirely from my kind
22 of homework reading. This is not the period that I was
23 involved in. I think you have to -- impact is what
24 capabilities people have, times the probability of using
25 them, and someone could have fewer -- a smaller range

1 of --

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But wouldn't it have been helpful to have
3 covered all of them in this comparative exercise? It
4 wasn't just a tweak of the dial at this point. The dial
5 was moved round to point in a different direction from
6 four countries to one, so that the comparative exercise
7 was lost. Wouldn't it have been much more helpful --

8 LORD TURNBULL: There are all sorts of criticisms you could
9 have made of that March -- if you are looking. There
10 was this key issue of regional stability. The
11 question that strikes me, again entirely with hindsight,
12 is: how did you improve regional stability by knocking
13 out Saddam Hussein but vastly increasing the power of
14 Iran by putting 15 million Shias in charge of the
15 next-door country? And have we actually ended up with
16 a more dangerous region?

17 It is a question that wasn't asked at the time.
18 I think the strategic direction, as partly set by -- the
19 US had made this choice, but we heard this theory that
20 the Prime Minister's theory of fusion that the
21 combination of rogue state, plus WMD, plus terrorism
22 could come together in a ghastly mixture and simply
23 waiting through a policy of containment until something
24 terrible happened wasn't a prospect that he was prepared
25 to defend. The combination of those two, I think leads

1 people to focus on Iraq. But --

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: An interesting question, the regional
3 stability that you mention wasn't asked at the time
4 because there hadn't been a wide-ranging review of the
5 strategic options?

6 LORD TURNBULL: I think it is undoubtedly the case that
7 the March -- this is March 2002. Again, I must
8 absolutely stress, I'm just looking at this from what
9 I read, almost as a historian. Undoubtedly, we must have
10 had some -- must have been influenced in some way by the
11 fact that the Americans were stirring on this issue.

12 One thing that is surprising to me is that if you
13 put the words "Iraq Liberation Act 1998" into the
14 website of this Inquiry, you get nothing.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It has come up.

16 LORD TURNBULL: It has come up, but not explicitly by name.
17 I don't think people realised that it was an Act passed
18 by Clinton.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: This was stressed heavily yesterday.
20 Just following through, you raised some very interesting
21 questions here, and coming in at this point, means that
22 you took a snapshot at that point.

23 Do I understand you to be saying that we didn't
24 really -- we weren't in a position to take a broad
25 review of our strategic options because, by the time you

1 arrived, we effectively were hooked on to a policy being
2 driven by the United States of America?

3 LORD TURNBULL: That was certainly the position as reached
4 in September 2002. I think that was a point where
5 a particular strategy coalesced, and at that point
6 the position of Cabinet Office, the Civil Service
7 generally was: we now have a settled strategy and we now
8 will pursue this and make it effective.

9 The idea that there was, you know -- there was never
10 any opportunity, seriously, to say, "This is the wrong
11 option. Iran is the real problem or Korea is the real
12 problem", or whatever. That was -- certainly,
13 by September 2002, that decision had been made.

14 Now, why the March 2002 paper was written in the way
15 that it was written and put up by the OD Secretariat,
16 I think you have to ask the people who were there at the
17 time.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm very interested in what you said
19 about the situation in September 2002. Thank you very
20 much.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I follow that up? You have
22 given us, as Sir Roderic said, an interesting view, that
23 things had been settled and you said the strategy was
24 settled and it had become operational.

25 In your mind, what's the distinction between

1 something being a strategic decision and an operational
2 decision?

3 LORD TURNBULL: Why I am still talking about the strategy,
4 you are still talking about options? We had agreed, not
5 only what we wanted to do, but the Prime Minister at
6 Camp David had agreed with the President of the United
7 States what was going to be done next, and the idea of
8 formulating of single resolution, and you could almost
9 say setting a trap for Saddam Hussein -- the idea of the
10 ultimatum, that was all formulated at around that time.

11 That was then reported to the Cabinet on --
12 a meeting on the 23rd and from then on, with one
13 exception, Robin Cook -- you will certainly hear more
14 about that later -- that was endorsed and people were
15 very, very relieved that the UN route had been chosen.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Clearly, that was important, and, of
17 course, that wasn't decided as such at Camp David, it
18 was decided when the President made his speech to the
19 General Assembly on 12 September. So you are correct
20 that the UN route --

21 LORD TURNBULL: Well --

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Well, it's--

23 LORD TURNBULL: -- two days' difference between them.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But the British didn't know, until
25 the speech was made, exactly which way the President was

1 going to jump, but that's not the point.

2 We can agree that an important decision had been
3 made to go for the UN route, but there are big decisions
4 to come. We were still not sure whether we would make
5 a minimum or maximum military contribution. That had
6 not been decided. We didn't know --

7 LORD TURNBULL: That's not my understanding. Maybe -- you
8 have read these papers probably better than I have.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But you were the Cabinet Secretary.

10 LORD TURNBULL: No, hold on. In July, there is a -- you
11 have heard about the three options?

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Indeed.

13 LORD TURNBULL: I think it is pretty clear that by the end
14 of July we were going to go for option three.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I don't think you will find that was
16 wholly decided by that point, and, indeed, there was
17 some resistance to that idea, although it was clearly
18 very much on the table.

19 As we have just discussed, the government was
20 reluctant to let the logistics go forward on that
21 assumption. We certainly didn't know whether which
22 would be going through Turkey --

23 LORD TURNBULL: I think it is clear that, by July, the
24 meeting of the 23rd, which has been referred to -- was
25 referred to in Alastair Campbell's book -- that the most

1 likely thing would be the larger -- the larger of the
2 options. Whether that was the north or the south, that
3 all depended on diplomatic negotiations with Turkey.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about the consequences of
5 getting no UN Resolution at all? Just because we had
6 agreed to try for a resolution, that wasn't definite.

7 LORD TURNBULL: Well, my own view is, if there had been no
8 resolution at all, this whole exercise would have ground
9 to a halt. Had the Prime Minister attempted to say
10 "I have tried a resolution -- to get a resolution and
11 failed", he is far worse off than in Kosovo where there
12 wasn't an equivalent one. To have tried to get
13 a resolution and failed and then said, "We will proceed
14 as partners with America". In the face of rejection by
15 the UN, you have to ask yourself: was it plausible that
16 this would have been accepted by the Cabinet, the
17 Labour Party and Parliament? In my view, it would not.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So there could well have been
19 strategic decisions to come, that we couldn't know
20 in September how events were going to unfold over the
21 coming six months?

22 LORD TURNBULL: We had a plan.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We had a policy and we had a plan.

24 LORD TURNBULL: Yes, and we then set out to make it work.

25 So you have these months of intense negotiation to get

1 1441 and that was regarded as a great diplomatic
2 success.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But the implication is that there
4 was -- saying the strategy was set, that there were no
5 big decisions yet to be made --

6 LORD TURNBULL: If it --

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- and clearly it was likely that
8 there would be big decisions to be made.

9 LORD TURNBULL: There could have been decisions if we had
10 suffered a major reverse at some point, but what I think
11 was clear was what was the desired outcome, and the
12 desired outcome was the setting of an ultimatum, and
13 the US would be carried at least to that point.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I will leave this point for the
15 moment, but I think it is important to establish that,
16 though there was a strategy for September 2002 that was
17 set, it was possible that there would be another
18 strategy.

19 LORD TURNBULL: There could have been, yes.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: A strategy reappraisal and --

21 LORD TURNBULL: But that would have been in a sense of not
22 choosing something that you think is better, but because
23 you were forced to do it by a reverse. I think that's
24 different.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: I think I would like to come back to some

1 good boring stuff on structures and machinery.

2 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: You came in at this interesting turning point
4 of September 2002, and a strategic decision had been
5 taken, if not the final one, it had been, and what
6 I would really like to hear a bit about is what the
7 structures were when you arrived to deal with Iraq, both
8 official and ministerial, and how they developed, given
9 that a turning point had been passed.

10 LORD TURNBULL: Right, there were two fora. One was the
11 group that was meeting in Number 10, the
12 Foreign Secretary, Defence Secretary, Chief of Defence
13 Staff, the intelligence chiefs and so on. This --

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Was this the Ad Hoc Group, capital A, H? No?
15 That's an official group. This is a group of Ministers?

16 LORD TURNBULL: This is a group of Ministers.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: It's not ODP or --

18 LORD TURNBULL: No, it didn't have, it wasn't set up as,
19 constituted as a Cabinet Office committee with a number.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: So it wasn't being serviced and secretaried,
21 minuted in the way that --

22 LORD TURNBULL: No, the Cabinet Office best practice manual
23 says you have a membership and that membership are the
24 people who have a locus, not the people you choose to
25 have there. Secondly, it has its terms of reference.

1 All these things have been now published. It would have
2 papers, people minuting them and distributing them, and
3 whatever restrictions were placed on them.

4 This work was -- it was a professional forum. There
5 was no complaint about -- they had the right people,
6 with one possible exception, the right people in the
7 room. It wasn't the kind of sofa government in the
8 sense of the Prime Minister and his special advisers and
9 political cronies. It had the serious players, but they
10 met in this informal ad hoc, small "a", small "h", way.

11 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: It is not a Cabinet committee?

12 LORD TURNBULL: It is not a Cabinet committee.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Is it -- did you know -- is it being properly
14 seconded, minuted, so that action points can flow out of
15 it into the system?

16 LORD TURNBULL: Not with the degree of formality that you
17 would normally have. Now, this is a question of, if we
18 were doing this again, would we do it this way? I think
19 this is one of the big questions.

20 The second question is: did it make much difference
21 that it was done that way? I think, for the sake of
22 good order -- and one of the points I might make later
23 on is I think you should include people who have
24 a locus, even if they are going to be difficult.
25 I thought Alastair Campbell's description of Clare Short

1 as untrustworthy was very poor. I didn't agree with
2 that.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: She was the exception you mentioned just now?

4 LORD TURNBULL: Yes. She could be troublesome. She was
5 strong-minded and had a distinct view, and why I think
6 the Prime Minister -- this was a kind of characteristic
7 way of working. I like to move fast. I don't want to
8 spend a lot of time in kind of conflict resolution, and,
9 therefore, I will get the people who will make this
10 thing move quickly and efficiently. That was his sort
11 of characteristic style, but it has drawbacks.

12 But it did have -- insofar as it was about military
13 planning and the diplomatic strategy, it had the key
14 players on it. So it was a serious group, working in
15 a serious way.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But did it have papers which were
17 options and which were discussed or not?

18 LORD TURNBULL: Sometimes, yes, and it had this -- the one
19 we have referred to, the 2 March. There was a paper
20 in July about the military options.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: CDS was not a member of this group?

22 LORD TURNBULL: No, CDS was a regular attender, and the
23 intelligence chiefs.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

25 LORD TURNBULL: But then the other which came into existence

1 is the Ad Hoc Group of officials, which was a proper --

2 THE CHAIRMAN: It is important, I think, for you to tell us
3 for the record that an Ad Hoc Group is a recognised
4 Cabinet Office entity.

5 LORD TURNBULL: If it is a capital A, capital H, it is
6 a Cabinet Office group and people were invited to join
7 that on the basis they had a right and a need and
8 a purpose in being there and it brought in a very large
9 number of people from all sorts of places you might not
10 expect, like the Department of Transport. You certainly
11 had the Treasury, the DTI and so on, and that was the
12 thing that was set up 25 September².

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Was it a clearing house or was it a group
14 that developed and made recommendations to Ministers on
15 policy issues?

16 LORD TURNBULL: It didn't make recommendations on the
17 kind of policy issues Sir Lawrence is talking about, the
18 big issues of how we deal with the UN and the US. It
19 was a kind of contingency planning group and it would
20 look at all sorts of things that could go wrong. It was
21 very, very heavily influenced, I think, by the first
22 Gulf War, what went wrong there.

23 For example, there were papers on aircraft and
24 shipping - we didn't want a repetition of the stranded
25 BA jet - papers about environmental sabotage, consular

² Witness has clarified this was in fact 20 September

1 issues, how you would get people out of the region. The
2 Treasury on the oil market, macroeconomic policy and
3 something, the whole series of -- and it was where the
4 work on the humanitarian phase started, although, after
5 a point, a separate group was set up, the Iraq --
6 sometimes called Planning Unit or Policy Unit. That was
7 set up at Cabinet Office instigation.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: But set up inside the FCO?

9 LORD TURNBULL: It was placed inside the FCO.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: As you said earlier, describing the role of
11 the Cabinet Office generally, this Ad Hoc Group is not
12 where military or diplomatic or other planning takes
13 place, it looks at questions that will need to be
14 answered in the relevant departments?

15 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Right.

17 LORD TURNBULL: It is the thing to which the group above
18 could say, "Please sort out this".

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Where in the system is the official level
20 body that creates policy advice to Ministers on the Iraq
21 set of issues, or isn't there one? Because the
22 Prime Minister has David Manning, who is both Overseas
23 Secretariat and in government.

24 LORD TURNBULL: I would say that was the OD Secretariat.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: But -- okay, the secretariat is a secretariat

1 to something. But there isn't an interdepartmental
2 official body --

3 LORD TURNBULL: There was no DOP(O) or OD(O). In other words,
4 partly because this big committee didn't have
5 a Cabinet Office kind of identity, there wasn't
6 a similar thing, official thing, below it, although it
7 was a mixed ministerial -- it had CDS and the
8 intelligence agencies and David Manning working together
9 as a group.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Do you think it was realistic for
11 David Manning to carry both roles?

12 LORD TURNBULL: It had certain advantages, which meant that
13 the OD Secretariat was right there at the heart of this
14 process. Even worse, it could have been something where
15 there was a head of an OD Secretariat and the
16 Prime Minister was working on this with a random group
17 of people.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So he provided the link --

19 LORD TURNBULL: He provided a link, but there are issues
20 about -- was there one pair of eyes less? A possible
21 other disadvantage referred to by Suma Chakrabarti is
22 this question of judge and jury. If there was
23 a dispute, particularly about who was allowed to be
24 brought into a certain state of knowledge, was David
25 conflicted? What tended to happen was, if people had

1 a dispute, they brought it to me and asked me to help
2 them get it unblocked.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: I would still like to ask you just one more
4 question about the official level machinery for actually
5 preparing the big policy decisions on Iraq,
6 interdepartmentally, because there are the usual sets of
7 interest at work. There isn't a piece of machinery that
8 is doing that at official level? The OD Secretariat are
9 sighted on it all --

10 LORD TURNBULL: People -- the FCO and the MoD and the
11 OD Secretariat at various times put papers to this
12 ministerial group.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Just to ask -- we will come back to this,
14 probably, a bit later, but how are your
15 Permanent Secretary colleagues looking at the machinery
16 and the processes and how it was all working? Were they
17 content to work with it as it stood?

18 LORD TURNBULL: I think they were quite familiar with that
19 style of working by five years, yes.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I think one last thing on this. It is
21 about the culture rather than anything else, the
22 official machine. Enough challenge, enough invitation
23 to challenge, enough audience at ministerial level for
24 advice that may not be welcome or indeed may say you
25 have two difficult choices.

1 LORD TURNBULL: I don't know whether you were going to give
2 me the opportunity at the end to say, you know, lessons.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Of course.

4 LORD TURNBULL: Well, I can do it now.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

6 LORD TURNBULL: I don't think the culture is -- encourages
7 challenge enough, either ministerially or -- I think at
8 the official level people can get pretty disputatious
9 but there is a tendency, and I have seen it in other
10 spheres like the run up to the financial crisis, we all
11 convinced ourselves that everything was wonderful, we
12 didn't see the dangers.

13 I would say that on the issue of global warming, we
14 have seen exactly the same phenomenon, that the IPCC has
15 become a narrowed down group of climate scientists who
16 tissue reject climate scientists who have other views.
17 So getting drawn into a prematurely achieved consensus
18 is a danger of -- not only Whitehall, you know,
19 Whitehall political life and I think this was one of
20 them.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: That's vertically between the official layers
22 ministerial, and horizontally --

23 LORD TURNBULL: I think once the Ministers had coalesced,
24 people said, "There is a settled policy", and you are
25 not encouraged, once this thing has settled, to go on

1 arguing that we shouldn't have done this.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Can we take one area of policy-making and
3 planning, which is for the aftermath? That has
4 attracted a good deal of critical evidence from a number
5 of witnesses from different perspectives: inadequacy or
6 lateness, untimeliness for post-conflict planning
7 particularly in the United States, but also perhaps
8 partly because of here.

9 Seated as you were in the Cabinet Secretary's chair,
10 did you judge that the Prime Minister was getting
11 sufficient and sufficiently timely advice about the
12 post-conflict phase, right from your starting point
13 in September?

14 LORD TURNBULL: We didn't -- maybe we could have started it
15 earlier. I suspect there wasn't enough clarity about
16 the strategy to start it earlier, but work did begin in
17 the -- originally in the Ad Hoc Officials Group on this
18 issue and we were aware, with increasing alarm, from
19 visits to the US, that things weren't going very well at
20 their end. We massively underestimated just how bad it
21 was.

22 This sense of -- a lot of work was done. So if you
23 go from -- it reaches a head in about the second week
24 of February. The Prime Minister has a meeting and says,
25 "We have got to raise our game on this". Between then

1 and 20 March a huge amount of work was done on what we
2 needed to do. We managed to insert an International
3 Development Committee report in the House of Commons. It
4 writes a report and a government response is prepared
5 for it. So in those closing weeks, a huge amount of
6 work was done.

7 The difficulty was where you took it and how you
8 then attached that work. I don't think it was the work
9 that was the problem. I think there were two problems.
10 One was the US. The other is we made -- along with
11 the -- when we allocated, we made some incorrect
12 assumptions. There was a belief that we would succeed
13 in persuading -- since we had persuaded the US to go the
14 UN route on the confrontation of Saddam Hussein, they
15 would buy into the UN route for the post-crisis.

16 I think when Bush said the UN will have
17 a vital role, he was fobbing us off, and he
18 meant the UN agencies would have a vital role, but he
19 was absolutely resistant. So we took false comfort from
20 that. We took false comfort from the fact that there
21 are papers which say, "This is a well-educated society"
22 and there were words around in the papers which say
23 "with a functioning, public -- relatively functioning
24 public sector". It turned out that it partly collapsed
25 of its own accord and then Bremer destroyed what was

1 left. We had underestimated the discord that would
2 arise.

3 In a sense, we were preparing, but we didn't --
4 there were lots of things we didn't foresee and it was
5 getting the -- an arrangement with US apparatus, that was
6 the thing that was really difficult.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: From the standpoint of an autonomous
8 United Kingdom, albeit operating within a coalition,
9 I mean, there are two-ways you could look at this. This
10 is aftermath planning and the aftermath itself. One is
11 looking at potential scenarios.

12 There is a huge amount of wisdom and learning and
13 experience, both in Whitehall, and particularly in the
14 Foreign Office and the agencies outside it, about the
15 nature of the Iraqi society. We haven't been there with
16 an embassy, but we have had lots of people going in and
17 out. There is no real evidence of worse case/best case
18 scenarios being written and considered as a backdrop to
19 the planning work?

20 LORD TURNBULL: I wouldn't say entirely. I think we looked
21 at worst case scenarios on the humanitarian front.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, yes, but not on the collapse front, if
23 I can put it that way.

24 LORD TURNBULL: No, what we did not get were large numbers
25 of internal displaced people and we did not get hunger,

1 and I have come to the view that the UN, when they said
2 they were feeding 60 per cent of the population, they
3 were boasting.

4 Valerie Amos went to Basra in June/early July and
5 reported that the markets were simply flowing with
6 produce. So I don't think we were looking at a much,
7 much worse scenario on those two fronts. What we did
8 not anticipate was the collapse of civil order, and you
9 could say this comes back to the fact that the one
10 assumption that was absolutely correct in this whole
11 thing was that Saddam Hussein could be toppled very
12 quickly with a surprisingly small number of people, but
13 the number of people required to topple him in three
14 weeks was far less than the number required to occupy
15 what was left. That was a major strategic
16 miscalculation, not principally of our doing.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: The other perspective, if you can make
18 a distinction, bearing on this thought -- foreseen set
19 of circumstances, namely the toppling of the regime and
20 occupation, is just risk management.

21 What I don't know is whether, apart from nobody
22 foreseeing the scenario that actually occurred, there
23 was a sense of the range and scale of risks that we were
24 taking on as the United Kingdom. For example, the
25 moment we crossed the start line into Iraq and Kuwait,

1 we became responsible for all the territory we occupied.

2 LORD TURNBULL: I think this was a point that Sir Roderic
3 was on to with Kevin Tebbitt, that the military choice
4 between option 2 and option 3 wasn't simply a difference
5 between adding a divisional force, that it brought with
6 it the responsibility of an occupying power.

7 Had we stuck with option 2, we would have had
8 warships and airships, but we wouldn't have had large
9 numbers of people, other than special forces, on the
10 ground and we would not have been the occupying power
11 with everything that then flowed from it.

12 Whether people really understood that significance,
13 I don't know. Maybe they did, but they underestimated
14 just how difficult it was going to be, and one of the
15 reasons we underestimated it was, in my view, that the
16 emigre groups had the ear of people that mattered in the
17 Pentagon who said, once you have decapitated the Saddam
18 regime, it will not be difficult to create a functioning
19 Iraqi society. We were overconfident in that and didn't
20 foresee -- this whole idea -- we didn't foresee that we
21 would be in the midst of an extreme security problem.
22 We didn't foresee that the Iranians would meddle as much
23 as they meddled. It goes back almost to that point, but
24 I think we seriously failed to see what was the real
25 problem.

1 The real problem was security and we probably spent
2 too much time on humanitarian -- the movement of people,
3 refugee camps, safe havens and the food supply issue,
4 and we didn't catch this other issue that, if we didn't
5 establish security, nothing else counted for anything.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: This is not a side point, it is a big one,
7 but it is not a big one for this particular session,
8 I think. We heard this morning from Dr Shafik that, in
9 effect, there could have been the humanitarian crisis,
10 to deal with which so much planning effort went on, but
11 it was because of that planning effort and its execution
12 that there wasn't a major humanitarian crisis. Is that
13 your sense of things?

14 LORD TURNBULL: No, not really.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: She wasn't there at the time.

16 LORD TURNBULL: No, I would say there wasn't, because,
17 basically, the US thrust went straight up the main road,
18 got to Baghdad and there was no use of chemical or
19 biological weapons. So large parts of the country
20 encountered no fighting whatsoever.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Okay. Let's leave that for a minute.
22 I would like to come on to a different aspect of how
23 decisions were taken and who was involved. Clearly
24 there was a discomfort in the DFID area in Clare Short's
25 term as Secretary of State and we have heard that

1 Sir Suma Chakrabarti wrote to you, a letter of 11 March,
2 I think, about his concerns about ministerial
3 decision-making and his Secretary of State's involvement
4 among other things. By the way, this letter has been
5 declassified and will be on our website.

6 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: What did you make of it and what did you do
8 in response?

9 LORD TURNBULL: I think we then moved to the next of the
10 committees that got established, which was the
11 Ministerial Ad Hoc Iraq Rehabilitation, I think it was
12 called. It had an official kind of underpinning, but in
13 practice I think they largely met as a mixed group.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, and that worked okay?

15 LORD TURNBULL: Chaired by the Foreign Secretary,
16 occasionally the Defence Secretary deputised. Most
17 people thought it worked reasonably well, yes.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: We have got another letter from Suma on
19 1 April about that dimension, which is also now out.

20 LORD TURNBULL: That was something -- it started with
21 a proposal from Desmond Bowen and myself. I wrote
22 on 28 March saying, "I think we should set up this group",
23 and it then came into existence or got it agreed by the
24 first week in April.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: And then became a solid functioning part of

1 the machinery through the next period?

2 LORD TURNBULL: It stayed for quite a long time, yes, indeed

3 several months.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: There is one other set of Permanent Secretary

5 concerns we are aware of. There may have been others,

6 in which case you might tell us. But this is

7 Kevin Tebbitt on the particular and quite narrow point

8 that he wrote to you about on 5 March, about how you get

9 the legal advice when the decision is settled, when you

10 can't predict exactly how much notice you are going to

11 get, if any.

12 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: So he suggested a special, you know,

14 War Cabinet sort of meeting with the right people.

15 LORD TURNBULL: Which happened.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Which happened?

17 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: And worked?

19 LORD TURNBULL: Yes, you should have a record of that.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes and --

21 LORD TURNBULL: It was very clear, although in a sense the

22 running -- most people talked of, "Lord Boyce needs this

23 in order to write his orders", it was absolutely clear

24 that exactly the same principle applied to any

25 Accounting Officer in Whitehall. If this thing wasn't

1 legal, they couldn't allow any money whatsoever to be
2 spent on it. So it was as vital for the Civil Service
3 as it was for the military.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Indeed, yes. We don't propose this afternoon
5 to go into the legal issues. We are taking it obviously
6 from other witnesses, from the Attorney General and so
7 on later.

8 LORD TURNBULL: That's a relief.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: But what I think we just would like to ask
10 more about is really the role of the Cabinet Secretary
11 when there is a real war going on, and I think
12 Sir Lawrence would like to ask something on it.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes. Can you just give us some idea
14 generally how much of your time was being spent on Iraq
15 issues, say from the point that you came in, in
16 early September, through to the start of the war itself?

17 LORD TURNBULL: I don't know. I'm not sure I can put
18 a figure to it. It wasn't the biggest part of my job by
19 any means. I think the biggest part of my job -- two
20 things. One is, in effect, I was the line manager for
21 30 Permanent Secretaries and I spent many hours working
22 with Baroness Prashar on the SAS Committee, on the
23 recruitment and promotion of them and trying to improve
24 that; and on what was known as the Delivery and Reform
25 Agenda, which was brought to Cabinet in this period. At one

1 of the meetings, 27 May, there was a big paper on some
2 principles about the public sector.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So Iraq for you personally was not
4 your highest priority over this period?

5 LORD TURNBULL: I don't think simply the amount you spend
6 on something tells you its priority. It is that, if you
7 needed to spend time on Iraq, you dropped things and did
8 it. But it wasn't the thing which took up most of my
9 time.

10 In the -- after the start of hostilities, we
11 immediately set up the so-called War Cabinet, which was
12 a more or less direct copy of what had happened in the
13 first Gulf War and there was a daily routine. It started,
14 fortunately, not with me, but around about 6 o'clock in
15 the morning the intelligence assessment was produced,
16 leading to this meeting at 8.00 to 8.30, with a wider
17 range of Ministers, not the full Cabinet but the wide
18 range of Ministers. The Treasury would be represented.
19 Clare Short was certainly represented at this stage. It
20 would then receive from John Scarlett the
21 intelligence report on the way the fighting was going,
22 and issues would be identified in the course of that
23 discussion.

24 Then the third component was the COBR Committee,
25 which David Manning chaired, which was to take the

1 fallout from that War Cabinet meeting and try and take
2 things forward. And I attended all those War Cabinet
3 meetings.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You attended all the War Cabinet
5 meetings, and what did you see as your main role in
6 attending the War Cabinet meetings?

7 LORD TURNBULL: One was to take delivery of a particular --
8 if there was a particular problem, or to see if there
9 was some piece of apparatus and process that they needed
10 to put in hand, and to help sort out -- or to help and
11 sort out any particular -- any particular problem.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can you give us some examples of the
13 sorts of things that you would find yourself dealing
14 with?

15 LORD TURNBULL: Well, there were the issues around -- we
16 were beginning to talk about assembling a cadre of
17 people whom we could send out as secondees, what the
18 terms and conditions were. We subsequently had
19 discussions about -- that is after the end of the
20 War Cabinet period, about their security.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That was after the actual
22 hostilities?

23 LORD TURNBULL: The particular issue about security was
24 later, but the process of beginning the -- we had this
25 target of getting something like 100 people into

1 ORHA/CPA from a wide range of departments and that would
2 be the kind of thing that I would take to, say, the
3 Permanent Secretary meeting and say, "There is this
4 call-out for this now".

5 This is one of the things that has changed, of
6 course, that we now try to have a group of kind of
7 civilian reservists you might call them. We didn't have
8 it at the time because we couldn't really see the -- the
9 structures into which they would be injected were so
10 unclear.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was this the first point at which
12 you are regularly attending ministerial meetings on
13 obviously the Cabinet, but other than the Cabinet, this
14 is the first point that you were regularly attending?

15 LORD TURNBULL: Yes, there were various one-off meetings,
16 like the one we have just referred to, on legal powers,
17 and then I was obviously attending the Cabinet week by
18 week, and then this particular forum.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But basically what I take from this
20 is that up to 19/20 March 2003, you are essentially
21 content to delegate the work or let David Manning,
22 David Omand --

23 LORD TURNBULL: Yes, principally David Manning.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: David Manning principally. To take
25 responsibility for things, to move things along.

1 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You didn't engage particularly with
3 Iraq policy yourself?

4 LORD TURNBULL: No, if I had thought that something was
5 going dramatically wrong or reinforcements were needed,
6 I might have done, but that's --

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You would have to rely on somebody
8 telling you that something was going wrong because you
9 weren't engaged yourself?

10 LORD TURNBULL: Well, I would have picked it up. There is a sort
11 of osmosis in the Cabinet Office where you pick these things up
12 even if somebody doesn't directly tell you. But, yes, at
13 that time, this mechanism³, which you referred to in the
14 Butler Report, but the participants liked this
15 mechanism. The Prime Minister was very comfortable with
16 it. It worked for him, and until we didn't get the
17 second resolution, it had worked for us generally.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Does it mean that the system itself
19 was performing effectively in terms of the challenge
20 function that you mentioned earlier may have been
21 lacking, but that it was perhaps part of your duty to
22 make sure --

23 LORD TURNBULL: The question is what you think I should have
24 been challenging or someone should have been
25 challenging, whether it was a separate -- was it the

³ Note by witness. "This mechanism" refers to the so-called dual-hatting under which the Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser in No10 is also the Head of the Overseas and Defence Secretariat in the Cabinet Office.

1 strategy that was --

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Well, I think there were a number of
3 issues around this time which a Cabinet Secretary might
4 have raised questions about. We can take them forward
5 after a break, but I think, in the past,
6 Cabinet Secretaries might well have seen a role for
7 themselves as advising on strategy.

8 LORD TURNBULL: While the strategy was in a state of
9 formation, yes.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's take a break at this point and we can
11 come back to it afterwards. Let's come back at 3.30.

12 LORD TURNBULL: Right.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

14 (3.13 pm)

15 (Short break)

16 (3.26 pm)

17 THE CHAIRMAN: We will pick up one or two points about the
18 functioning of the Cabinet itself during this period.

19 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: One of the critiques which the
21 Butler Committee offered was that, although there were
22 frequent discussions of the Iraq question, these were
23 not, as it were, discussions for policy decisions based
24 on papers; these were updates informing, but how did the
25 Cabinet actually function through this period as a body

1 of people responsible, very heavy accountability on
2 their shoulders, and eventually we lose one member and
3 then a secretary?

4 LORD TURNBULL: Yes, I think you underplay the role when you
5 say these were just updates. On certain points, key
6 moments of endorsement and I would say the -- if you
7 look at them -- you know, there are roughly 24. There
8 were four before I arrived and 20 afterwards. The key
9 ones were either side of Crawford, in March 2002, when
10 he -- the Prime Minister reports on the growing kind of
11 concern about reporting coming out of the US, and then he
12 reports back on what has happened and they are given
13 a chance to express their concerns, and that -- but he
14 said this was not a time for decisions.

15 But they gave certain important sort of pointers and
16 there is -- for example, one thing they dealt with very
17 frequently was concern on the impact on the Muslim
18 population in Britain. They wanted to emphasise the
19 maximum international support, and consistently led by
20 Clare Short, but I think there was certain other
21 support. They would express their concern about the
22 pro-Israeli bias of US policy that we were being drawn
23 into and the sense that the Middle East peace process
24 was not being pursued rigorously enough.

25 So they were giving the Prime Minister some very

1 important reactions and steers, but consistently they
2 are telling him that they want this -- whatever is done
3 to follow a major international -- have an international
4 component.

5 We then get to the important meeting -- my
6 first - of 23 September 2002, and this was -- coincided
7 with the production of the dossier which was being
8 published the following day. Again, points were made --
9 you know, the double standards on Israel, major
10 opportunity to promote the UN, clear vision needed on
11 reconstruction. So they weren't simply listening and
12 saying, "Thank you very much". They were actually
13 applying their political judgment and -- for the most
14 part supportively, in the direction that the
15 Prime Minister wanted.

16 Key -- the only dissension was Robin Cook. Quite
17 remarkable that -- the question was: was containment
18 working? Everyone else accepted the thing that
19 containment wasn't working and he was the one person to
20 say he thought it was, and I'm sorry he isn't around to
21 take the credit for that.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Just on a point there, not working but
23 couldn't be sustained either, politically, or in terms
24 of its effects on opinion throughout the world.

25 LORD TURNBULL: When you say wasn't -- both --

1 THE CHAIRMAN: He thought containment was (a) working
2 operationally, and (b) could be defended and sustained.

3 LORD TURNBULL: Yes, but what the Prime Minister was saying
4 was it wasn't working, it couldn't be sustained and we
5 couldn't take the risk that he would use this period to
6 come back at someone.

7 What the Iraq Survey Group showed was that, of
8 course, Robin Cook was absolutely spot on. That's the
9 really interesting thing, but, again, this same set of
10 concerns about getting the Middle East peace process
11 going, involvement for the UN in the sense of
12 validation of what was happening, and involvement of the
13 UN in the aftermath, these are kind of recurring themes.

14 So they -- it isn't -- there is a slight
15 implication in the way you put it that they were just
16 getting a nice interesting briefing. What was
17 interesting about these occasions was -- and it happens
18 quite rarely -- virtually everyone spoke.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Which, of course, would not appear from the
20 Cabinet minutes, given the normal formula for Cabinet
21 minute writing --

22 LORD TURNBULL: No --

23 THE CHAIRMAN: -- without attribution?

24 LORD TURNBULL: I know that's the case and two major
25 occasions, this -- seminal meeting of

1 29⁴ September and again on 17 March, everyone -- everyone
2 spoke, mostly supportively but with, it is important to
3 emphasise, certain concerns.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Is it right -- this is from memory --
5 Robin Cook had actually resigned before the meeting on
6 17 March?

7 LORD TURNBULL: He had, he didn't attend it.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Just one other thing on that. Thank you for
9 clarifying the nature of those Cabinet discussions.
10 Perhaps the Butler Committee slightly misunderstood it.

11 LORD TURNBULL: When you get to say, November, 1441, there
12 is a lot of praise going round. "You have done really
13 well. So and so has played a blinder". The function of
14 generating sort of mutual support, which also the
15 Cabinet is about, was very evident.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Given that and accepting it, at the
17 same time you said, a couple of years later now, to the
18 PAC, that there was something wrong with the functioning
19 of Cabinet on Iraq through this period or at least of
20 the Cabinet system. I'm not sure exactly what you
21 meant.

22 LORD TURNBULL: I was thinking of the Cabinet system in
23 general, that at times it kind of degenerated -- there
24 was a rather perfunctory reading out of the
25 whipping, you know, what bills there were and were they

⁴ Witness has clarified this was in fact 23 September.

1 two and three-line whips. A completely pointless
2 activity, because you can just read all that, and then
3 the sort of traveller's tales from the Foreign
4 Secretary, and whatever was in a sense the short-term
5 political issue of the day. And then, in the run-up to
6 the election -- I think that was the time -- yes, there
7 was an exercise where Jeremy Heywood and I said, "We
8 must try and get better discussion here", and this was
9 the point --

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Jeremy Heywood then the Prime Minister's
11 principal private secretary?

12 LORD TURNBULL: Yes, trying to introduce presentations. Up
13 to that point, the Powerpoint presentation was unknown
14 in the Cabinet room, and yet absolutely standard
15 practice in the boardrooms and other things, and a -- so
16 a series of presentations were made where Secretaries of
17 State would come along and say, "This is the Home
18 Office's strategy", "This is the Department of
19 Education's strategy", and there would be a discussion
20 about that to try and get some -- some sort of life into
21 this. Indeed, sometimes the Iraq discussions were the
22 things that were the most interesting events.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Usha, would you like to pick this up?

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Yes, thank you.

25 Lord Turnbull, you have given a description how the

1 Cabinet operated. There is sort of an undercurrent of
2 disquiet, because, if you look at the letter that
3 Sir Suma wrote to you on 11 March, and then when we
4 talked to Desmond Bowen, he said -- and I'm quoting what
5 he said. He said:

6 "Here we have a government that has been powerful,
7 as you know, a number of years and that has
8 a methodology for how it sets out its business. Is it
9 ideal? It is certainly not ideal for officials, is it.
10 Does it actually get business done?", and so on and
11 then, of course, Clare Short in her book says:

12 "I believe this breakdown of proper decision-making
13 is a serious erosion of the effect of this government."

14 What is the reason for this undercurrent of disquiet
15 that was being expressed in these observations?

16 LORD TURNBULL: I think Clare Short's complaint, and it was
17 probably justified, wasn't simply about Cabinet, but it
18 was about her exclusion from this absolutely key
19 committee. I think she resented that very strongly.

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You think that was something
21 personal, not about the machinery of Cabinet and how
22 that operated?

23 LORD TURNBULL: I think it was certainly coloured by the
24 fact that she was Secretary of State for International
25 Development, a fantastic reputation abroad, and yet

1 wasn't being given the position in the sort of inner
2 councils. If you look at the way the Cabinet in general
3 functioned, it wasn't -- and I have said this on other
4 occasions -- it wasn't that different from the way it
5 functioned in Mrs Thatcher's time either; that there is
6 an era before that where it is meeting more than once
7 a week, 90 papers in a year.

8 This has died out by even sort of early Thatcher --
9 you know, papers to Cabinet were a rare phenomenon, even
10 in the 1980s. Most of the work where papers circulated
11 was in the network of Cabinet Committees, and what
12 I observed in the Blair era was there were
13 Cabinet Committees chaired particularly by John Prescott
14 that absolutely followed the classic Cabinet framework,
15 and he is to be praised for being a staunch defender of
16 that. I think the difference is that Mrs Thatcher
17 worked more in Cabinet Committees than Tony Blair did.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I come to another issue? You
19 said earlier that Clare Short was robust and she was
20 challenging.

21 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You also hinted that the culture of
23 challenge was on the decline. Do you think it was part
24 of that, that they didn't want her challenging, and this
25 was something that had become the kind of culture around

1 Number 10 --

2 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: -- and that began to impact on even
4 the Civil Service?

5 LORD TURNBULL: I think this is something about the Blair
6 administration. How many serious arguments did they
7 have in Cabinet? The answer -- or even in
8 Cabinet Committees. The answer is very few.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So they are all becoming compliant?

10 LORD TURNBULL: No, the arguments take place elsewhere.

11 There is a lot of argument and -- but how do you resolve
12 a dispute? I suppose the traditional way is you invite
13 people to put their view, the Prime Minister may put
14 a view in as well, and then has got to sum up and say,
15 "Actually, I have heard all the evidence and I think we
16 should do X", and it requires a lot of skill to get
17 a decision which one minister will like, another will be
18 dissatisfied with, but you have to bring them along as
19 well. That wasn't really how decisions got made in the
20 sense of overt, kind of, face-to-face
21 argument. It wasn't the characteristic.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Are you implying competitive briefings, as it
23 were, created --

24 LORD TURNBULL: That was an alternative way of doing it and
25 it was something that, as I say, John Prescott, who was

1 a staunch defender of the system, absolutely hated. He
2 would go ballistic, if he turned up at a meeting to
3 discuss whether we did something in the local government
4 world, or whatever, or something on -- in the Home
5 Office field and he found that it had all been in the
6 newspapers the day before.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But did that way of working
8 actually, in your view, impact on the quality of
9 decision-making?

10 LORD TURNBULL: It probably did, yes, but you have to
11 remember that the government had a very long run where
12 things went well for them.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So it was assumed that that was a
14 good --

15 LORD TURNBULL: But you know, I think it is something that
16 you ultimately -- and I think it is a poorer way of
17 making decisions. If you -- the real contrast is, if
18 you go back and read -- and I do recommend it --
19 Douglas Wass's book, "Decline to Fall", which is about
20 the period around the IMF negotiations, where the
21 Cabinet was meeting, everyone was encouraged to put
22 their view, and there were several different camps in
23 the room, Crossland, Benn, Shore, Harold Lever,
24 a Prime Minister, (inaudible), that way of working
25 disappeared a long time ago.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Now, you came in in September and it
2 is kind of a fresh eye. You are the Cabinet Secretary.
3 You make an assessment. Did you make any attempt to
4 sort of discuss these issues? Because, in a way, that's
5 a contribution you make in terms of the process of
6 government. Did you see that as your responsibility?

7 LORD TURNBULL: I think issue by issue, if I had a choice of
8 trying to get something into a more formalised channel,
9 I would, I don't know that I had a lot of success, but
10 around sort of 2004/2005 I did try to get some more --
11 greater use, greater commitment, to the use of the
12 Cabinet Committee framework.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But do you think sort of decline in
14 the culture of challenge has had a long-term impact on
15 the way civil servants operate, do you think it is a
16 sort of sustained damage?

17 LORD TURNBULL: There is plenty of challenge. If you think
18 over the argument about are we ready to join the Euro,
19 or foundation hospitals, or ID cards, furious arguments
20 and challenge, but it didn't take place in the sort of
21 registered fora.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So the structure, the fora, wasn't
23 there?

24 LORD TURNBULL: The structures were there, but weren't being
25 used. They were being bypassed and decisions were being

1 taken in other ways.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay, just before I ask Sir Lawrence,
4 Robin Cook in this atmosphere, he was a man who had
5 a strong run as Foreign Secretary before becoming leader
6 of the House, not afraid to speak his mind in any
7 gathering. Did it become apparent quite early on, from
8 your starting point as Cabinet Secretary, that he would
9 definitely go unless his own terms were met for any
10 particular engagement in a military intervention?

11 LORD TURNBULL: No. Apart from this very -- this one
12 instance where he just said, you know, "You are
13 overestimating the extent to which containment has been
14 eroded". He didn't go on about it, you know, week after
15 week, whereas Clare Short -- you can see in those
16 these -- other points were made in the discussion -- you
17 can see the voice of Clare Short all the way through
18 that. He must have had other discussions with the
19 Prime Minister, but I think he -- he kept his counsel
20 almost to the end.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: He didn't actually share that judgment or
22 counsel with his Cabinet colleagues?

23 LORD TURNBULL: Not in that forum, no. He may have been
24 encouraged -- the overt reason he gave in his
25 resignation letter was the failure to secure the second

1 resolution. He did not use the, "I have never believed
2 that containment was so eroded that we need to act".
3 I haven't read his -- he must have mentioned it in his
4 book, but I haven't ...

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you. Sir Lawrence?

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: On the Cabinet government question,
7 you have mentioned Cabinet meetings as a key moment of
8 endorsement and you have made it clear that's not just
9 rubber stamping, that is people having a discussion and
10 coming round behind the Prime Minister, and you have
11 mentioned a couple of issues, the Middle East peace
12 process, getting the UN involved, both pre and after any
13 war. But these were not, I would have thought, in terms
14 of what the Prime Minister was trying to do,
15 particularly objectionable to the Prime Minister. It
16 wouldn't have been difficult for him.

17 LORD TURNBULL: No.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: There were things he was trying to
19 do. Can you think of any point at which -- I'm not sure
20 I should say government strategy, but the government
21 approach changed as a result of a Cabinet meeting?

22 LORD TURNBULL: There was not a point at which anyone said,
23 "Iraq, you have got the wrong objective here", that
24 the -- the Prime Minister had basically carried his
25 colleagues with his central strategic insight about --

1 I call it the fusion theory, and no one said, "Why don't
2 we go the Vietnam route and just offer political support
3 but nothing else?"

4 Again, the Prime Minister had demonstrated
5 leadership and he had succeeded in carrying his
6 colleagues with him. I wouldn't have expected Cabinet
7 to get into the business of land forces through the
8 north or the south or the -- or whatever. I think they
9 would probably have recognised that that was
10 quintessentially the business of a smaller group. So
11 none of them suggested a serious change of direction.

12 None of them, with the possible exception of
13 Robin Cook, said that, "Maybe the French are right, the
14 inspectors need more time", they were all very
15 conditioned by the intelligence presentation. They all
16 had, between February of 2003 -- some of them actually
17 started in September.

18 September 2002 through to March 2003, there was
19 a series of briefings and they are listed in the ISC
20 report -- which would have been -- I did not have one of
21 them specifically, but I imagine they all went to see,
22 in turn, or in groups, to see John Scarlett and he would
23 have given them the line, what it was that we believed,
24 and it would have been consistent with the dossier
25 because we hadn't, at that stage, lost faith in it.

1 So they bought into this view.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's interesting, that, within
3 government, JIC played quite an important role in
4 convincing members of the Cabinet that the
5 Prime Minister's assumptions, claims, about the nature
6 of the threat --

7 LORD TURNBULL: I think the dossier was ostensibly an
8 attempt to inform the public. But one of the effects it
9 had was that the Cabinet all read it and basically
10 decided -- they absorbed it and accepted it.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You are suggesting that there were
12 regular briefings during the course of 2003?

13 LORD TURNBULL: No, there were not regular briefings. What
14 happened was a special programme of briefing was set up
15 and virtually everyone took advantage of it.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can you just give us an idea of when
17 these meetings were taking place?

18 LORD TURNBULL: If I can find it. I don't know whether
19 I have got it to hand. They start -- yes, here we are.
20 This is a -- from the ISC report:

21 "During the conduct of this Inquiry, the Committee
22 asked for details of the various Iraq briefings given to
23 Cabinet Ministers and senior Parliamentarians. The
24 details are as follows: September, Ian Duncan Smith" --

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think we have got that.

1 LORD TURNBULL: Anyway, that is the list.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We have seen that list.

3 LORD TURNBULL: I think Robin Cook is there on 20 February.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So these are continual --

5 LORD TURNBULL: There wasn't --

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: There wasn't a special --

7 LORD TURNBULL: There was a special -- it was a special
8 programme of briefing for this purpose. It wasn't just
9 a kind of drop-in facility.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Because one of the issues
11 of February/the first part of March is that there is
12 no -- what has been described as a smoking gun coming
13 through from the inspectors. So you might expect more
14 questioning, more concerns about whether the
15 intelligence actually was correct.

16 LORD TURNBULL: I think what happened was that people
17 interpreted the absence of any discovery exactly the
18 opposite way, that the less we discovered,
19 the more successful he was in cheating -- pulling the
20 wool over our eyes and obstructing the inspectors. It
21 is a case of, if you start from a certain premise, you
22 can interpret one piece of evidence completely different
23 ways. But because of the overwhelming belief that they
24 were there, it was interpreted as evidence of his
25 recalcitrance, not his innocence.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That, incidentally, was what the
2 dodgy dossier was trying to show; that there was
3 a concealment capacity.

4 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So did the furore over the
6 plagiarism issue with the dodgy dossier affect the way
7 that was viewed, that was seen as --

8 LORD TURNBULL: No, they maintained their faith in this and
9 I think the intelligence agencies tended to think that
10 there is this smoking gun or, more likely, the famous
11 scientist is going to come across with his laptop. There
12 were all sorts of kind of little titillations that we
13 might be on the point of something.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So that kept people satisfied
15 through this period?

16 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just ask one final question,
18 which is slightly different but goes back to the
19 starting point of Cabinet government, which is -- we had
20 it described by you, and in one word by
21 Alastair Campbell in another, as a sort of continual
22 seminar, almost, going on with the Prime Minister in the
23 middle, talking to people, getting their views, perhaps
24 from an inner circle, perhaps going outside it at times.

25 In these sorts of structures, personalities make

1 a tremendous difference. That is probably true in most
2 governmental structures, but how well they work may well
3 depend on personalities.

4 What was your sense of the personal relations
5 between the Prime Minister and key members of the
6 Cabinet in terms of how this affected the way that these
7 discussions went, and perhaps key members of the
8 Civil Service as well?

9 LORD TURNBULL: Well, the key members of the Cabinet were
10 pretty supportive. He managed to keep the Deputy
11 Prime Minister, the Chancellor, the Foreign Secretary,
12 the Defence Secretary, all on board and whenever they
13 spoke, they -- in Cabinet, they spoke supportively.
14 I don't know whether privately they were expressing
15 concerns. If they were, I would guess that they weren't
16 questioning what we were doing, but were we doing enough
17 to make a success of it, ie particular concerns about:
18 are we capturing or persuading certain parts of the
19 population?

20 There were concerns that the loss of -- issues
21 around Cambridge, the intelligentsia. They were having
22 a lot of difficulty getting the intelligentsia brought
23 in, whereas Leicester was really supportive. Some
24 people reported back saying, "We must do more in this
25 area", saying, "We have got to get this argument

1 across", and were they winning people over.

2 I don't think many of them were saying, "God, why
3 are we on this? Surely we have got to get off at some
4 point". I don't think that was happening.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: I would just like to pursue a little further
7 one aspect of the legal advice question, not the content
8 or the quality of the advice -- and we have dealt with
9 Kevin Tebbitt's letter to you and the methods which did
10 operate. It is rather the way in which you dealt with
11 it in evidence to the Public Administration Select
12 Committee in March 2005 as to how the advice was
13 presented to Cabinet.

14 I wonder could you just give us your description
15 from memory?

16 LORD TURNBULL: We know now, from all sorts of papers that
17 have been leaked or Freedom of Information requests,
18 that the Attorney General prepared a longer version and
19 he took this to the Prime Minister and he went through
20 in great detail the various arguments. His conclusion
21 at that point was you could make a case on the basis of
22 one resolution, but it would be much better if you got
23 the second one.

24 But, at a crucial point, he says, "But I can't make
25 the -- make this definitive yet, because two things are

1 needed. One is I don't know whether there will be
2 a second resolution, and, secondly, someone has to
3 warrant the -- whether he is in material breach".

4 THE CHAIRMAN: In the terms of 1441, the first resolution?

5 LORD TURNBULL: Yes. So then there comes -- first of all,
6 the second resolution is lost, and then there is the
7 pressure from the military, the Civil Service,
8 et cetera, saying, "Come on, make up your mind, you
9 know, you have got to give us the definitive version",
10 and the definitive version was what was presented to
11 Cabinet and what was published -- what was given to
12 Parliament.

13 It was not, in my view -- you will need
14 to check the Attorney General's understanding --
15 a summary of what had been produced ten days earlier.
16 It was materially different in some respects because of
17 the passage of time. Certain things had actually
18 changed, and, at that point, he had to say yea or nay,
19 and the way legal advice is handled in the Civil Service
20 is there can be views this way and that way, but the
21 Attorney General is, in effect, the last court of
22 appeal, because, once the Attorney General has ruled,
23 then we all agree to stop arguing at that point, and
24 that is, with one or two exceptions, what happened.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Were members of the Cabinet aware on that

1 last day just before the Parliamentary answer, that
2 there was a complex set of finely balanced arguments
3 which had been going on, or did they simply listen to
4 what the --

5 LORD TURNBULL: No, he presented -- he said, "I have now
6 reached my determination in this thing and this is what
7 it is."

8 I mean, it contained the so-called revival argument.
9 It was there. But the kind of commentary about, you
10 know, the complexities and the history were omitted.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. It was not -- and this is perhaps
12 a sidetrack -- it wasn't a law officer's opinion, in
13 that classic sense?

14 LORD TURNBULL: Why not?

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, was it?

16 LORD TURNBULL: Yes, I think it was, and this is what we may
17 be coming on to, which is, a few weeks later, out of the
18 blue, Clare Short tried to mount the argument that the
19 Ministerial Code says that, if you -- you can't say,
20 "The law officer has advised this", and then not
21 disclose the fact that, two paragraphs later, he then
22 says something which we can -- we have to publish the
23 whole thing.

24 Her argument was that this is indeed what had
25 happened. He hadn't published the whole thing and he

1 took the view -- and I -- I think he was right -- that
2 there was one version, the final version, and that was
3 what was published, presented in full.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: The rest was travaux preparatoires?

5 LORD TURNBULL: Your French is better than mine, yes.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry for the unintended pun -- the short
7 point is that you were completely content that the
8 Ministerial Code had not been breached because the
9 Attorney was there and gave his own opinion in person to
10 the Cabinet?

11 LORD TURNBULL: Yes. A particular key issue here is it
12 wasn't being reported by the Secretary of State
13 for Defence saying, "Here is the advice I have had from
14 the Attorney General". He was there in person. I think
15 you can say he started reading it out and they all said,
16 "Don't bother, we can read it for ourselves". That was
17 it.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I just ask a question on that
19 one? It is not so much about the Ministerial Code, but
20 the initial advice with all the caveats. I mean, that
21 wasn't circulated and discussed in Cabinet, what they
22 had already presented was in person, the view that the
23 Attorney General had come to, but they never had the
24 opportunity of actually discussing/debating the fuller
25 advice that had been discussed with the Prime Minister.

1 LORD TURNBULL: No. Partly because there is the kind of
2 tradition which says you rely on the Attorney General to
3 produce definitive advice. Once he has done it, you
4 don't say, "I didn't think much of that". His job is to
5 produce the version that we can all work on.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That's one aspect of it, but isn't
7 there a stage before where the Cabinet as a whole needs
8 to have a discussion about the fuller thing before you
9 come to a decision?

10 LORD TURNBULL: I think what they needed was "yes" or "no",
11 and that's what they got.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: A side point of some interest is you said in
13 that evidence to the PAC that, although it had not been
14 the convention of the Attorney to attend all Cabinet
15 meetings at that time -- it subsequently became so -- is
16 that right?

17 LORD TURNBULL: Yes, I'm not sure I think that is entirely
18 a good idea myself. We have had arguments about this.
19 Once we had dealt with the huge anomalies in the
20 position of the Lord Chancellor, people then turned to
21 the huge anomalies in the position of the Attorney
22 General, and at some point, this Constitutional Reform
23 Bill was going to deal with it, but they ducked it in
24 the end.

25 It is a residual ambiguity that he has a ministerial

1 role, and is the adviser, and is it better to have
2 a bit of a distance?

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, quite so. Thank you. Martin, moving
4 on?

5 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to turn now to the
6 post-conflict situation. We have heard from several
7 witnesses, quite emphatically, that the government
8 didn't have, in their view, the people, the skills, the
9 resources, the process, in the post-conflict phase to
10 make the right decisions and to implement them
11 effectively. For example, Sir Peter Ricketts told us,
12 again with some emphasis:

13 "There was an underestimate of the number of people
14 and the cost of the role that we found ourselves playing
15 in the south."

16 Whose job was it to ensure that the scale of the
17 task was identified and that it had the capacity -- the
18 Civil Service had the capacity to meet those demands?

19 LORD TURNBULL: You could say it was the Iraq Planning Unit.
20 A lot of work did go on. I think the principal reason
21 is not actually the lack of skills. DFID had a very
22 long and, I would say, distinguished record of acting in
23 various conflict situations: Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor,
24 Sierra Leone, and I want to record, I think, the
25 patronising insults heaped on them by some of the

1 elderly military you got early on in this, I hope you
2 will disregard. I think they have absolutely top class
3 people.

4 The difficulty wasn't whether we had good people who
5 were experienced in humanitarian. The difficulty -- two
6 things. One is anticipating just how difficult the
7 situation would be, and, two, finding an apparatus in
8 which their talents could be deployed, and we
9 underestimated this -- for a variety of reasons,
10 some I think I have probably mentioned.

11 Well, we didn't realise how -- that ORHA was going
12 to be entirely kind of a Pentagon operation, what
13 limited resources it would have. We underestimated the
14 risk of kind of civil strife. The military plan provided
15 enough people to topple the regime, but not enough
16 people to provide security, and the -- there was this
17 expectation, indeed hope, that the UN would be a big
18 player. The US clearly had no intention of that
19 happening. There is some phrase I have seen where it is
20 said they wanted endorsement, not authority.

21 All those things led us to kind of underplay what
22 was needed. We also expected to find that, if you went
23 to the Ministry of Finance, for example, you would find
24 well-educated, competent people, and we didn't, partly
25 because they kind of fled and looted the place, but more

1 importantly the Bremer decision on de-Ba'athification
2 removed the people we thought we were going to be
3 working with.

4 These are, in my view, a lot more important issues
5 as to why we ran into difficulty than whether we had
6 enough people of the right quality, because in other
7 theatres these people had demonstrated their capability.

8 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How were you able to redress the
9 balance when DFID itself obviously presented these
10 concerns?

11 LORD TURNBULL: Well, at one point this came -- various
12 representations were made to the United States. I think
13 the Prime Minister raised it with Bush when they met at
14 Hillsborough. There was -- there had been a number of
15 missions around the turn of the year to Washington, but
16 the lack, the loss of security proved absolutely
17 crippling, and, as you read the papers of the Ad Hoc
18 Group -- this is the Ad Hoc Rehabilitation,
19 the April 2003 -- it will say week by week, "We have now
20 got 50 people in ORHA", "We have now got 60 people in
21 ORHA", and then, when you get through around the turn of
22 the year, it starts saying things like, "They are in
23 lockdown".

24 "There are 15 mortars coming in a day, and it is
25 becoming impossible to work", and we have seen from the

1 case of Peter Moore, pretty sadly, he needed four people
2 in the department and another transport detail to get
3 him there and get him back. In the end, it just became
4 impossible, until, as I think you heard this morning,
5 once law and order was restored in the south, then all
6 sorts of possibilities opened up.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Essentially, whatever could be done in
8 your view was done and done at the right time,
9 effectively?

10 LORD TURNBULL: I think we had the people to do it. The
11 other thing we underestimated is the discomfort of
12 being, let's say a 10 per cent shareholder, but you
13 carry in your area full responsibility. The arrangement
14 in which -- this was not like post-war Germany, which
15 you will be a world expert on. There was not a British
16 Army of the Rhine area. The south-east region was
17 a subdivision of ORHA/CPA and we had to sort of do
18 everything through them. That's where the money came
19 from, and one of the major constraints was getting
20 CPA/Baghdad to get the money to CPA.

21 So this is the sort of key lesson: don't get into
22 a position where you have responsibility and
23 accountability, but you don't have power. That is
24 exactly the position we were in and I think all your
25 witnesses have described how uncomfortable this was.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Technically and legally, we had equal
2 responsible for the whole of Iraq, didn't we?

3 LORD TURNBULL: That just illustrates the mismatch. Yes.
4 1483 describes just the two governments. They were
5 only the two -- they didn't mention the Poles or the
6 Dutch or any Australians or anything else. So we were
7 part of an American operation about which we had a lot
8 of misgivings. We worked very hard to get them to
9 change and we put some high-powered people into the
10 Baghdad operations, some of whom you have heard from,
11 and it was still a problem.

12 That's where I think the difficulty about the -- the
13 post-conflict period comes from, the lack of security
14 and the -- the lack of kind of power to go with the
15 responsibility, rather than talent and resources, money.

16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Certainly that's what several witnesses
17 have stressed.

18 Now, you mentioned in your answer lessons learned,
19 so perhaps I can go on to my final question in this
20 regard: we have heard that there was a lessons learned
21 exercise started by the Cabinet Office in 2003 --

22 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

23 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: -- which was not finished. Can you
24 explain to us why it was stopped?

25 LORD TURNBULL: I think Desmond Bowen gave you the answer

1 that Number 10 thought this wasn't the moment to do it,
2 and then I think they never found another moment.

3 By then, we were into the death of Dr Kelly, Hutton,
4 then into Butler Report, and it was never -- it was
5 never completed. But you have seen it, the lessons
6 are well worth absorbing and if the focus of this
7 Inquiry is lessons learned, that is as good a starting
8 point as any.

9 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Not the right moment, for what reasons?

10 LORD TURNBULL: I could see maybe June 2003 was too early,
11 but then these other inquiries, they became the focus of
12 the -- if the government is under scrutiny, they bore
13 the brunt of it.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Martin, do you want -- right.

15 I think we are coming to the end of the session, but,
16 before we get there, I think Sir Roderic has got
17 something he would like to pursue?

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'd just like to come back a little bit
19 on to the track of the policy that you were talking
20 about earlier and recognising that you were only there
21 from September, by which time, as you said, the strategy
22 was essentially fixed and it was a matter of delivering
23 it.

24 In the period after your arrival as
25 Cabinet Secretary, to what extent did the Prime Minister

1 get briefing, orally or in writing, on the potential
2 downside of tackling -- toppling Saddam Hussein, on the
3 risks that this could lead to instability inside Iraq,
4 the negative consequences for regional stability, how
5 would it play with regard to international terrorism?

6 You talked about concerns in the Cabinet about the
7 effect on the Muslim population, but were experts coming
8 to him -- there was a seminar in November, I think. Was
9 he getting the other side of the picture, the
10 inconvenience side?

11 LORD TURNBULL: I don't think he was, no.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Why not?

13 LORD TURNBULL: Well, there was a sense of, "This is the --
14 the strategy". Is there a failure of the imagination
15 and a failure of people wanting to present sort of the
16 pessimistic side? You realise that this could all go
17 badly wrong, at a time when you are trying to convince
18 people that you believe you have a winning strategy.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But isn't there a very strong sort of
20 Civil Service tradition setting out the pros and cons
21 for a minister before you say, "But on balance, with
22 respect, yes, Minister, we think your policy should go
23 this way or that way"?

24 LORD TURNBULL: I think that was largely concluded
25 by September.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So we then walked into this operation,
2 led by the Americans, and then it turned out there were
3 rather a lot of cons that hadn't been anticipated, but
4 do you think there were people around the system,
5 experts on the Middle East, or indeed outside
6 government, who had read it more accurately but who were
7 inhibited in putting that view forward to Ministers and
8 the Prime Minister because they felt this would be
9 unwelcome, unpopular, maybe not good for their careers
10 or whatever?

11 LORD TURNBULL: I wasn't aware of where would you find
12 them? They would probably be in the Foreign Office, if
13 you are talking about experts on Iraq. What would the
14 effect be? One of our problems was, as has been
15 referred to already, we hadn't had a presence in the
16 country. So our ability to judge whether the Chalabi
17 view was correct was poor, and I think we relied too
18 heavily and didn't -- we walked into this risk that --
19 I suppose, two things.

20 One is that the Iraqi people, having been given this
21 opportunity to become a democracy, would prefer to
22 murder each other and us. We didn't really see that
23 and I never saw any papers really discussing this. The
24 scope this gave for Iranian meddling.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I mean, there is evidence on the public

1 record that the Foreign Secretary from time to time
2 expressed some doubts about the way it was going, very
3 much in liaison with Colin Powell and the United States.
4 But was the Prime Minister not really listening to that
5 because his mind was made up?

6 LORD TURNBULL: No, I wasn't privy to what doubts the
7 Foreign Secretary had. I would be very interested to
8 see here whether you induce him to present those.
9 I don't think they were presented in a public forum in
10 Cabinet. Indeed, what the Cabinet saw of the Foreign
11 Secretary was someone battling very hard indeed, it
12 turns out, with pretty poor material, presenting the
13 case in the United Nations. This didn't look like a man
14 who was privately thinking, "This whole thing is flawed.
15 I just don't think this adds up". They weren't the
16 vibes that someone in my position or other Cabinet
17 colleagues were getting. They were getting the vibes of
18 someone who was fighting this case very hard indeed.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: My last question is indeed about the
20 United Nations and the UN route, because you have said
21 in your very early period one of the things that was
22 achieved was to get agreement with President Bush that
23 the Americans would go down the UN route, as it tends to
24 be called. But what was this route towards?

25 Was it a route primarily in order to acquire

1 international support and legitimacy for what was
2 already, as you have said, a longstanding American
3 policy of regime change, or was it a genuine attempt,
4 made through the United Nations, to resolve the problem
5 of Iraq's WMD without a conflict?

6 LORD TURNBULL: From September onwards, every statement that
7 comes from the Prime Minister and any other minister of
8 the government is entirely about disarmament. All sorts
9 of statements, which say, "You can save your regime if
10 ... Military action is not inevitable". I may -- this
11 is a statement from the UN Security Council Resolution
12 in November:

13 "I may find this regime abhorrent, any normal person
14 would, but the survival of it is in his hands. Conflict
15 is not inevitable."

16 Others will say:

17 "I detest his regime. Even now, he can save it by
18 complying with the UN's demands."

19 That is 25 February. So all the way through this
20 period he is saying -- and there is one which I think is
21 quite extraordinary, something about:

22 "He can survive and we will be just with you." He says

23 So in exactly the same -- if you take
24 25 November, the Hoon speech in the Queen's Speech
25 debate it is disarmament, disarmament, disarmament.

1 Absolutely clear that that is the policy, and, had
2 Saddam Hussein said, "Okay, I will co-operate fully.
3 You know, not only is my cupboard bare, but I will
4 actually demonstrate that", the implication is he could
5 have saved the regime even to that point.

6 The question then is: what on earth is this
7 statement to Fern Britton on the television all about,
8 where she asked, "If you had had no weapons of mass
9 destruction -- if you had known he had no weapons of
10 mass destruction, what would you have done?", and he said
11 "Well, then I would have found some other way of mounting
12 the argument".

13 You will have to put this point to him. But also,
14 coming to the earlier period, there are -- remarks have
15 been -- things have been pointed out where he talks in
16 rather regime change-ish language after Crawford.

17 Even in the sort of inner -- you know, papers that,
18 you know, you have probably seen, but at one stage
19 talking about going to the UN is an option, and my
20 hypothesis is, he starts as a regime changer and he is
21 picking up his alliance with Bush, whose public policy
22 through the Iraq Liberation Act is to depose the regime.
23 That's what he is thinking of doing, and then it is not
24 just Bush who is put on to the UN route in September,
25 but Blair also.

1 At that point, either he is saying, "Well, I am
2 really a regime changer, but I will just talk the
3 disarmament language", or he realises that disarmament
4 is the only way -- or that disarmament, by pushing that
5 point and pushing the ultimatum, is the only way, he
6 thinks, of toppling this regime.

7 But it is absolutely unambiguous that from September
8 to the final speech -- not the one in March, but the
9 one before that, the February statement, he is saying,
10 "You can save your regime even now", and I don't know
11 the answer. Did he seriously believe that when he -- if
12 we -- he had not gone the UN route or had been rebuffed
13 at the first resolution stage, did he seriously believe
14 that he could take the country into a -- in a sense
15 a non-UN joint operation with the US? That's, I think,
16 what you have got to ask him.

17 I personally would say, it is a fantasy. He could
18 not have made it work, but you have got to ask him.

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But do you think the UN route was
20 taken because, at that time, he was getting strong
21 advice there would be no legal basis, because --

22 LORD TURNBULL: I think it was more important -- that was an
23 important factor, but much more important was -- as
24 I said -- when they first discussed this, after
25 Crawford, the first thing everyone was on about was,

1 "We've got to internationalise this process. You have got to
2 create a coalition. You cannot do it as just a US/UK
3 partnership", and that, I think, was the principal
4 attraction because the -- the legal basis then was
5 secured, admittedly controversially, by the UN route,
6 but people were very -- you know, the one thing the
7 Cabinet warned him really from the start was, this must
8 be an international coalition.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I follow that on? In any of
10 your conversations with the Prime Minister, did he give
11 you any indication that he was -- he found the
12 disarmament route, the UN route, something of a pretext?

13 LORD TURNBULL: No, I -- maybe I am too trusting, but I read
14 these statements. Week by week, he was saying
15 disarmament is the objective.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But did you talk to him about it?
17 How often were you having conversations about Iraq
18 policy with him?

19 LORD TURNBULL: Not all that often actually. I had many
20 conversations with him about all sorts of other things
21 but I wasn't one of his close confidantes on Iraq.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You described a number of things
23 that went wrong and things you thought about. Did you
24 have misgivings at the time about the way things might
25 be going?

1 LORD TURNBULL: Not as much as I should have done, no. This
2 is the whole point about the group, the collectivity.
3 There is a view, here is the intelligence. I did not
4 have the resources to challenge it. The interesting
5 thing is the one person who did had been the minister in
6 charge of MI6, and no one else felt that they had the
7 knowledge and depth to say --

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The Foreign Secretary?

9 LORD TURNBULL: Robin Cook, from his time as Foreign
10 Secretary, and I think that's a key difference between
11 him and virtually all the others.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Going back to the Cabinet processes
13 you have given us a clear picture of everybody coming
14 along, being -- asking their questions, sharing their
15 concerns, but basically following the path that was
16 being set.

17 Weren't there opportunities, even if there was no
18 great strategic challenge, for at least a stocktaking;
19 for example, in January when the decision was made to
20 send our ground forces? There must have been moments
21 when you would produce the papers and say, "Well, this
22 is what we are doing, this is the policy, but these are
23 alternatives"?

24 LORD TURNBULL: But part of the justification for sending in
25 the ground forces which again appears in many of these

1 speeches, is the threat will improve our chances of
2 getting the results.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I understand that there was
4 a reason. It is just a question of whether or not there
5 was an opportunity here to do a stocktaking, just to do
6 a reality check, to question whether the right thing --

7 LORD TURNBULL: It wasn't done.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It wasn't done. But in a Cabinet
9 system that was fully operational, perhaps it would have
10 been done.

11 LORD TURNBULL: When you say "fully operational", if you
12 mean --

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In a more traditional way, should
14 I say.

15 LORD TURNBULL: Had there been more sharing between the
16 insider group and the outsider group, I don't think that
17 would have made much difference, because the insider
18 group was operating on false information, and simply
19 sharing that with the outsider group, they would have
20 simply pooled those shared misconceptions.

21 The only way it would have happened is if there had
22 been somewhere close to the Prime Minister, saying, you
23 know, "You need to think about" --

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: All I have in mind is the sort of
25 meeting that has taken place, and used to take place

1 quite regularly in OD, or whatever it was called at the
2 time, where papers would be produced by departments
3 saying, "This is where we are, these are the issues,
4 these are the options", and in a sense, this seems
5 almost to have been given up on.

6 LORD TURNBULL: At this stage we -- I think the players
7 thought they were past that point.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I ask you a final question which
9 goes ahead of it? We have heard from a number of
10 witnesses that April 2004 was a pretty low point --

11 LORD TURNBULL: Yes.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- that no weapons of mass
13 destruction had been found and clearly now are not going
14 to be found, battles going on in Fallujah, the Sadrists
15 rising is taking place, there are the revelations about
16 Abu Ghraib.

17 Can you just describe the impact on Cabinet of these
18 sorts of problems and revelations coming through and
19 whether this -- the mood and the way the Cabinet
20 operates contrasts with how it does --

21 LORD TURNBULL: You are absolutely right to pick April 2004
22 as a turning point. If you do a word search, I think
23 you won't find the word "insurgency" comes up much
24 before then, and it becomes part of the currency.

25 For me, the turning point in all this was the

1 capture and the murder and the burning of the bodies of
2 the American engineers and then their bodies are hung up
3 on the bridge. That -- suddenly, I thought, "This is
4 really not going well". You know, we have really hit
5 something very, very serious at this point and this is
6 the point at which all the good work that people had
7 done -- Treasury people had been out there and they had
8 changed the currency and so on, they had built up a lot
9 of the civil society -- where it became really difficult
10 to operate.

11 Did people then say, "Well, you know, we have just
12 got to get out of here?" No, they didn't. I mean,
13 I think they knew that they had got to stay there and
14 fight it through and sort it out and it took until more
15 or less the Charge of the Knights in 2008. So it was
16 virtually four years of getting on top of this --

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did this affect the workings of the
18 Cabinet in itself, these shocks --

19 LORD TURNBULL: No. No one came along and you know, really
20 said -- you know, there were no recriminations. They
21 stuck together. They realised they were in a problem
22 and they -- you know, there was a good deal of loyalty
23 but they weren't going around blaming other people,
24 which is a sign that you know, the Prime Minister
25 managed to hold them together. They could have

1 fractured, but they didn't, they hung in together.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Lastly, what was the effect on the

3 Civil Service of this?

4 LORD TURNBULL: I think the thing that had the most effect

5 was Abu Ghraib, this sense of they were kind of sullied,

6 kind of disgraced. It was a very, very distasteful

7 revelation which shocked a lot of people, that

8 although it was principally an American thing, we were

9 in a coalition with people who had different views about

10 treatment of prisoners, torture, and it made it apparent

11 just how uneasy a partnership this was.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the questions we have raised

13 in the past is whether there was much advance warning of

14 these revelations and so on. I think there was some

15 knowledge within the system that there were problems in

16 America with these prisons.

17 LORD TURNBULL: There may have been, but --

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: They hadn't percolated to you?

19 LORD TURNBULL: I basically saw them on the news, like most

20 other people.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Just one last point. You were

23 saying earlier, in response to Sir Lawrence, that

24 probably you should have been more concerned than you

25 were, but you didn't have the resources, but earlier, in

1 response to a question about the role of
2 Sir David Manning, you said that it was a good thing
3 that you had someone who was kind of a link, but were
4 you not getting regular feedback from David Manning how
5 things were developing? Did he have any concerns? Was
6 there regular interchange, exchange?

7 LORD TURNBULL: A lot of the reports, the notes of these
8 meetings, came through. I got reports through
9 David Manning -- sorry, David Omand, sitting on JIC and
10 through, you know, I worked closely with Desmond Bowen
11 who was the head of the OD Secretariat on our side of
12 the door. So I'm not quite sure which period you are
13 talking about.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I'm talking about the build-up of
15 the war, because it was the earlier thing in terms of
16 the concern about going to war. I mean, it was that
17 period I'm talking about. All I am really saying is, if
18 you were getting this feedback from David Omand and
19 David Manning ...

20 LORD TURNBULL: This is what -- by the time I had got my
21 feet under the table, we had a settled position and --
22 so I was not getting feedback saying, "This is -- you
23 know, there are serious problems here". All the signs
24 I was getting from Number 10 was the Prime Minister was
25 extremely satisfied with the official support that he was

1 getting.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: I think we are coming to the end of this
4 session. We have learned from this session a number of
5 lessons and you may have others to suggest and certainly
6 some last reflections.

7 LORD TURNBULL: Well, I have got one in particular. That
8 is -- the perception in the British public is, we said
9 he had weapons of mass destruction and we went to war in
10 order to find them and disarm them, and we didn't find
11 them. Therefore, the 179 people who died, many more
12 injured, their sacrifice is in vain. That's a very kind
13 of popular view.

14 What I find extraordinary is that -- how little
15 knowledge there is of what the answer to this story is,
16 and I hope that this Inquiry will devote some time to
17 explaining what we now know about what actually
18 happened, the two main sources being the
19 Iraq Survey Group and the debriefing of Saddam Hussein.

20 If you said to people, "Who is George Piro?",
21 I don't think one in 60 million would know -- do you
22 know who George Piro is? George Piro is the FBI agent
23 who debriefed Saddam Hussein over a period of five
24 months.

25 So there is a sense that we do know the answer, and

1 the answer is, I think, that Saddam Hussein's priority
2 was not, as Sir Roderic was saying, a growing arsenal of
3 weapons of mass destruction, but the escaping from the
4 shackles of sanctions, and what he told them was that
5 he -- he had lost most of his weapons of mass
6 destruction as a result of the first round of weapons
7 inspectors and closed the rest of the programme down
8 because he wanted to get sanctions removed. But he also
9 told his debriefers that, as soon as he had the
10 opportunity, he would return to these programmes and he
11 would reconstitute them, all three categories, chemical,
12 biological, nuclear. But what he was trying to do was
13 not tell the Iranians that he currently didn't have
14 them. He thought it was absolutely crucial.

15 So he was telling this lie and, of course, he -- we
16 now know that in fact his intention was to reconstitute
17 his programme, and, therefore, getting rid of him turns
18 out to have been a worthwhile thing to have done.

19 But this story of what actually happened, we have
20 these popular accounts. We said he had them and then we
21 found out that he didn't, and, therefore, what was it
22 all about? What we now know is he was playing a game
23 which was in the end too clever by half and he got
24 caught up in the web of his own deception. But he
25 clearly had an intention to reconstitute these

1 programmes and I think the British public has never been
2 given, in a sense, a tutorial on the Iraq Survey Group
3 and the Saddam debriefing, and I think one of the things
4 that needs to come out is just what did happen and was
5 it quite such a worthless exercise as many people now
6 believe?

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Well, I think that brings this
8 session to a close. Our thanks to Lord Turnbull, our
9 witness, thank you for that, and to those who have been
10 here through the afternoon.

11 Just to say we reconvene on Friday morning at
12 10 o'clock to take evidence from Major General Binns,
13 who was one of the last general officers commanding the
14 Multi-National Division South East. That will be at
15 10 o'clock on Friday. With that, we will close the day,
16 thank you.

17 (4.39 pm)

18 (The Inquiry adjourned until Friday 15 January 2010 at
19 10.00 am)

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