

SECTION 6.4

PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR A POST-SADDAM HUSSEIN IRAQ, MID-2001 TO JANUARY 2003

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Introduction and key findings

1. Sections 6.4 and 6.5 consider the UK's planning and preparation for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq between late 2001 and March 2003.
2. Section 6.4 covers the period up to Mr Blair's decision on 17 January 2003 to deploy UK forces to support US military preparations.
3. Section 6.5 covers the 10 weeks between the decision to deploy UK forces and the first post-invasion meeting between Mr Blair and President Bush at Camp David on 26 and 27 March 2003.
4. The two parts address:
 - the development of UK post-conflict strategy and objectives;
 - planning and preparation to implement those objectives;
 - UK civilian and military planning machinery;
 - UK influence on US planning and preparation and the impact of US planning on the UK; and
 - Parliamentary interest in post-conflict planning and preparation.
5. The two parts do not consider:
 - military plans for the invasion, which are addressed in Sections 6.1 and 6.2;
 - intelligence on weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or preparations for the post-invasion search for WMD, addressed in Section 4;
 - the financial and human resources available for post-conflict administration and reconstruction, addressed in Sections 13 and 15; and
 - the outcome in post-conflict Iraq, which is addressed in Sections 9 and 10.
6. Descriptions of US preparations for post-conflict Iraq in Sections 6.4 and 6.5 are mostly taken from *Hard Lessons*, Mr Stuart Bowen's account, as US Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, of the US experience of reconstruction between 2002 and 2008.
7. Key findings for Sections 6.4 and 6.5 are listed below.
8. The Inquiry's conclusions relating to Sections 6.4 and 6.5 are at the end of Section 6.5.

Key findings

- Before the invasion of Iraq, Ministers, senior officials and the UK military recognised that post-conflict civilian and military operations were likely to be the strategically decisive phase of the Coalition's engagement in Iraq.
- UK planning and preparation for the post-conflict phase of operations, which rested on the assumption that the UK would be able quickly to reduce its military presence in Iraq and deploy only a minimal number of civilians, were wholly inadequate.
- The information available to the Government before the invasion provided a clear indication of the potential scale of the post-conflict task and the significant risks associated with the UK's proposed approach.
- Foreseeable risks included post-conflict political disintegration and extremist violence in Iraq, the inadequacy of US plans, the UK's inability to exert significant influence on US planning and, in the absence of UN authorisation for the administration and reconstruction of post-conflict Iraq, the reluctance of potential international partners to contribute to the post-conflict effort.
- The Government, which lacked both clear Ministerial oversight of post-conflict strategy, planning and preparation, and effective co-ordination between government departments, failed to analyse or manage those risks adequately.
- Mr Blair, who recognised the significance of the post-conflict phase, did not press President Bush for definite assurances about US plans, did not consider or seek advice on whether the absence of a satisfactory plan called for reassessment of the terms of the UK's engagement and did not make agreement on such a plan a condition of UK participation in military action.

Pre-conflict management of information on Iraq

9. During 2002 and early 2003, a growing body of evidence on the state of Iraq under Saddam Hussein and on the potential impact of conflict was available to UK planners.

10. The evidence was fragmented and incomplete. Many of the sources were not reliable.

11. A number of departments shared responsibility for the gathering, analysis and dissemination of that information.

12. The principal sources of information potentially available to UK planners before March 2003 on social, political and economic conditions in Iraq included:

- the UN, including the UN-managed Oil-for-Food (OFF) programme;
- reports on visits to Iraq by diplomats at the British Embassy in Amman, Jordan;¹

¹ Paper FCO, 17 November 2010, 'Note for the Iraq Inquiry on the FCO's diplomatic contacts in Baghdad, 1990-2003'.

- a humanitarian programme funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) focused on northern Iraq;²
- Assessments produced by the UK's Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC);
- the US State Department's Future of Iraq Project;³ and
- other sources, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academics, journalists, Arabic media, Iraqi émigrés and allied countries with Embassies in Baghdad.⁴

13. The information available to the Government before the invasion on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is addressed in Section 4. Information on Iraq's other military capabilities is in Sections 6.1 to 6.3.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

14. In December 2003, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) presented a *Strategy for the FCO* to Parliament, in which it listed the department's "key contributions" to government.⁵ They included:

- "co-ordination and leadership of the UK's international policies";
- "expert foreign policy advice for Ministers and the Prime Minister, feeding into the wider policy process"; and
- "rapid gathering, analysis and targeting of information for the Government and others".

15. Within the FCO between 2001 and 2003, prime responsibility for information on other countries fell to the relevant regional department. For Iraq, that was the Middle East Department (MED), under the supervision of the Director Middle East and North Africa.

16. The FCO Directorate of Strategy and Innovation (DSI) reported to the Permanent Under Secretary (PUS)⁶ and the FCO Board. Its role was to review policy in areas of high priority and to supplement or challenge advice from the relevant department within the FCO. DSI was a significant contributor of strategy papers on Iraq in the second half of 2002.

² [Minute Western Asia Department \[junior official\] to Private Secretary \[DFID\], 10 May 2002, 'Iraq: Proposed humanitarian activities 2002/03'](#).

³ The National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Book No. 198, 1 September 2006, *New State Department Releases on the "Future of Iraq" Project*.

⁴ Public hearing Ricketts, Chaplin, 1 December 2009, pages 66-67; Statement Foreign and Commonwealth Office Research Analysts, 23 November 2009, page 1.

⁵ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *UK International Priorities: A Strategy for the FCO*, December 2003, Cm 6052.

⁶ In keeping with variations in use within departments, the Inquiry refers to the most senior civil servant in the FCO and the MOD as the Permanent Under Secretary (PUS), but in all other departments as the Permanent Secretary. The Permanent Under Secretaries and Permanent Secretaries are referred to collectively as Permanent Secretaries.

17. The FCO Research Analysts (RA) provided expert support and background for the policy recommendations made by MED and the Iraq Planning Unit (IPU), which was established in February 2003.⁷ The FCO told the Inquiry that one analyst worked full-time on Iraq during 2001, increasing to two from mid-2002.⁸ RA also acted as the contact point within government for the US State Department's Future of Iraq Project.⁹

18. After the closure of the British Embassy Baghdad on 12 January 1992, the UK had no diplomatic relations with Iraq.

19. In other cases where diplomatic relations have been interrupted, the UK has often maintained a British Interests Section within a friendly Embassy. The FCO told the Inquiry it did not consider opening an Interests Section in Iraq staffed with permanent UK diplomatic staff.¹⁰ Instead, Russia acted as the UK's Protecting Power in Baghdad from November 1992 until the invasion, but did not provide the UK with political reporting from Iraq.

20. The FCO told the Inquiry that, from the late 1990s, junior UK diplomats based in Amman visited Baghdad about every six months to check on UK property, in particular the Embassy building, deal with locally-employed staff, call on resident diplomats from other countries and glean what information they could on the situation in Iraq.¹¹ On return to Amman, the UK diplomats produced reports containing political and economic information, some of which are described later in this Section.

21. Initially, the reports from Amman had an administrative focus. The FCO explicitly advised visiting diplomats from Amman not to travel to Basra, as such visits would not be consistent with that purpose and might suggest the UK was increasing contact with Iraq.¹² Visiting diplomats were instructed to "avoid all political contacts".

22. In July 1998, FCO Economic Advisers asked the British Embassy Amman for help in monitoring Iraq's economy, explaining that basic economic indicators were unavailable and that those with an interest in the issue had to rely on "snippets of information, on anecdote, and on speculation".¹³ The Embassy was asked to make a "modest effort" to gather economic information during routine administrative visits to Iraq, focusing on:

- living standards;
- employment/unemployment and the structure of economic activity;

⁷ Briefing Wilson, November 2009.

⁸ Email FCO to Iraq Inquiry, 3 June 2013, 'FCO Research Analysts'.

⁹ Briefing Wilson, November 2009.

¹⁰ Paper FCO, 17 November 2010, 'Note for the Iraq Inquiry on the FCO's diplomatic contacts in Baghdad, 1990-2003'.

¹¹ Paper FCO, 17 November 2010, 'Note for the Iraq Inquiry on the FCO's diplomatic contacts in Baghdad, 1990-2003'.

¹² Telegram 366 Amman to FCO London, 16 July 1997, 'Proposed visit to Iraq'; Telegram 390 FCO London to Amman, 18 July 1997, 'Iraq: proposed visit'.

¹³ [Letter Economic Advisers \[junior official\] to Amman \[junior official\], 15 July 1998, 'Reporting Economic Developments in Iraq'](#).

- inflation;
- trade and capital flows;
- public finances and monetary policy;
- structural policies and economic philosophy;
- northern Iraq; and
- long-term planning.

23. From early 2002, UK diplomats based in Amman began to visit Iraq more often. They produced reports on political and social developments, drawing on information gleaned from business and other travellers and monthly UN briefings in Baghdad.¹⁴

24. The FCO has not been able to provide the Inquiry with the complete series of reports between July 1998 and March 2003.

25. Dr Robert Wilson and Mr Mark Hetherington, the two research analysts working on Iraq before the invasion, explained to the Inquiry that the FCO drew on a range of sources for information about the social, economic and political situation in Iraq:

“These included Iraqi politicians and exiles from both Iraqi Kurdistan and the rest of the country, contact with whom was one of the core tasks of Research Analysts during this period. Amongst those were individuals who visited either Saddam-controlled Iraq or Northern Iraq (where Saddam had withdrawn his administration and which was under de facto control of the two main Kurdish parties) and those who had links to family or contacts within the country. Though the majority of those with whom we were in contact were opposed to Saddam Hussein’s regime, their analysis was far from homogenous – religious organisations and NGOs in particular offering more nuanced analysis. Of course we were aware that many of these individuals had their own particular agenda – especially when it came to the question of what level of political support their parties or ideologies had within Iraq, and this was hard to assess independently. In addition there were many Iraqis who shied away from contact with the British Government ...”¹⁵

26. Dr Wilson told the Inquiry that RA had “no shortage of information on Iraq of varying degrees of reliability”.¹⁶ In addition to Iraqi exiles, the FCO’s network of Embassies in the region (particularly in Jordan and Turkey) kept in touch with local Iraqi officials and opinion formers. Though most contacts were opposed to Saddam Hussein’s regime, their analysis was far from homogeneous.¹⁷ Researchers were aware their contacts had their own agendas and it was hard to assess independently what support specific parties or ideologies had in Iraq.

¹⁴ Teleletter Amman [junior official] to MED [junior official] 24 January 2002, ‘Iraq: our interests’.

¹⁵ Statement Foreign and Commonwealth Office Research Analysts, 23 November 2009.

¹⁶ Briefing Wilson, November 2009.

¹⁷ Statement Foreign and Commonwealth Office Research Analysts, 23 November 2009.

27. Dr Wilson told the Inquiry that academics, the UN and its agencies, NGOs and the Arabic media were also sources of information.

28. Lord Jay, the FCO PUS from 2002 to 2006, told the Inquiry that the FCO had only a “partial” picture of what was going on in Iraq.¹⁸ He highlighted the critical role of an Embassy in understanding a country:

“... we did not have first-hand knowledge of what was going on inside Iraq, of how Saddam Hussein and his government operated.

“We had it second- or third-hand from other powers to whom we spoke ... [W]hat we did not have was the ... constant day-to-day contact between well-qualified, Arabic-speaking diplomats in Baghdad able to report back constantly on the ebb and flow of power and influence and what that meant for us.

“... [Y]ou really do need people on the ground feeding stuff back. If you don't have that, you are going to make mistakes.”

29. Lord Jay agreed that, in the absence of first-hand information, No.10 looked to the UK's intelligence services to provide advice on a broader range of issues than normal.¹⁹

30. Lord Jay added:

“I don't think we had thought through as much as we should have done what the implications were going to be of an invasion of a country such as Iraq ... I wished we had had a better understanding of what Iraq was like in the 1990s, early 2000s before a decision was taken to invade.”²⁰

31. Mr Edward Chaplin, FCO Director Middle East and North Africa from 2002 to 2004, characterised UK knowledge of what happened inside Iraq as “patchy”.²¹ He told the Inquiry he could, nevertheless, draw on a number of useful sources of information: the British Embassy Amman, which held a “watching brief”; contacts with exiled Iraqi groups in London and Washington; contacts with close allies, like the French, who had long experience of, and still had representation in, Iraq; contacts in a number of academic institutions; and contacts with journalists.

32. Mr Chaplin commented:

“... I don't think we lacked for sources of information, but I think one of the problems is that actually nobody outside Iraq, including Iraqi exiles, quite realised how broken Iraqi society had become ... nobody really had that information.”²²

¹⁸ Public hearing, 30 June 2010, pages 8-10.

¹⁹ Public hearing, 30 June 2010, pages 12-13.

²⁰ Public hearing, 30 June 2010, page 67.

²¹ Public hearing, 1 December 2009, page 39.

²² Public hearing, 1 December 2009, page 67.

33. Mr Chaplin rejected the suggestion that he had made no attempt to fill gaps in the UK's knowledge base on Iraq, highlighting the multiple sources of information that were available.

34. Mr Simon Webb, Ministry of Defence (MOD) Policy Director from 2001 to 2004, told the Inquiry he felt he had a very good feel for Iraq's military capability, but not for what was happening within Saddam Hussein's administration, the state of Iraq's infrastructure, or the mood of the population in the South:

"If we had thought that we were going to play a big role in reconstruction, and we'd been asked to gather that information, I suspect we could have had a better picture."²³

35. Mr Webb agreed that the Government could have made more use of "open source" reporting and analysis, including from academia, think-tanks and NGOs.

The Iraq Planning Unit

36. In early February 2003, the Government established the Iraq Planning Unit (IPU) to focus on post-conflict Iraq. The IPU was an inter-departmental (FCO/MOD/DFID) unit, based in the FCO and headed by a former member of MED. In the FCO, the IPU reported to the Director Middle East and North Africa.

37. The origin and purpose of the IPU are addressed in more detail in Section 6.5.

38. Mr Dominick Chilcott, Head of the IPU from February to June 2003, told the Inquiry there was "a lot of expertise" he could draw on, in particular from FCO RA, Iraqi exiles and FCO posts in the region.²⁴

The Joint Intelligence Committee

39. The JIC was (and continues to be) responsible for:

"... providing Ministers and senior officials with co-ordinated intelligence assessments on a range of issues of immediate and long-range importance to national interests, primarily in the fields of security, defence and foreign affairs."²⁵

40. The JIC is supported by Assessments Staff analysts seconded to the Cabinet Office from other departments. The Assessments Staff's draft assessments were (and still are) subject to formal inter-departmental scrutiny and challenge in Current Intelligence Groups (CIGs), which bring together working-level experts from a range of government departments and the intelligence agencies. In the case of Iraq between 2001 and 2003, the CIG brought together the desk-level experts from the FCO (including MED and RA),

²³ Private hearing, 23 June 2010, pages 79-81.

²⁴ Public hearing, 8 December 2009, page 50.

²⁵ Cabinet Office, *National Intelligence Machinery*, November 2010, pages 23-24.

MOD (including the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS)), Cabinet Office and the intelligence agencies, and any other department with an interest in the issue being considered.

41. The JIC agrees most assessments before they are sent to Ministers and senior officials, although some papers, including urgent updates on developing issues, are issued under the authority of the Chief of the Assessments Staff.

42. The current JIC Terms of Reference make clear that it is expected to draw on “secret intelligence, diplomatic reporting and open source material”.²⁶

43. Iraq was regularly considered by the JIC in 2000 and 2001, with the focus on weapons of mass destruction (WMD), sanctions and the implications of the No-Fly Zones (NFZs).²⁷

44. Sir John Scarlett, JIC Chairman from 2001 to 2004, considered that Iraq had been one of the top priorities for the JIC for most of his time as Chairman.²⁸

45. Sir John told the Inquiry that, with the limited resources available to the Assessments Staff, the breakdown, decay and decrepitude of Iraq’s civilian infrastructure was “not a natural intelligence target”.²⁹ He added:

“That kind of information and that kind of understanding of the fragility of the structures of the State ... could have been ... presented or understood from a whole range of sources, not necessarily from intelligence.”

46. Sir John later told the Inquiry that the JIC had not been asked to look at Iraqi civilian infrastructure and institutions, other than Saddam Hussein’s power structures:

“If we had been, I think almost certainly my response would be: that’s not for us. Why should that be an intelligence issue? I wouldn’t quite be able to understand how intelligence would help. I would see it as fundamentally something which in the first instance advice would need to come from the Foreign Office ... Of course, if we had been asked, we would have said can you identify or can we between us work out what would be particularly susceptible to an intelligence view or consideration? And I think it would have been quite narrow. I don’t quite see how secret intelligence would have particularly helped.”³⁰

47. Mr Julian Miller, Chief of the Assessments Staff from 2001 to 2003, told the Inquiry that intelligence available to the JIC gave some peripheral indications on issues such as Iraq’s civilian infrastructure and the state of its institutions, but was not focused on those areas.³¹ In retrospect, he believed that if the UK had wanted to find out more, it might

²⁶ Cabinet Office, *National Intelligence Machinery*, November 2010, page 26.

²⁷ Public hearing Webb, Ricketts, Patey, 24 November 2009, pages 51-54.

²⁸ Public hearing, 8 December 2009, page 10.

²⁹ Public hearing, 8 December 2009, page 51.

³⁰ Private hearing, 5 May 2010, pages 65-66.

³¹ Private hearing, 5 May 2010, pages 63-64.

have been possible for the JIC to ask the agencies to make an effort in that direction. He had no recollection of any such request.

48. Mr Miller added that departments had shown interest in the internal politics of Iraq and the relationship between the Shia and the Kurds, but only very limited intelligence had been available on those subjects.

49. The majority of JIC assessments relevant to Iraq between 2002 and the start of the invasion on 19 March 2003 dealt with Saddam Hussein's military and diplomatic options, WMD, or regional attitudes to Iraq.³²

50. The weekly Intelligence Updates issued by the Assessments Staff from November 2002 and more frequently from February 2003, concentrated on the same three themes.

The Defence Intelligence Staff

51. The principal task of the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS)³³ was the provision of intelligence to inform MOD policy formulation and procurement decisions, and to support military operations.³⁴

52. The DIS worked closely with other UK intelligence organisations and with overseas allies.³⁵ Its sources included human, signals and imagery intelligence, as well as open sources. The DIS produced a number of reports on the state of Iraq.

53. In late February 2003, the DIS established a Red Team to give key planners in Whitehall an independent view of intelligence assumptions and key judgements, to challenge those assumptions and judgements if appropriate and to identify areas where more work was needed (see Section 6.5).³⁶ Papers were copied to the Chiefs of Staff, the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ), the MOD, FCO, IPU and the JIC.

54. Mr Martin Howard, Deputy Chief of Defence Intelligence from February 2003 to May 2004, the senior civilian in the DIS, told the Inquiry:

“... at the strategic level the lead agency was the JIC. They are the ones who produced, as it were, the capstone intelligence assessments.

“What the DIS tried to do was do things at a level a little below that, to produce products which would be of interest to high level policy makers, but also extremely useful to planners, to commanders and so on and so forth. So I'm not sure we were necessarily the lead, but we probably did the bulk of the analytical work.”³⁷

³² JIC Assessments on Iraq, 1 January 2002 to 18 March 2003.

³³ Now known as Defence Intelligence (DI).

³⁴ Letter Ministry of Defence to Iraq Inquiry, 29 April 2010, 'MOD Evidence – Submission on Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS)'.

³⁵ Ministry of Defence Website, 'Defence Intelligence'.

³⁶ [Minute PS/CDI to APS2/SofS \[MOD\], 25 February 2003, 'Iraq: Red Teaming in the DIS'](#).

³⁷ Private hearing, 18 June 2010, page 20.

55. Mr Howard stated that the DIS produced “a mass of material, even in the short time we had available, and I’m not sure that there would have been a fundamental improvement in what we could have provided if we had had another few months”.³⁸

56. Mr Howard did not recall the Red Team having a huge impact on work done by DIS. It raised “some interesting points”, but “in the end, although it had a senior level distribution list ... the practical impact would have been at the analytical level, rather than necessarily the policy making level”.³⁹

57. Mr Ian Lee, MOD Director General Operational Policy (DG OpPol) from September 2002 to May 2004, told the Inquiry that the MOD looked to the DIS for information about what the UK should expect to encounter in Iraq after a military campaign, including the state of the country, its sectarian, ethnic, political, and economic makeup.⁴⁰ There was not much detail available. Mr Lee described the written briefing as “a bit generalised”.

58. Major General Michael Laurie, MOD Director General Intelligence Collection from 2000 to 2003, told the Inquiry he did not recall the DIS being tasked to look at the situation after the campaign, but did recall “a general feeling that we weren’t paying as much attention to follow-on operations and what would happen as we should have done”.⁴¹ He agreed that it would have been within the DIS remit to consider the state of Iraq’s infrastructure: the DIS had a number of teams working on infrastructure issues and had an established capability to collect open source information, including from the academic and scientific communities.

The Cabinet Office Overseas and Defence Secretariat

59. The Cabinet Office contains the Cabinet Secretariats, which support the Cabinet and Cabinet committees, and draw staff from across government.⁴² Between 2001 and 2003 the Overseas and Defence Secretariat (OD Sec)⁴³ was responsible for foreign and defence policy issues, of which Iraq was one.⁴⁴

60. The Head of OD Sec (Sir David Manning from September 2001) was also Mr Blair’s Foreign Policy Adviser.⁴⁵ In 2001 and 2002, of about a dozen staff in OD Sec, just two had any responsibility for Iraq.⁴⁶ In both cases, Iraq was only part of their job.

³⁸ Private hearing, 18 June 2010, page 23.

³⁹ Private hearing, 18 June 2010, page 27.

⁴⁰ Private hearing, 22 June 2010, pages 42-52.

⁴¹ Private hearing, 3 June 2010, pages 21-27.

⁴² Statement McKane, 8 December 2010, page 1.

⁴³ Later renamed the Foreign and Defence Policy Secretariat (F&DP Sec) and now part of the National Security Secretariat).

⁴⁴ Public hearing Manning, 30 November 2009, pages 44-45.

⁴⁵ Public hearing Sheinwald, Sawers, Bowen, 16 December 2009, page 15.

⁴⁶ Public hearing McKane, 19 January 2011, pages 2-3.

The Ad Hoc Group on Iraq

61. OD Sec chaired the cross-Whitehall Ad Hoc Group on Iraq (AHGI), which met for the first time on 20 September 2002.⁴⁷ The AHGI was the principal Whitehall co-ordination mechanism for non-military Iraq planning until the creation of the inter-departmental IPU in February 2003.

62. The origin and purpose of the AHGI are addressed in greater detail later in this Section.

63. The MOD participated in the AHGI but its own post-conflict military planning was not part of the AHGI process.

The Department for International Development

64. Within DFID the Iraq Team in Middle East and North Africa Department included advisers with expertise on conflict, humanitarian assistance, governance, infrastructure, economics and social development who provided analysis to inform decisions.⁴⁸ The DFID Iraq Team worked closely with the FCO and drew on the FCO's Iraq-related research and analysis.

65. Advisers were drawn from the relevant DFID professional cadres with consultants brought in to provide advice on specific issues and projects where required.

66. In addition, DFID's Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department (CHAD) provided specific policy and operational advice on Iraq.

67. DFID's August 2002 review of northern Iraq drew on a combination of DFID papers and consultations with UN agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and western European donor countries.⁴⁹

68. The DFID desktop analysis of central and southern Iraq, completed in October 2002, was produced without consulting the UN, NGOs or bilateral partners because of restrictions on external contacts by DFID officials, but did draw widely on external (including UN) publications.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Minute Drummond to Manning, 23 September 2002, 'Ad Hoc Group on Iraq'.

⁴⁸ Email DFID to Iraq Inquiry Secretariat, 19 June 2013, 'Iraq Inquiry new queries'.

⁴⁹ Minute CHAD Operations Team [junior official] to [DFID junior official], 8 August 2002, 'Northern Iraq Desktop Review and Background Briefing Document' attaching Paper Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, July 2002, 'Northern Iraq Desktop Review and Background Briefing Document'.

⁵⁰ [Email DFID \[junior official\] to Fernie, 17 October 2002, 'CSI analysis' attaching Paper Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, October 2002, 'Central/southern Iraq humanitarian situation analysis'](#).

69. Sir Suma Chakrabarti, DFID Permanent Secretary from 2002 to 2008, told the Inquiry that DFID's knowledge of Iraq in 2002 was "pretty scanty". It had not itself implemented humanitarian programmes in Iraq in the period leading up to the invasion, working instead through the UN agencies, NGOs and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).⁵¹

UK international development policy and the Department for International Development

Between 1979 and 1997, the UK's international development programme was managed by the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), a "wing" of the FCO. The Overseas Development and Cooperation Act 1980 allowed aid funds to be used for a wide variety of purposes, including supporting political, industrial and commercial objectives.⁵²

A separate Department for International Development (DFID), headed by a Cabinet Minister, replaced the ODA in 1997.⁵³ Its mission was to "refocus [UK] international development efforts on the elimination of poverty and encouragement of economic growth which benefits the poor". That was to be achieved by focusing on the eight Millennium Development Goals:

- eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- achieve universal primary education;
- promote gender equality and empower women;
- reduce child mortality;
- improve maternal health;
- combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- ensure environmental sustainability;
- develop a global partnership for development.⁵⁴

DFID's mission was enshrined in law through the International Development Act (IDA), which came into force in July 2002.⁵⁵ The IDA required that all programmes and projects must either further sustainable development or promote the welfare of people and be likely to contribute to the reduction of poverty.

In 2002, DFID adopted a target to increase the proportion of its bilateral aid going to low income countries from 78 percent to 90 percent (the so-called "90:10" target).⁵⁶

In 2002/03 nearly half DFID's resources were spent through multilateral agencies. The largest parts were the UK's share of European Community development assistance and contributions to the World Bank, regional development banks and the UN agencies.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Public hearing, 8 December 2009, Page 9.

⁵² Barder, Owen, *Reforming Development Assistance: Learning from the UK experience*. CGD Working Paper No.50, October 2005.

⁵³ UK Government, *White Paper on International Development*, 1997.

⁵⁴ DFID, *Departmental Report 2003*, page 141.

⁵⁵ DFID, *Departmental Report 2003*, page 9.

⁵⁶ DFID, *Departmental Report 2003*, page 105.

⁵⁷ DFID, *Departmental Report 2003*, page 106.

US and UK planning machinery

70. US planning machinery was reorganised a number of times during 2002 and 2003:

- Before August 2002, two separate planning processes operated in parallel in the State Department and the Department of Defense (DoD).
- Between August 2002 and January 2003, greater inter-agency co-ordination was loosely overseen by an Executive Steering Group of the National Security Council (NSC). The US Agency for International Development (USAID) was brought into the planning process for the first time.
- From January 2003, all post-conflict planning was consolidated under Mr Donald Rumsfeld, US Secretary of Defense.⁵⁸

71. The UK introduced significant changes to its planning machinery in September 2002 and February 2003, in part to reflect US reorganisation:

- Until September 2002, a tightly held process was largely confined to No.10 and the MOD, with some work in the FCO and limited Whitehall co-ordination through the MOD-based Pigott Group (described later in this Section) and the Cabinet Office OD Sec.
- Between September 2002 and February 2003, the AHGI co-ordinated Whitehall planning at official level. DFID, the Treasury and other departments were brought into the planning process for the first time. The MOD attended the AHGI, but planning for military operations continued on a separate track.
- From February 2003, the inter-departmental Iraq Planning Unit (IPU), located in the FCO, but including staff from the MOD and DFID, was responsible for Whitehall planning for civilian aspects of post-conflict Iraq, with the MOD continuing to lead on military planning.

72. Those changes are described in more detail later in this Section and in Section 6.5.

The US approach to nation-building

73. The future President Bush expressed his opposition to US military involvement in post-conflict nation-building during the 2000 US presidential election.

74. In October 2000, Governor George W Bush cited the US military intervention in Somalia in 1992 and 1993 as an example of why the US military should not be involved in nation-building.⁵⁹ He said that what had started as a humanitarian mission:

“... changed into a nation-building mission, and that’s where the mission went wrong. The mission was changed. And as a result, our nation paid a price. And so

⁵⁸ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

⁵⁹ Commission on Presidential Debates, 11 October 2000, *October 11, 2000 Debate Transcript: The Second Gore-Bush Presidential Debate*.

I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building. I think our troops ought to be used to fight and win a war. I think our troops ought to be used to help overthrow the dictator when it's in our best interests. But in this case it was a nation-building exercise, and same with Haiti. I wouldn't have supported either."

75. Dr Condoleezza Rice, who was Governor Bush's adviser on national security before becoming President Bush's National Security Advisor, explained that Governor Bush was proposing a new division of labour in NATO:

"The United States is the only power that can handle a showdown in the Gulf, mount the kind of force that is needed to protect Saudi Arabia and deter a crisis in the Taiwan Straits. And extended peacekeeping detracts from our readiness for these kinds of missions."⁶⁰

76. Dr Rice stated:

"Carrying out civil administration and police functions is simply going to degrade the American capability to do the things America has to do. We don't need to have the 82nd Airborne escorting kids to kindergarten."

77. Similar views were held by Mr Rumsfeld, US Secretary of Defense from 2001 to 2006.

78. In his memoir, Mr Rumsfeld described his views before the invasion of Iraq as "straightforward".⁶¹ The US goal was:

"... to help the Iraqis put in place a government that did not threaten Iraq's neighbours, did not support terrorism, was respectful to the diverse elements of Iraqi society, and did not proliferate weapons of mass destruction. Period ...

"As soon as we had set in motion a process, I thought it important that we reduce the American military role in reconstruction and increase assistance from the United Nations and other willing coalition countries."

79. Mr Rumsfeld added:

"I recognized the Yankee can-do attitude by which American forces took on tasks that locals would be better off doing themselves. I did not think resolving other countries' internal political disputes, paving roads, erecting power lines, policing streets, building stock markets, and organizing democratic governmental bodies were missions for our men and women in uniform."

80. The US adopted the minimalist approach in Afghanistan, where military action began on 7 October 2001.

⁶⁰ *The New York Times*, 21 October 2000, *The 2000 Campaign: The Military; Bush Would Stop US Peacekeeping in Balkan Fights*.

⁶¹ Rumsfeld D. *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*. Sentinel, 2011.

81. In April 2002, Sir Christopher Meyer, British Ambassador to the US, warned of the need to learn the lessons from Afghanistan, where “US fear of getting sucked into nation-building” and Secretary Rumsfeld’s insistence on a “minimalist approach” threatened failure.⁶²

82. In a speech in New York on 14 February 2003, described in more detail in Section 6.5, Secretary Rumsfeld drew lessons for Iraq from the US experience of nation-building in Afghanistan:

“Afghanistan belongs to the Afghans. The objective is not to engage in what some call nation-building. Rather it is to help the Afghans so they can build their own nation. This is an important distinction. In some nation-building exercises well-intentioned foreigners ... can create a dependency.”⁶³

83. Sir David Manning told the Inquiry:

“... it’s quite clear throughout 2002, and indeed throughout 2003, that it is the Pentagon, it’s the military, who are running this thing ...

“... Bush had this vision of a new Middle East. You know, we are going to change Iraq, we are going to change Palestine, and it’s all going to be a new Middle East.

“But there were ... big flaws in this argument. One is they won’t do nation-building. They think this is a principle. So if you go into Iraq, how are you going to achieve this new Iraq? And the military certainly don’t think it’s their job.”⁶⁴

84. *Hard Lessons* characterised US planning for post-conflict Iraq between autumn 2001 and early 2003 as a “tense interplay” between the DoD and the State Department.⁶⁵ Many in the DoD anticipated US forces being greeted as liberators who would be able leave Iraq within months, with no need for the US to administer the functions of Iraq’s government after major combat operations. The State Department judged that rebuilding Iraq would require “a US commitment of enormous scope” over several years.

Initial UK consideration of post-Saddam Hussein Iraq

85. In his Chicago speech of 22 April 1999, Mr Blair listed five considerations to guide decisions on military intervention in another country. Those included being prepared for the long term: “we cannot simply walk away once the fight is over”.

⁶² [Telegram 451 Washington to FCO London, 1 April 2002, ‘PM’s Visit to Texas: Bush and the War on Terrorism’](#).

⁶³ US Department of Defense, 14 February 2003, *Speech: Beyond Nation Building*.

⁶⁴ Private hearing, 24 June 2010, pages 42-43.

⁶⁵ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

86. During 2001, UK officials began to consider the possible shape of Iraq after the departure of Saddam Hussein.

87. At that stage, the UK assumption was that the most likely successor to Saddam Hussein was another Sunni strongman.

88. A number of concerns emerged during initial exchanges:

- the long-term implications of military action;
- US support for the Iraqi opposition;
- the dilapidated state of Iraq's infrastructure;
- the risks of de-Ba'athification; and
- the absence of obvious successors to Saddam Hussein.

89. In his memoir, Mr Blair stated that the final part of his speech to the House of Commons on 18 March 2003, in which he set out the moral case for action against Saddam Hussein, echoed his Chicago speech of 22 April 1999.⁶⁶

90. In the Chicago speech, described in more detail in Section 1.1, Mr Blair had raised the importance of being prepared for the long term after military intervention.⁶⁷

91. In a reference to international security, Mr Blair identified “two dangerous and ruthless men” as the cause of “many of our problems”: Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milošević (President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), both of whom had waged “vicious campaigns against sections of their own community”. Instead of enjoying its oil wealth, Iraq had been “reduced to poverty, with political life stultified through fear”.

92. Mr Blair set out “five major considerations” to guide a decision on when and whether the international community should intervene militarily in other countries, including:

“... are we prepared for the long term? In the past, we talked too much of exit strategies. But having made a commitment we cannot simply walk away once the fight is over; better to stay with moderate numbers of troops than return for repeat performances with large numbers.”

93. Mr Blair sent a draft ‘Contract with the Iraqi People’ to President Bush in December 2001.

94. In autumn 2000, the Government began a review of the UK's Iraq policy. That process, which continued into 2001, is addressed in detail in Section 3.1.

⁶⁶ Blair T. *A Journey*. Hutchinson, 2010.

⁶⁷ Speech, 23 April 1999, Tony Blair, *Doctrine of the International Community*.

95. During 2001, on the initiative of Mr Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, the UK Government worked on a draft ‘Contract with the Iraqi People’ intended to deliver a clear statement on the steps the international community would take to restore and rehabilitate Iraq in the event of Saddam Hussein’s departure (see Box below).⁶⁸

The ‘Contract with the Iraqi People’

The ‘Contract with the Iraqi People’ made clear that Iraq could not be re-integrated into the international community without fundamental change in the behaviour of Saddam Hussein’s regime, but stopped short of calling directly for the regime’s overthrow.⁶⁹ It was designed “to appeal to regional states and to signal to any successor regime the sort of relationship with the international community that would be in prospect”.

The last (December 2001) version of the text seen by the Inquiry stated:

“We want to work with the International Community to enhance stability and security in the Gulf region. We are committed to maintenance of Iraq’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its current borders.

“We want to work with an Iraq which respects the rights of its people, lives at peace with its neighbours and which observes international law. We want to see Iraq’s full integration into the International Community.

“The Iraqi people have a right to live in a society based on the rule of law, free from repression, murder, torture and arbitrary arrest; to enjoy respect for human rights, economic freedom and prosperity.

“For all this to happen the Iraqi regime must abide by its obligations under international law ...

“The record of the current regime ... suggests that its priorities remain elsewhere. The regime must end its mistreatment of the Iraqi people and be held to account for its war crimes. We must ensure that the Iraqi people have access to information not controlled by the regime. Those who wish to promote change in Iraq deserve our support.

“Until such time as Iraq is able to rejoin the international community we will continue to ensure that it is not in a position to threaten its neighbours and that there are tight controls on its ability to build up its military and WMD capability. We will also endeavour to minimise the impact of these controls on the Iraqi people.”

The ‘Contract’ set out objectives to be pursued once Iraq rejoined the international community:

- support for an international reconstruction programme for Iraq;
- rebuilding political relations with the rest of the world;

⁶⁸ [Minute MED \[junior official\] to Goulty, 7 June 2001, ‘Iraq Basket III: The Opposition And Regime Change’ attaching Paper Middle East Department, 7 June 2001, ‘Iraq: Policy Towards The Opposition’ and Annex, ‘Contract with the Iraqi People’.](#)

⁶⁹ [Letter McDonald to Tatham, 3 December 2001, ‘Iraq: Options’ attaching Paper \[unattributed and undated\], ‘Contract with the Iraqi People’.](#)

- pursuit of growth-orientated economic policies with International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank support;
- integration into the region and an application to join the World Trade Organization (WTO);
- promotion of investment in Iraq's oil industry;
- establishment of a comprehensive retraining programme for Iraqi professionals, academic exchanges and scholarships;
- promotion of an EU aid/trade package.

Many elements of the 'Contract' were incorporated into the first draft of the FCO's 'Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People', produced in October 2002 and addressed later in this Section.

96. On 3 December 2001, in response to a request from Mr Blair for “a note on the options for dealing with Iraq”, Mr Simon McDonald, Principal Private Secretary to Mr Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, advised No.10 that:

“A strategy to deal with a WMD threat will require ratcheting up our present policy of containment ... We should encourage and support the Iraqi opposition. We could mount a higher profile campaign on the issue of war crimes and consider the options for an international tribunal to try Saddam and his principal lieutenants. We could set out a vision of post-Saddam Iraq by deploying a 'Contract with the Iraqi People'.”⁷⁰

97. The other issues addressed in Mr McDonald's letter are considered in Section 3.1.

98. On 4 December, Mr Blair sent President Bush a paper, 'The War against Terrorism: The Second Phase', which was delivered by Sir David Manning (see Section 3.1).⁷¹

99. The key points relating to Iraq included the need for “a strategy for regime change which builds over time” and might include supporting opposition groups, and setting out an agenda for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq (the FCO's 'Contract with the Iraqi People').

100. In December 2001, an attempt was made by a senior Republican close to the Pentagon to persuade Mr Kevin Tebbit, MOD PUS, that the opposition Iraqi National Congress (INC) could be a force to be reckoned with, “sufficient to cause an Iraqi response and enable the US to take supportive military action” (see Section 3.1).⁷²

101. On 13 December, Mr Tebbit commissioned an analysis of that thesis, which he expected would “show it to be flawed”.⁷³

⁷⁰ [Letter McDonald to Tatham, 3 December 2001, 'Iraq: Options' attaching Paper, 'Contract with the Iraqi People'](#).

⁷¹ [Note \[Blair to Bush\], 4 December 2001, 'The War against Terrorism: The Second Phase'](#).

⁷² Minute PS/PUS [MOD] to PS/CDI, 13 December 2001, 'Iraq: is there a 'Northern Alliance'?'

⁷³ Minute PS/PUS [MOD] to PS/CDI, 13 December 2001, 'Iraq: is there a 'Northern Alliance'?'

102. In its response on 14 January 2002, the DIS concluded that the INC's weaknesses far outweighed its strengths and that it would have no chance of overthrowing the regime.⁷⁴

103. On 21 December 2001, in the context of discussions on the sustainability of US/UK joint patrols to enforce the NFZs in Iraq, Mr Geoff Hoon, the Defence Secretary, asked MOD officials for advice on options for future military action against Iraq and their "political, legal and military implications" (see Section 6.1).⁷⁵

104. Dr Simon Cholerton, a junior official in Overseas Secretariat (Sec(O)), replied on 24 January 2002.⁷⁶ He focused on options for patrolling the NFZs, but also addressed the issue of wider action against Iraq. Dr Cholerton emphasised that neither the MOD nor the FCO had seen any "detailed US planning". Work on policy options, at both military and political levels, was continuing in the US but "little, if anything has been shared with the UK". He advised that the "initial assessment of the efficacy (never mind the legality) of military action to effect regime change is that it is poor".

105. Dr Cholerton explained that work commissioned by Mr Tebbit in December 2001 had addressed the strengths and weaknesses of the INC. In the MOD's view:

"There is no [Afghan] Northern Alliance equivalent in Iraq who could take advantage of precision bombing – nor is it obvious that a successor regime would be an improvement on the existing one. In the absence of any detailed US planning ... it is very difficult to comment further."

106. In January and February 2002, the DIS in London and junior officials based at the British Embassy Amman produced a number of reports on the state of Iraq's politics, economy and society.

107. The DIS reports painted a bleak picture of the state of Iraq's infrastructure and highlighted the degree of inter-connectedness between the Ba'ath Party and Iraq's armed forces and civil bureaucracy.

108. The British Embassy Amman reported that foreign diplomats based in Baghdad were agreed that, without massive external commitment on the ground or the continuation of "the current system of order", there was a risk that regime change would destabilise Iraq.

109. In mid-January 2002, the DIS reported on Iraq's infrastructure.⁷⁷ With the exception of road and rail transport, the picture was comprehensively bleak. Services had been degraded substantially in the Iran-Iraq war and the 1991 Gulf Conflict. Repairs

⁷⁴ Minute PS/CDI to PS/PUS [MOD], 14 January 2002, 'Iraq: Regime Change and the Iraqi National Congress'.

⁷⁵ Minute Williams to Sec(O)1, 21 December 2001, 'Iraq'.

⁷⁶ Minute Cholerton to APS/Secretary of State [MOD], 24 January 2002, 'Iraq: No Fly Zones'.

⁷⁷ [Paper DIS, 18 January 2002, 'Infrastructure Briefing Memorandum: Iraq'](#).

since then had been minimal. The DIS assessed that theoretical power generation capacity was about 10,000 megawatts (MW), but that the “practical limit” was about 5,000 MW, well below “even the most basic demand”. Power cuts were widespread and prolonged. The report stated that the UN had begun extensive works to rehabilitate the transmission network.

110. The DIS cited “a recent UN report” which suggested the Iraqi oil industry had declined seriously over the previous 18 months and that “urgent measures” needed to be taken to avoid yet more deterioration of oil wells and petroleum infrastructure. Of 12 oil refineries in Iraq, only three were operating, inefficiently and unreliably. Pipelines in Iraq had not been repaired since 1991 and oil distribution was by road.

111. On Iraq’s water and sewerage systems, the DIS assessed that:

“... despite recent heavy investment into modernisation and extension of municipal water systems, the water supply and sanitation sectors in Iraq are in a state of continuous deterioration.”

112. The DIS reported that, across Iraq, power outages and damage to water pipes meant a substantial proportion of piped water was routinely lost and that the water supply was known to be affected by sewage leaks. There were marked differences between urban areas, where 96 percent of the population had access to safe, potable water, and rural areas, where the figure was 48 percent. In particular, Basra province was “chronically short” of drinkable water, with treatment plants working at less than 60 percent of capacity.

113. The sewerage system was in very poor condition. Sewage treatment, even in Baghdad, was “virtually non-existent”, with the few treatment plants that were functioning operating at less than a third of capacity. Sanitary conditions were deteriorating because of indiscriminate dumping of sewage and industrial and medical waste.

114. The DIS warned that, throughout Iraq, water supplies were:

“... contaminated by pathogenic bacteria, parasites and viruses. Given the shortages of essential treatment chemicals, deployed forces could not rely on local water supplies as a source of safe, potable water.”

115. A second DIS report, in late January, stated that the Ba’ath Party, the Iraqi civil bureaucracy and the armed forces were intertwined: “every government ministry (as well as state labour organisations, youth and student organisations and media organisations) has within it, at each level, a parallel Ba’ath Party structure”.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Paper DIS, 1 February 2002, ‘The Iraqi Ba’ath Party – its history, ideology and role in regime security’.

116. The second report concluded:

“... any ‘regime insider’ succeeding Saddam would find the functional roles of the Party indispensable in administering the state and controlling the populace. One can therefore assume that, unless a fundamental political change accompanies the succession to Saddam, the Ba’ath Party will continue in its present role. Were a figure outside the inner circle of the regime to take power (such as a senior military officer), the future of the party would be open to question.”

117. The paper provided details of eight ranks in the Ba’ath Party. The three most senior, in ascending order, were: *Udw Firqa* (Division Leader); *Udw Shu’ba* (Section Leader); and *Udw Fara’* (Branch Leader). Party membership was estimated at between 600,000 and 700,000, four percent of the Iraqi population.

118. The earliest UK consideration of options for dealing with the Ba’ath Party in a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq seen by the Inquiry appeared in an MOD paper on UK military strategic thinking in mid-June 2002, described later in this Section.

119. The DIS papers on infrastructure and the Ba’ath Party were included in Mr Blair’s summer reading pack at the end of July.

120. Much of the material in the infrastructure paper was incorporated into a DIS report on Basra in March 2003 (see Section 6.5).

121. In January 2002, the British Embassy Amman reported on the economic situation in Iraq, drawing on a seven-day visit to Iraq by an Embassy junior official.⁷⁹ Changes to the Oil-for-Food (OFF) programme had led to improvements to Baghdad’s infrastructure and the provision of some essential services, although “underlying poverty” remained and power cuts continued. There were signs that the private sector was picking up. A “free market” was well established in the public sector: a nurse receiving only US\$3 a month from the Iraqi government might expect to earn US\$250 a month by charging patients. The situation was very different outside Baghdad, where the standard of living in the countryside did not seem to be improving: “Many people, particularly in the south, are dependent on the monthly ration.”

122. In separate reports on Iraqi politics, religion and society, the official reported that:

- Unemployment in Iraq was believed to be more than 25 percent and underemployment affected almost half the population.⁸⁰
- The Iraqi Christian community was concerned that it risked marginalisation, with some senior figures worrying about what would happen to their community if the current Iraqi regime fell or changed.

⁷⁹ Telegram 21 Amman to FCO London, 24 January 2002, ‘Iraq: Economic’.

⁸⁰ Teleletter Amman [junior official] to MED [junior official], 24 January 2002, ‘Iraq: Religion/Society’.

- There was “a large thriving diplomatic, UN and NGO community established in Baghdad”. If the UK hoped to tap into that it would be necessary for officials to visit more frequently.⁸¹

123. A fourth report, on regime change, stated:

- Regime change was being discussed “frequently and openly by many diplomats, and by some Iraqis too”.
- The assumption in the diplomatic community in Baghdad was that there would be military action and that, as a result, the regime would be toppled.
- It was agreed by “all” that there was a risk of destabilisation of the country if there were not either a “massive external commitment on the ground” or a continuation of the “current system of order” following regime change.
- “Concerns about an Arab or Islamic backlash against a large Western presence seem unfounded. The Iraqi society is already lapping up whatever American culture it can get – Coca Cola, Western clothes, Western music, Western films and British football ...”⁸²

124. The February round-up from Amman stated that there had recently been a significant turnover of senior staff within the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with all under secretaries removed in the name of combating corruption.⁸³ It also reported:

“... continued apathy on the streets. Despite the feeling that something is really going to happen this time, those who can run have already done so. There is little to do except watch the space over Baghdad.”

Preparations for Mr Blair’s meeting with President Bush at Crawford, 6 April 2002

125. After President Bush’s State of the Union address on 29 January 2002 (the “axis of evil” speech), UK policy makers began to consider more closely the objectives and possible consequences of military action in Iraq.

126. Mr Blair sought further advice on what might follow Saddam Hussein before meeting President Bush at Crawford on 6 April 2002.

127. On 19 February, the Cabinet Office commissioned papers for Mr Blair’s planned meeting with President Bush after Easter (see Section 3.2).⁸⁴

128. On 20 February, Mr Alan Goulty, FCO Director Middle East and North Africa, produced a paper on contingency planning in the event of military action against

⁸¹ Teleletter Amman [junior official] to MED [junior official], 24 January 2002, ‘Iraq: Political’.

⁸² Teleletter Amman [junior official] to MED [junior official], 24 January 2002, ‘Iraq: Regime Change’.

⁸³ Teleletter Amman [junior official] to MED [junior official], 5 March 2002, ‘Iraq: Feb sitrep’.

⁸⁴ Minute McKane to Manning, 19 February 2002, ‘Papers for the Prime Minister’.

Iraq.⁸⁵ He warned of the need for “a plan to address the humanitarian consequences” if military action were to force the withdrawal of UN and NGO staff and suggested that the information campaign to make the case for war should “highlight our commitment to helping the Iraqi people before, during and after any action”.

129. Mr John Sawers, British Ambassador to Egypt, who had been closely associated with the development of the UK’s policy on Iraq as Mr Blair’s Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, responded to Mr Goulty’s minute with a teletype to Sir Michael Jay and senior colleagues offering his views on the direction of policy.⁸⁶

130. In Mr Sawers’ view, the UK needed to say “clearly and consistently that our goal is Regime Change – for the sake of stability in the Middle East, for the Iraqi people, and for the goal of controlling the spread of WMD”.

131. Mr Sawers argued that:

“... by associating ourselves with Bush’s heartfelt objective of seeing Saddam removed, we will be given more house room in Washington to ask the awkward questions about how.

“And there are many such questions. What is the plan? How long would it take for a direct confrontation to succeed? How do we retain the support of our regional friends meanwhile? ... If we were to build up the Kurds and Shia as proxies, what assurances would we have to give them that we would not let them down yet again? How would we keep the Iranians from meddling? How do we preserve Iraq’s territorial integrity ...? How would we provide for stability after Saddam and his cronies were killed?”

132. On 27 February, Mr Webb warned Mr Hoon of the importance of establishing clear strategic objectives before taking a decision on military action against Iraq.⁸⁷ In advice on possible responses to President Bush’s State of the Union address, he cautioned against ruling out UK participation in military action against Iraq, “if that is the only way to stem the tide of WMD proliferation and a worthwhile and legal option exists at the time”. Mr Webb added:

“Before assessing military options we should need to be clear about the strategic objectives ...

“It is not easy to see the satisfactory end states which should be the objective of military operations.”

133. A JIC Assessment of 27 February reached the view that, without direct intervention on the ground, the Iraqi opposition would be unable to overthrow Saddam Hussein’s regime (see Section 6.1).

⁸⁵ [Minute Goulty to Fry, 20 February 2002, ‘Military Action Against Iraq: Issues’.](#)

⁸⁶ [Teletype Sawers to Jay, 21 February 2002, ‘Iraq: Policy’.](#)

⁸⁷ [Minute Webb to PS/Secretary of State \[MOD\], 27 February 2002, ‘Axis of Evil’.](#)

134. The JIC produced its Assessment, 'Iraq: Saddam under the Spotlight', addressing "Saddam's threat perceptions and internal position: whether he is secure, what opposition he faces, and what he is doing to try and avoid the internal and international threats he faces", on 27 February.⁸⁸

135. The JIC considered that it was "absolutely clear" that the Kurds and Shia "would not show their hand until US resolve to overthrow Saddam". There was "no obvious leader" among those groups who was "capable of unifying the opposition" and had "credibility and popular appeal inside Iraq". No likely replacement for Saddam Hussein from within the regime had been identified, but the JIC stated that, in the event of internal change, it was "likely that any successor would be autocratic and drawn from the Sunni military elite".

136. The DIS issued a paper on possible US military options for removing Saddam Hussein on 5 March.

137. The paper reiterated that the only viable, long-term successor to Saddam Hussein would come from within the Sunni security/military structure. A US attempt to create a more equitable long-term distribution of power in Iraq would require massive and lengthy commitment.

138. At the request of Air Marshal Joe French, Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI), the DIS produced a paper on 5 March examining US military options for removing Saddam Hussein over the next 12 months.⁸⁹ The paper is described in more detail in Section 6.1.

139. In the list of key judgements, the paper stated:

"The UK intelligence community has consistently assessed that the only viable, long-term successor to Saddam will come from within the Sunni security/military structure. Such a figure is unlikely to command popular support among the Shia or Kurdish populations and would be forced (and probably inclined) to run Iraq along autocratic lines. Iraq will remain a unitary state, but many of the long-term problems of Iraq will not disappear with Saddam."

140. The paper described the Iraqi opposition in exile:

"The Iraqi National Congress (INC), based in London, remains the main umbrella opposition grouping. Both Kurdish factions (KDP [Kurdistan Democratic Party] and PUK [Patriotic Union of Kurdistan]) are represented along with various monarchist and independent Shia factions. SCIRI [Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq] is not a member ... Current INC 'leader' Ahmad Chalabi is a London-based Iraqi Shia who is mistrusted by regional powers and many within his own movement – he has little credibility in Iraq. Chalabi's prominence owes much to his success in handling the US media. Republican politicians ... see him as a

⁸⁸ [JIC Assessment, 27 February 2002, 'Iraq: Saddam under the Spotlight'](#).

⁸⁹ [Paper DIS, 5 March 2002, 'Politico Military Memorandum, Removing Saddam'](#).

credible opposition figure and CIA have not been engaged with the INC since 1996. Indeed as it is currently organised the INC is less than the sum of its parts. **We assess that it would have a nugatory role in any regime change scenario** – US are well aware that the INC (and other exile groups) are completely penetrated by Iraqi intelligence.”

141. The concluding section addressed Iraq after Saddam Hussein:

“We assess that despite potential instability Iraq will remain a unitary state. But many of Iraq’s structural problems will remain. Sunni hegemony, the position of the Kurds and Shia, enmity with Kuwait, infighting among the elite, autocratic rule and anti-Israeli sentiment will not disappear with Saddam. We should also expect considerable anti-Western sentiment among a populace that has experienced ten years of sanctions.

“A US attempt to create a more equitable long-term distribution of power in Iraq would require massive and lengthy commitment. Modern Iraq has been dominated politically, militarily and socially by the Sunni. To alter that would entail re-creation of Iraq’s civil, political and military structures. That would require a US-directed transition of power (ie US troops occupying Baghdad) and support thereafter. Ten years seems a not unrealistic time span for such a project.”

142. The paper was sent to Mr Hoon, the Chiefs of Staff, Sir Kevin Tebbit, Mr Webb, Lieutenant General Sir Anthony Pigott (Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Commitments)) and a small number of other individuals. It was also sent to Mr Scarlett and the Assessments Staff, Mr Tom Dodd (OD Sec), Dr Amanda Tanfield (Head of Iraq Section in MED) and the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS).

143. The paper was later included in the pack of reading material on Iraq for Mr Blair sent to No.10 by Mr Scarlett on 1 August.

144. On 8 March, the Cabinet Office raised the potential long-term consequences of a full-scale military campaign in Iraq in a paper preparing the ground for the meeting between Mr Blair and President Bush in Crawford, Texas, on 6 April.

145. The ‘Iraq: Options Paper’, addressed in more detail in Section 3.2, was commissioned by Sir David Manning and co-ordinated by OD Sec.⁹⁰ It was sent to Mr Blair by Sir David Manning on 8 March, as part of the collection of “background briefs that you asked for” for the meeting with President Bush.

146. The paper was prepared as background. It did not represent agreed interdepartmental advice for Ministers.

⁹⁰ Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 8 March 2002, ‘Briefing for the US’.

147. The ‘Iraq: Options Paper’ set out three options for bringing about regime change, including a full-scale ground campaign.⁹¹ It identified two options for a successor regime: a Sunni military strongman or “a representative, broadly democratic government”. The paper stated: “we need to wait and see which options or combination of options may be favoured by the US government”. It warned that achieving a representative, broadly democratic successor government would require “the US and others to commit to nation-building for many years. This would entail a substantial international security force and help with reconstruction.”

148. Throughout 2002 and early 2003, the UK remained sceptical about the capacity and credibility of the Iraqi opposition in exile and in Iraq, both as a force for change and as the potential core of a credible post-Saddam Hussein administration.

149. The ‘Iraq: Options Paper’ stated that:

“Unaided, the Iraqi opposition is incapable of overthrowing the regime. The **external opposition** is weak, divided and lacks domestic credibility. The predominant group is the Iraqi National Congress ...

“The **internal opposition** is small and fractured on ethnic and sectarian grounds.”

150. On 5 March 2002, Mr Ben Bradshaw, FCO Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, held a meeting with the “Group of Four” (G4) Iraqi opposition parties: the Iraqi National Accord (INA), represented by future Iraqi Prime Minister Dr Ayad Allawi, the KDP, the PUK and SCIRI.⁹² The delegation told Mr Bradshaw that “things were moving in Iraq”, the people supported regime change and the UK could play a role. Mr Bradshaw stated that the UK wanted to pursue the UN route first.

151. On 12 March, Mr Bradshaw met a delegation from the INC headed by Dr Ahmed Chalabi, at which Dr Chalabi suggested that the INC would like to hold a conference in London to garner international support for planning for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.⁹³

152. The Inquiry has seen no evidence of any response from Mr Bradshaw.

⁹¹ [Paper Cabinet Office, 8 March 2002, ‘Iraq: Options Paper’.](#)

⁹² Minute MED to APS/Mr Bradshaw, 5 March 2002, ‘Iraq: Mr Bradshaw’s meeting with Iraqi Opposition’.

⁹³ Minute MED to APS/Mr Bradshaw, 25 March 2002, ‘Iraq: Mr Bradshaw’s Meeting with Iraqi National Congress, 12 March’.

Government contact with the Iraqi opposition

The Inquiry has seen evidence of four meetings between UK Ministers and the Iraqi opposition in the year before the invasion of Iraq:

- separate meetings with the “Group of Four” (G4) Iraqi opposition parties and the Iraqi National Conference (INC) in March 2002, hosted by Mr Ben Bradshaw, FCO Parliamentary Under Secretary of State;
- a visit to No.10 by the two leaders of the Iraqi Kurds in December 2002, part of which was attended by Mr Blair;⁹⁴ and
- a meeting between Mr Straw and “Iraqi exiles” in London on 21 February 2003.⁹⁵

At official level, by late 2002, it was UK policy “to stay in touch with the thinking of opposition groups who may have a role to play in shaping a post-Saddam Iraq”.⁹⁶ “Regular, routine meetings” took place between opposition representatives and junior FCO officials. There were occasional meetings at senior official level.

153. On 15 March, Mr William Patey, Head of MED, sent Mr Straw a paper by Research Analysts on the “nature and role of the opposition to Saddam” commissioned by Sir David Manning.⁹⁷

154. The paper cautioned that the UK’s ability to influence or direct the Iraqi opposition was constrained by dependence on contacts with Iraqi exiles. Ten years without diplomatic representation in Iraq meant that the UK knew little about the internal opposition to Saddam Hussein.

155. The paper listed three main problems dealing with the external opposition:

- the absence of a coherent structure, with Western offers of financial support or political backing exacerbating rivalries between groups;
- the absence of Sunni representation in the INC, which was dominated by Kurds and Shia Arabs;
- lack of credibility. Regional governments had no faith in the INC’s ability to achieve its goals and high-profile Western support left it open to charges of being a Western stooge.

156. Research Analysts reported few signs of co-ordinated opposition in Iraq, where most organisations were believed to be penetrated by agents of the regime. It concluded that Saddam Hussein’s immediate successor was most likely to be a senior Sunni member or ex-member of the Iraqi military.

⁹⁴ Letter Rycroft to Sinclair, 19 December 2002, ‘Iraqi Kurds: Meeting with Prime Minister, 19 December’.

⁹⁵ Minute Tanfield to PS/PUS [FCO], 21 February 2003, ‘Iraq Morning Meeting: Key Points’.

⁹⁶ Telegram 104 FCO London to Amman, 20 November 2002, ‘Iraqi Opposition Sitrep’.

⁹⁷ Minute Patey to PS [FCO], 15 March 2002, ‘Iraq’ attaching Paper Research Analysts, 14 March 2002, ‘Iraq: the nature and role of the opposition to Saddam Hussein’.

157. US post-conflict planning began to take shape in spring 2002 at meetings of the NSC Deputies Committee⁹⁸ involving DoD, the State Department, the CIA and the Pentagon Joint Staff:

“The Deputies Committee focused on three concepts: a liberation model in which Iraqis would quickly take charge through a provisional government; a military administration led by CENTCOM [the US Central Command]; or a civilian transitional authority, perhaps run under UN auspices.”⁹⁹

158. What might replace Saddam Hussein’s regime was one of the themes of talks between Mr Blair and Vice President Dick Cheney in London on 11 March.

159. The FCO briefing for Mr Blair’s meeting with Vice President Cheney on 11 March covered a range of issues.¹⁰⁰ Iraq was highlighted as:

“... the main issue, including for the media given speculation that the US are moving towards early decisions on military action ... This will ... be an important opportunity ... to get a feel for where the debate in Washington stands and what options are emerging.”

160. The FCO suggested that the key messages for Mr Cheney on Iraq included:

“Issues arising from regime change on which I [Mr Blair] would welcome your thoughts:

- Assessment of Iraqi Opposition ...;
- Require serious movement on MEPP to give us space in which to act;
- Day after issues loom large. Territorial integrity of Iraq important. Likely replacement for Saddam – another Sunni strongman. Establishing representative government would require long term commitment;
- Genuine consultation and construction of convincing legal basis will be important ...”¹⁰¹

161. Mr Matthew Rycroft, Mr Blair’s Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, advised Mr Blair that he needed Vice President Cheney to give him Washington’s latest views on a number of issues, including “what to do on the day after regime change”.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ A committee of the National Security Council (NSC), chaired by the Deputy National Security Advisor (Mr Stephen Hadley from 2001 to 2005) and including the deputies to the members of the NSC. The Deputies Committee is the senior sub-Cabinet inter-agency forum for consideration of policy issues relating to US national security.

⁹⁹ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Letter McDonald to Rycroft, 8 March 2002, ‘US Vice President’s call on the Prime Minister, 11 March’.

¹⁰¹ [Paper \[unattributed and undated\], ‘Visit of US Vice President Dick Cheney 11 March: Iraq’](#).

¹⁰² Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 8 March 2002, ‘Lunch with Dick Cheney’.

162. The record of the meeting, described in more detail in Section 3.2, shows that Mr Blair raised several post-conflict issues:

- the need for “a proper strategy for dealing with the Iraqi opposition”, one that was better than anything Mr Blair had seen so far;
- the need “to guard against the law of unintended consequences” by building support in the region;
- the need for “an acceptable successor government”; regime change was not enough.¹⁰³

163. After the meeting, Mr Blair commented that he thought the US was still vague about the nature and role of the opposition inside and outside Iraq, and unclear about what would follow Saddam Hussein. He asked for further advice.

164. Sir David Manning raised the issue at a meeting with Dr Rice in Washington on 14 March (see Section 3.2).¹⁰⁴

165. Sir David recorded that he had “made it clear that we would continue to give strong support to the idea of regime change, but were looking to the US to devise a convincing plan of action. This would also need to answer the question of who would follow Saddam.”

166. Sir David Manning told Dr Rice that a series of issues would need to be addressed if the US decided on military action against Iraq. One was whether the US “wanted company”. If it wanted the support of a coalition, it would have to address a number of concerns that would be critical in determining the attitude of potential partners:

“... the US would need to:

- mount a public information campaign explaining the nature of Saddam’s regime and the threat he posed;
- describe the role that the US envisaged for the UN, and particularly for the weapons inspectors;
- provide a convincing plan setting out how a combination of outside military pressure, and external and internal opposition could topple Saddam; and
- provide an equally convincing blueprint for a post Saddam Iraq ... acceptable to its neighbours as well as to its own population.

“... Preparing public opinion and deciding who and what might replace Saddam were tough propositions.”

¹⁰³ Letter Manning to McDonald, 11 March 2002, ‘Conversation between the Prime Minister and Vice President Cheney: 11 March 2002’.

¹⁰⁴ Letter Manning to McDonald, 14 March 2002, ‘Discussions with Condi Rice on 12-13 March’.

167. Before Mr Blair's meeting with President Bush at Crawford, Mr Hoon, Mr Straw and Sir Christopher Meyer expressed concern about the potential longer-term implications of military action in Iraq.

168. On 22 March, Mr Hoon advised Mr Blair: "If a coalition takes control of Baghdad ... it will probably have to stay there for many years."¹⁰⁵

169. In evidence to the Inquiry, Mr Hoon recalled that he had pointed out that:

"... we had never successfully identified at that stage someone who might replace Saddam Hussein. There was real concern about what Iraq might look like in the aftermath of his regime being removed, and ... that debate was a very live debate ..."¹⁰⁶

170. Mr Straw wrote to Mr Blair on 25 March, advising that the Government was a long way from convincing the Parliamentary Labour Party that "the consequence of military action really would be a compliant, law abiding replacement government".¹⁰⁷ On the "big question" of what military action would achieve, there was "a larger hole ... than on anything". Mr Straw added: "Iraq has had no history of democracy so no-one has this habit or experience."

171. Sir Christopher Meyer advised on 1 April that President Bush had raised expectations that the US would take military action against Iraq in autumn 2002, but questions were beginning to be asked about the risks.¹⁰⁸

172. Sir Christopher Meyer reported:

"There is no shortage of Bush insiders who tell us that the die is cast for a regime-change operation of some sort this autumn. But there is now a sense that the Administration are for the first time really staring the hard questions in the face: how much international support is needed: what smart options are available to topple Saddam: above all what happens afterwards. There is a doubt among some – no bigger than a fist sized cloud on the horizon – that Iraq might be too risky politically."

173. Sir Christopher also offered advice on the US approach in Afghanistan, where decisions had been taken:

"... in a very small circle of key officials around the President. Where Rumsfeld (and General [Tommy] Franks [Commander in Chief CENTCOM]) have not been fully engaged, little action has resulted. Many in the Administration recognise that, on the ground, there is a real danger of losing Afghanistan because of a US fear of getting sucked into nation-building. But Rumsfeld has, in effect, blocked all but a minimalist approach."

¹⁰⁵ [Minute Hoon to Prime Minister, 22 March 2002, 'Iraq'](#).

¹⁰⁶ Public hearing 19 January 2010, pages 108-109.

¹⁰⁷ [Minute Straw to Prime Minister, 25 March 2002, 'Crawford/Iraq'](#).

¹⁰⁸ [Telegram 451 Washington to FCO London, 1 April 2002, 'PM's Visit to Texas: Bush and the War on Terrorism'](#).

174. Sir Christopher Meyer told the Inquiry that he had advised Mr Blair:

“There are three things you really need to focus on when you get to Crawford. One is how to garner international support for a policy of regime change, if that is what it turns out to be. If it involves removing Saddam Hussein, how do you do it and when do you do it?’ And the last thing I said, which became a kind of theme of virtually all the reporting I sent back to London in that year was, ‘Above all ... get them to focus on the aftermath, because, if it comes to war and Saddam Hussein is removed, and then ...?’”¹⁰⁹

175. On 2 April, Mr Blair held a meeting at Chequers to prepare for his meeting with President Bush at Crawford (see Section 3.2).

176. No formal record was made of the discussion or who was present.

177. Accounts given by participants suggest that Admiral Sir Michael Boyce (Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS)), Sir Kevin Tebbit (representing Mr Hoon, who was unable to attend), Lt Gen Pigott, Lieutenant General Cedric Delves (senior UK liaison officer at CENTCOM in Tampa, Florida), Sir Richard Dearlove (Chief of SIS), Mr Jonathan Powell (Mr Blair’s Chief of Staff), Sir David Manning, Mr Alastair Campbell (Mr Blair’s Director of Communications and Strategy) and Mr Scarlett were present.

178. The FCO was not represented.

179. In his diaries, Mr Campbell recorded that Lt Gen Pigott said at the meeting: “post-conflict had to be part of conflict preparation”.¹¹⁰ Mr Campbell added: “There was a discussion about who would replace Saddam and how could we guarantee it would be better. Scarlett said it couldn’t be worse.”

180. Mr Rycroft told the Inquiry that, around this time: “Undoubtedly the thought was in the Prime Minister’s mind that if at the end of this we were going to go down the military intervention route ... the aftermath would be many years.”¹¹¹

Post-conflict issues after Crawford

181. At Crawford, Texas, on 6 April 2002, Mr Blair and President Bush discussed who might replace Saddam Hussein.

182. There is no evidence that Mr Blair commissioned further work on post-conflict issues after Crawford, or that Mr Straw requested further work from FCO officials.

¹⁰⁹ Public hearing, 26 November 2009, pages 27-28.

¹¹⁰ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

¹¹¹ Private hearing, 10 September 2010, page 12.

183. Mr Hoon commissioned work from MOD officials on military options, to be conducted “on very close hold”.

184. Limited Whitehall co-ordination took place in the MOD-based Pigott Group.

185. In the absence of direction from No.10 after Crawford:

- the FCO was effectively sidelined from planning and preparation for possible military action in Iraq at a stage when policy remained fluid and FCO views on strategic direction might have been expected to have most influence;
- UK military planning dominated Whitehall consideration of Iraq, with the consequence that any potential UK involvement was considered principally in terms of the military role;
- DFID expertise on post-conflict issues was excluded from discussion as strategy took shape;
- the systematic research and analysis of post-conflict issues that was needed to underpin UK policy was not commissioned; and
- Mr Blair sought to influence US thinking on post-conflict issues with only a broad concept of the post-conflict task and no clearly defined UK negotiating position.

186. Many of the failings in UK planning and preparation over the coming year stemmed from those developments.

187. Mr Blair discussed Iraq with President Bush at Crawford, Texas, on 6 April. The discussions are addressed in more detail in Section 3.2.

188. A three-page record of the discussions on Iraq was circulated on a secret and strictly personal basis by Sir David Manning.¹¹² Sir David recorded that, among other issues, Mr Blair and President Bush had discussed who might replace Saddam Hussein if action were taken to topple him.

189. Mr Powell told the Inquiry:

“... one of the things that is so interesting is that the Prime Minister was talking at that stage about the things that you would need to do to make this successful ... He talked about what would happen on the day after. If you go into Iraq, are you going to be prepared for what happens thereafter? So I think he in many ways listed all the right questions at that stage when he was talking to Bush at Crawford.”¹¹³

¹¹² Letter Manning to McDonald, 8 April 2002, ‘Prime Minister’s Visit to the United States: 5-7 April’.

¹¹³ Public hearing, 18 January 2010, page 26.

190. In his speech at College Station on 7 April, Mr Blair argued:

“Prevention is better than cure. The reason it would be crazy for us to clear out of Afghanistan once we had finished militarily, is that if it drifts back into instability, the same old problems will re-emerge. Stick at it and we can show, eventually, as in the Balkans, the unstable starts to become stable.”¹¹⁴

191. Immediately after Crawford, UK officials and the UK military began to define the possible end state after a military operation against Iraq.

192. Section 6.1 describes how consideration of UK military options intensified after Crawford.

193. On 8 April, Mr Hoon discussed Iraq with Adm Boyce and Sir Kevin Tebbit.¹¹⁵ Afterwards he commissioned further work on potential military options, to be conducted “on very close hold”.

194. On 12 April, Mr Webb sent Mr Hoon a “think piece”, listing three possible US options for invasion and touching briefly on post-invasion commitments:

“To secure the country subsequently would depend critically on the extent of popular support: but without it how could we justify staying? It is possible that forces would be needed only sufficient to secure a new popular figure from being dislodged by dissident remnants. But we have to be ready for a longer job against an uncertain background of host nation support and regional instability.”¹¹⁶

195. Mr Webb suggested that:

“... there could be advantage in the MOD doing some discreet internal strategic estimating. This should help us think through what would be the key strategic objectives and end states and the ‘centre of gravity’ of the situation we need to tackle; and give better shape to redefining potential force packages (within the large region).

...

“Actively to prepare for operations on Iraq would obviously attract interest and possibly reactions ... There would come a point at which preparations could apply some valuable pressure on Saddam; or be seen as a natural reaction to prevarication over inspections. In general, however, until that point – say in the summer – we should keep a low profile, confining ourselves to the items that timeline analysis shows need to be got underway to preserve the ability to contribute on time later.

¹¹⁴ The National Archives, 7 April 2002, *Prime Minister’s speech at the George Bush Senior Presidential Library*.

¹¹⁵ Minute Watkins to PSO/CDS & PS/PUS [MOD], 8 April 2002, ‘Iraq’.

¹¹⁶ [Minute Webb to PS/Secretary of State \[MOD\], 12 April 2002, ‘Bush and the War on Terrorism’](#).

“... The FCO are content for activity to be centred on MOD to preserve the best prospect for dialogue with US DoD. All scoping activity would be confined to the minimum number of named individuals.”

196. Sir Kevin Tebbit explained to the Inquiry that: “At this early stage ... April 2002, we did not know whether the Americans were going to go for a military option and, if so, which one. So this was very, very preliminary ground clearing.”¹¹⁷

197. An MOD-led, inter-departmental group of senior officials, headed by Lt Gen Pigott, was established in April 2002. That body, which came to be known as the Pigott Group, considered issues related to UK participation in a US-led ground offensive in Iraq.

198. In spring 2002 the Pigott Group was the FCO’s principal forum for contributions to cross-government consideration of post-conflict Iraq.

199. Mr Peter Ricketts, the FCO Political Director and FCO member of the Pigott Group, took responsibility for Whitehall consideration of the UK’s desired “end state” for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.

200. On 25 April, Mr Peter Ricketts, the FCO Political Director, informed Mr Straw’s Private Office, Sir Michael Jay and a small number of other senior FCO officials, that the MOD had established “a small group of senior officials and military planners [the Pigott Group] to think about the issues that would be involved in any military operation in Iraq, as the basis for initial contingency planning in the MOD”.¹¹⁸ Participants included the FCO, Cabinet Office, JIC and Intelligence Agencies.

201. Mr Ricketts described the Group’s work as “a sensitive exercise”. Participation was being tightly restricted and paperwork would be kept to a minimum, but it was “important that the FCO was involved from the ground floor with MOD thinking”.

202. The first meeting of the Pigott Group took place in late April. Mr Ricketts reported that it had covered “mainly the political context, including the implications of the Arab/Israel crisis, attitudes in the Arab states, the risks of Iraq disintegrating and the consequences of that”.

203. The meeting also considered how to define the objective, or “end state” of a military operation:

“As we found in the run-up to the Afghanistan operation, defining the objective of an operation is crucial since this defines the scope of the operations and hence the scale of military effort required. The MOD had tried their hand at a definition of the ‘end state’ which was discussed at length, and I undertook to produce a further version.

¹¹⁷ Public hearing, 3 December 2009, page 15.

¹¹⁸ [Minute Ricketts to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 25 April 2002, ‘Iraq: Contingency Planning’.](#)

“I have now done so. Before feeding it in to the Whitehall [Pigott] group, it would be helpful to know whether the Foreign Secretary thinks we are on the right lines. At this stage, it is only to inform MOD contingency planning: at the right point, these issues would have to be negotiated carefully and at a high level with the Americans, who will have their own priorities. My proposal is as follows:

- ‘A stable and law-abiding Iraq, within its present borders, co-operating with the international community, no longer posing a threat to global security or to its neighbours, and abiding by its international obligations on control of its WMD.’”

204. Mr Ricketts reported that the Pigott Group had debated a number of issues related to the end state, including:

“... should there be anything more explicit about a future regime abiding by international norms on the treatment of its own population? I have got ‘law-abiding’ which is designed to capture that. There is a risk in overloading a definition of the ‘end state’ with desirable outcomes which cannot be achieved by military means.”

205. Mr Ricketts explained that the meeting had commissioned further work on a range of intelligence issues, which would be addressed by the JIC. The military would work on “the likely scale of effort required”. He proposed that he or Mr Stephen Wright, Director General Defence and Intelligence, should represent the FCO at future meetings, accompanied by Mr Edward Chaplin (Mr Goulty’s successor as Director Middle East and North Africa), who should remain the FCO “point man on Iraq issues”.

206. Mr Ricketts made no reference to further contingency planning in the FCO.

207. On 3 May, Mr Ricketts sent a very slightly amended definition of the end state, agreed by Mr Straw, to Mr Webb:

“A stable and law-abiding Iraq, within its present borders, co-operating with the international community, no longer posing a threat to its neighbours or to international security, and abiding by its international obligations on control of its WMD.”¹¹⁹

208. On 10 May, Lt Gen Pigott advised Mr Hoon that, although his Group was focused on military options, it needed to be supported by thinking on the end state.¹²⁰ He explained that the FCO was already engaged on the issue.

209. A revised version of the end state, agreed by Mr Straw and Mr Hoon, was sent to Mr Blair on 31 May and is described later in this Section.

¹¹⁹ [Letter Ricketts to Webb, 3 May 2002, ‘Iraq: Contingency planning’.](#)

¹²⁰ [Minute DCDS\(C\) to APS/Secretary of State \[MOD\], 10 May 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

210. Sir Peter Ricketts told the Inquiry:

“We [the Pigott Group] didn’t discuss military planning as such. We discussed the implications of military planning for other departments’ activities ... We worked up in that group an end state which was one of the political implications of any military plan.”¹²¹

211. In early May 2002, the international effort to resolve the India/Pakistan crisis was the FCO’s principal foreign policy concern and the major preoccupation for Mr Straw, Sir Michael Jay and Mr Ricketts.

212. Iraq policy was a lower priority and restricted to a small number of officials.

213. Despite those constraints, it fell to the FCO to ensure that the military contingency planning already under way in the MOD was placed in a wider strategic context, and that it took place alongside analysis of non-military options for achieving the desired end state in Iraq.

214. There is no indication that senior FCO officials commissioned such work during spring and early summer 2002.

215. Mr Tom McKane, Deputy Head of OD Sec, was asked by the Inquiry whether the Pigott Group had considered aftermath planning. He explained:

“There wasn’t from my recollection much, if any, discussion about the aftermath in terms of infrastructure of the country, the security of the country, or humanitarian or development assistance. That wasn’t the focus of these meetings, and I think that it’s not really surprising, given that they were meetings being convened in the Ministry of Defence and had quite a defence focus.

“... [T]he focus of everybody at that point was ... what is the military plan going to be? What is the form of the UK contribution likely to be? ... [U]ntil one had ... some resolution on those points the question of precisely what the aftermath was going to be was not something that could be settled.”¹²²

216. Mr McKane added:

“We had not got to the point at that stage of planning for an aftermath, because there wasn’t yet an aftermath to be planned for.”

217. In late May, the MOD Strategic Planning Group (SPG) advised that the post-conflict phase of operations had the potential to add significantly to the costs and scale of a UK military commitment in Iraq.

¹²¹ Public hearing, 1 December 2009, page 20.

¹²² Public hearing, 19 January 2011, pages 61 and 65.

218. On 24 May, the MOD Strategic Planning Group (SPG), headed by Brigadier James Dutton and reporting to Lt Gen Pigott, produced a paper for the Chiefs of Staff on potential UK military commitments.¹²³ ‘Contingency Thinking: Force Generation and Deployment for the Gulf’ (see Section 6.1) was circulated to a limited number of named MOD addressees. It aimed to provide sufficient information “to judge what the UK’s maximum level of commitment could be in the event of a contingent operation against Iraq, together with appropriate costs and timings”.

219. On the post-conflict phase, the paper stated that it might be necessary to maintain force elements in theatre for policing, stabilisation or humanitarian operations, which had the potential to add considerably to the cost and commitments, depending on the end state of the campaign.

220. The emerging findings from the SPG analysis were presented to Mr Hoon on 24 May to report to Mr Blair in advance of a planned meeting with Secretary Rumsfeld in early June.¹²⁴

221. Mr Hoon sent Mr Blair an update on military contingency planning for Iraq on 31 May (see Section 6.1).¹²⁵

222. Mr Hoon’s minute was copied to Mr Gordon Brown (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Mr Straw and Sir Richard Wilson (Cabinet Secretary). The minute included a definition of the end state, which it described as “tentative objectives to guide” contingency planning. The definition, agreed with Mr Straw, envisaged:

“A stable and law-abiding Iraq, within its present borders, co-operating with the international community, no longer posing a threat to its neighbours or international security, abiding by its international obligations on WMD.”

223. Mr Hoon advised:

“In order for us to plan properly we need to know what outcome in Iraq the US would wish to achieve ... and when the US might wish to take action. It would also be useful to know how long the US see themselves as remaining engaged in Iraq. Further, we need to clarify the policy basis and legal justification for any action.”

224. Mr William Nye, Head of the Treasury Defence, Diplomacy and Intelligence Team, provided a commentary for Mr Brown on 7 June.¹²⁶ He pointed out that the MOD had only provided costings for preparing for an operation, not for deploying a force, for a campaign, or for any “follow-up operation”. He commented:

“MOD have understandably given no thought to costs ‘after the war’ ... But there must at least be the possibility of some medium-term deployment for peacekeeping or occupation. If on the scale of the Balkans, it would cost several £100m a year.”

¹²³ Paper SPG, 24 May 2002, ‘Contingency Thinking: Force Generation and deployment for the Gulf’.

¹²⁴ [Minute DCDS\(C\) to PS/Secretary of State \[MOD\], 24 May 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

¹²⁵ [Minute Hoon to Prime Minister, 31 May 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

¹²⁶ [Minute Nye to Chancellor, 7 June 2002, ‘Iraq: potential costs’.](#)

225. On 5 June, Mr Blair and Secretary Rumsfeld agreed that the future of Iraq would be an important issue for the international coalition.

226. Secretary Rumsfeld visited London for talks with Mr Blair and Mr Hoon on 5 June. Mr Blair expressed concern about the possible unintended consequences of any military action. He and Secretary Rumsfeld agreed that the future of Iraq would be an important issue for the international coalition.¹²⁷

227. On 14 June, Mr Chaplin visited Washington with Mr Charles Gray, the Head of MED.¹²⁸ The British Embassy reported that US interlocutors from the NSC and State Department had confirmed that the US was “pressing ahead with trying to prepare the Iraqi opposition for regime change” and that Congressional funding had been agreed for the State Department’s Future of Iraq Project (see Box below), a series of working groups under Iraqi opposition ownership to look into issues of governance after Saddam Hussein’s departure.

228. In response to a US suggestion that successful regime change depended on a clear strategy for the day after, Mr Chaplin proposed that the UK and US should “exchange views on scenarios”.

229. That exchange took place in Washington on 6 November and is described later in this section.

The Future of Iraq Project

In October 2001, the US State Department began work on what became known as the Future of Iraq Project.¹²⁹ The project was launched publicly in early 2002. It involved a series of working groups of Iraqi exiles and officials from the State Department, each looking at an area of importance to Iraq’s future, including justice, education, the economy, infrastructure, the environment and reform of government institutions.¹³⁰ The objective was to expand the scope of US post-war planning and provide a common focus for competing exile groups.

The Future of Iraq Project worked independently of the US inter-agency planning process. It developed parallel proposals for post-invasion Iraq that did not contribute to the official US planning effort. According to *Hard Lessons*:

“The richly developed reports constitute the single most rigorous assessment conducted by the US Government before the war. Although the findings ... did not amount to an operational plan ... [they] contained facts and analysis that could – and in some cases did – inform operational planning.”¹³¹

¹²⁷ Letter Rycroft to Watkins, 5 June 2002, ‘Prime Minister’s Meeting with Rumsfeld, 5 June: Iraq’.

¹²⁸ Telegram 802 Washington to FCO London, 14 June 2002, ‘Iraq: UK/US Talks, 13 June’.

¹²⁹ The National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Book No. 198, 1 September 2006, *New State Department Releases on the “Future of Iraq” Project*.

¹³⁰ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

¹³¹ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

As a whole, the project failed to make a significant impact on US planning:

“... the project’s reports did not capture the attention of the State Department’s senior decision-makers ... Without a high-level patron, the ... reports lacked the visibility and clout to reach key decision-makers in time.”

UK officials were aware of the project, but the Inquiry has seen very little evidence of UK engagement with the working groups or analysis of the final report.

The 1,500 page, 13 volume final report is publicly available in the US National Security Archives.¹³² It is a compendium of papers prepared by the different working groups, some agreed by consensus, others not.

The US National Security Archive summary of the project highlights some prescient observations in the final report, including warnings that:

- the period after regime change might provide an opportunity for criminals “to engage in acts of killing, plunder looting, etc.”;
- former Ba’athists not re-integrated into society “may present a destabilizing element”, especially if unable to find employment;
- a decade of sanctions had resulted in the spread of “endemic corruption and black market activities into every sector of ... economic life” that would be difficult to reverse;
- the relationship between the new Iraqi state and religion was an intractable issue “which ultimately only the people of Iraq can decide on”;
- repair of Iraq’s electricity grid would be a key determinant of Iraqis’ reaction to the presence of foreign forces.

The Economy and Infrastructure Working Group

The final report of the Economy and Infrastructure Working Group provides one example of the range of material generated by the Future of Iraq Project.¹³³

Quoting data from the US Department of Energy, the Working Group reported that 85-90 percent of Iraq’s national power grid and 20 power stations had been damaged or destroyed in 1991. The UN programme to restore electricity generation in central and southern Iraq to pre-1991 levels required US\$10bn, of which \$US4.7bn had been allocated from Oil-for-Food (OFF) funds since 1996. US\$1.67bn of material had reached Iraq, but only 60 percent had been put to use. In northern Iraq, problems included:

- damage to transmission lines and substations in 1991;
- the need to replace major circuits constructed out of salvaged material after the region’s disconnection from the Iraqi national grid in 1991;

¹³² The National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Book No. 198, 1 September 2006, *New State Department Releases on the “Future of Iraq” Project*.

¹³³ US State Department, The Future of Iraq Project, [undated], *Economy and Infrastructure (Public Finance) Working Group*.

- the poor state of repair of the two hydroelectric power stations supplying all the power to two northern governorates;
- lack of investment and maintenance since 1991.

Other issues of concern included:

- an “extremely poor” telecommunications infrastructure that had hindered humanitarian programmes under OFF;
- a water treatment system operating at 50 percent efficiency, resulting in an increase in water-borne disease;
- three years’ drought between 1999 and 2001;
- 50 percent unemployment.

The report stated that “every Iraqi seeks new job opportunities that will enable them to provide their households with incomes and provide more food, better clothing, and improved healthcare for their families”. It warned:

“Any new war or military confrontation in Iraq could cause further damage to the Iraqi infrastructure and existing weak economy. Furthermore, this would exasperate the high unemployment rates already existing in Iraq. The post-Saddam government has to immediately consider economic initiatives to create new jobs through labor intensive projects.”

230. Between June and December 2002, the SPG produced six editions of a paper on UK military strategic thinking.

231. The first, issued on 13 June, identified a “spectrum” of possible post-conflict commitments, where the worst case was “a long period with a large bill” that would represent “a significant burden on defence resources”.

232. The paper stated that the post-conflict commitment needed to be “planned and agreed before we embark on military action”.

233. On 13 June, the SPG issued a paper on UK military strategic thinking on Iraq to a limited number of senior MOD addressees.¹³⁴ The paper was “part of ongoing work developed by a cross-Whitehall Group [the Pigott Group] that has met on a regular basis to exchange ideas and information, and undertake UK contingency thinking ... in advance of any detailed consultations with the US.”

234. The SPG paper was intended for discussion at a Strategic Think Tank on Iraq held by the Chiefs of Staff on 18 June, for which the MOD has been unable to find a record.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ [Minute Driver to PSO/CDS, 13 June 2002, ‘Supporting Paper for COS Strategic Think Tank on Iraq – 18 June’ attaching Paper \[SPG\], 12 June 2002, \[untitled\].](#)

¹³⁵ Letter MOD to Iraq Inquiry Secretariat, 23 May 2012, [untitled].

235. Mr McKane described the 18 June discussion to Sir David Manning as “preparatory to military talks with the US ... at which Tony Pigott and Desmond Bowen [MOD Director General Operational Policy (DG Op Pol)] would represent the UK” (see Section 6.1).¹³⁶

236. The SPG paper set out the desired end state for Iraq in two forms:

- A UK text, substantively unchanged from the version agreed by Mr Straw and Mr Hoon: “A stable and law-abiding Iraq, within present borders, co-operating with the IC [international community], no longer posing a threat to its neighbours or to international security, and abiding by its international obligations on WMD.”
- A US version derived from the CENTCOM Iraq plan: “maintenance of Iraq as a viable nation state, disavowing the use of WMD but capable of defending its borders and contributing to the counter balance of Iran”. The SPG paper added that US was “determined to achieve a more representative, non-tyrannical government”.¹³⁷

237. The SPG stated that the end state “cannot be achieved while the current Iraqi regime remains in power. Consequently, regime change is a necessary step and there is no point in pursuing any strategy that does not achieve this.”

238. The paper listed a number of “military/strategic implications” of this approach, including:

“Post-conflict. Need to acknowledge that there will be a post-conflict phase with an associated commitment, manpower and finance bill. Depending on how the regime change is achieved, and the form of the replacement, there is a spectrum of commitment where the worst case is a long period with a large bill.”

239. The SPG judged that domination of Iraq’s state institutions, security organisations and the officer corps by Sunni Arabs, who constituted just 15 percent of the population, made the country “potentially fundamentally unstable”. Iraq was held together by the strong security apparatus. It would require considerable force to break the security structure, but when that happened the regime would “shatter”.

240. Three possibilities for regime change were presented:

- removal of Saddam Hussein and key advisers, including his sons, to be replaced by a Sunni strongman;
- removal of Saddam Hussein and “his wider security and governing regime” to be replaced by an “International Presence coupled with a bridging process leading eventually to a broad based coalition”; and
- removal of the entire Ba’athist regime to be replaced by a federated state.

¹³⁶ [Minute McKane to Manning, 18 June 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

¹³⁷ [Minute Driver to PSO/CDS, 13 June 2002, ‘Supporting Paper for COS Strategic Think Tank on Iraq – 18 June’ attaching Paper \[SPG\], 12 June 2002, \[untitled\].](#)

241. The section of the paper on post-conflict tasks stated:

“This will depend on how regime change occurs, and what shape the campaign takes to bring about the change. However, key differences between Iraq and recent experience in Afghanistan and Balkans are:

- Iraq is naturally wealthy with significant oil reserves and potential revenue, therefore reconstruction should be self-sufficient, with cash from OFF escrow account providing significant pump priming as compared to Afghanistan or Balkans.
- Iraq has a sound agricultural base (‘fertile crescent’).
- Educated and able technical, industrial, and managerial population exists.
- Although ethnic suppression has occurred there is limited regional inter-ethnic mixing as compared to Afghanistan and Balkans.
- International intervention is not in tandem with ongoing, and in the case of Afghanistan, prolonged civil war.”

242. The paper listed likely short-, medium- and long-term post-conflict military tasks:

“Immediate (0 – 6 months):

- Provide external and internal security, law and order to prevent any potential for inter-ethnic violence, or opportunity for organised crime
- Detention and processing of key regime figures ...
- Confine and monitor remaining elements of Iraqi Armed Forces likely to rebel ...
- Secure and account for WMD capability (materiel and intellectual)
- Enable humanitarian relief
- Assist in restoration of key infrastructure elements
- Secure oilfields and oil distribution/refining infrastructure
- Negotiate and secure alternative lines of communication (LoC) through Syria/Turkey/Jordan
- Scope of tasks likely to demand large numbers of ground troops, comprehensive C2 [command and control] and air mobility (circa 200,000 plus)

“Medium Term (6 months – 2 plus years)

- Continue to provide both external and internal security, law and order to prevent any potential for inter-ethnic violence, or opportunity for organised crime, but commence transfer of requirement to new Iraqi security structures
- Detention and processing of key regime figures

- Develop SSR [Security Sector Reform] model, with DDR [disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration] aimed at reducing size and scope of internal security forces
- Support SSR with training and equipment
- Begin transfer [of] security of oilfields and production facilities to Iraqi forces
- Provide international security guarantees
- Scope of tasks is likely to continue to demand large scale¹³⁸ forces.

“Long Term (2 – 10 years)

- Support SSR through training and presence on ground to effect gradual resumption of full responsibility for internal and external security by new regime
- Detention of key regime figures
- Exercises to underpin international security organisations.”

243. There was no estimate of the scale of forces required for the long term, but the paper included the “key judgement” that: “In the worst case, we need to be prepared for a substantial long-term commitment.”

244. The paper listed “sustainability” as one of a number of principles affecting campaign design. The post-conflict commitment needed to be “planned and agreed before we embark on military action”. The paper advised that “sustainment beyond initial SDR [Strategic Defence Review] assumptions” had not yet been factored into calculations, and that prolonged post-conflict deployment would be a “significant burden on defence resources”.

245. The paper also set out a list of actions required as “precursors” to shape the necessary conditions for whichever military option was selected. They included preparations “to support [a] new (post-conflict) regime, politically, militarily and economically”.

246. The SPG paper was revised five times between June and December. The second edition was issued on 11 July.

247. Between March and June 2002, the British Embassy Amman and the DIS in London continued to report on aspects of the political, social and economic situation in Iraq.

¹³⁸ Defined in the 1998 Strategic Defence Review as deployments of division size or equivalent.

248. The March update from the British Embassy Amman, issued at the beginning of April, reported a number of demonstrations in Baghdad against recent Israeli incursions into Palestinian territory.¹³⁹ The Embassy commented that:

“Iraqis no doubt are willing to demonstrate on this issue to vent anti-Western feeling and disgust at Israeli action against an Arab state. But they are unlikely to put their necks on the line by demonstrating out of turn. Support is also tempered by anger that so much Iraqi money is being given to the Palestinians instead of being used to address the problems at home ...”

249. The Embassy reported that there had been rumours Saddam Hussein was “threatening to use chemical weapons in Baghdad itself if necessary to quell any uprising. Stockpiling of food and enough fuel to get to the border is now standard amongst families in Baghdad.”

250. In the April update, the Embassy reported “mixed stories” of the mood on the street in Baghdad: “Some say that Iraqis are used to American threats and simply do not believe that the regime will ever fall. Others report a freer atmosphere in Baghdad, encouraged by the possibility of change at the end of the year.”¹⁴⁰

251. The May update contained some insights into both social and infrastructure issues.¹⁴¹ It highlighted Saddam Hussein’s “scare tactics” over what would happen in the event of a coalition invasion of Iraq and the possibility of Iraqi and regional instability thereafter: “This line plays on real fears of the unknown and of religious instability. For all his faults, Saddam does, for now, mean stability and peace.”

252. The May report also included a snapshot of communications infrastructure in Baghdad: a medical student had reported significant difficulty accessing the internet, both because of state controls on what could be viewed but also because of limited server access. Illegal access via satellite to both the internet and international news (copied onto CD and then sold) was becoming popular but was both expensive and risky.

253. On 6 June, the DIS assessed that, while there were undoubtedly divisions between Shia and Sunni groups in Iraq, these were not straightforward. The interaction between tribal allegiance, Arab identity, religious affiliation and political persuasion was highly complex.¹⁴² The relationship between some tribes was characterised by “general lawlessness and brigandry ... and occasional incidents of inter-tribal conflict”, leading the DIS to question whether the activities of southern tribal insurgents really represented a political challenge to Saddam Hussein’s regime rather than simply traditional tribal activity that had always resented central government rule.

¹³⁹ Teleletter Amman [junior official] to MED [junior official], 4 April 2002, ‘Iraq: March sitrep’.

¹⁴⁰ Teleletter Amman [junior official] to MED [junior official], 6 May 2002, ‘Iraq: April sitrep’.

¹⁴¹ Teleletter Amman [junior official] to MED [junior official], 9 June 2002, ‘Iraq: May sitrep’.

¹⁴² [Paper DIS, 6 June 2002, ‘The Iraqi tribes: their identity and role in internal security’](#).

254. On 19 June, Adm Boyce was informed that the US was ready for a UK input into US military planning.

255. Lt Gen Pigott warned that US military planning was taking place “in a policy void”.

256. General Richard Myers, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed to Adm Boyce on 19 June, that he had a “green light to set up the necessary mechanism for a UK input into Iraq [military] planning” (see Section 6.1).¹⁴³

257. On 26 June, in a paper summarising the state of US military planning, Major General Robert Fry, Deputy Chief of Joint Operations (Operations) (DCJO(O)), commented that, although US plans contained an implicit assumption that post-conflict nation-building was achievable, “this has not been addressed by US planning thus far”.¹⁴⁴

258. *Hard Lessons* stated that, by mid-2002:

“... differences [in Washington] among the three underlying policies for a post-war framework – rapid transfer to Iraqi control, military administration, or civilian transitional authority – had yet to be seriously addressed, much less resolved. Nor had officials reached consensus on the public order and reconstruction requirements for each scenario.”¹⁴⁵

259. A team from the MOD headed by Lt Gen Pigott visited the US to discuss military planning from 27 to 29 June.¹⁴⁶

260. Mr Peter Watkins, Mr Hoon’s Principal Private Secretary, reported the outcome to No.10 on 2 July: US planners’ assumed mission was “to conduct offensive operations in Iraq to overthrow the regime, destroy the WMD capability, and reduce the threat to the Iraqi people, the region and the US”. That was being discussed “in a policy void”: “the end state to be achieved after conflict has not been defined and the identified military task currently runs out after the overthrow of the regime”.

261. In early July, Mr Hoon and Mr Straw encouraged Mr Blair to try to influence US thinking on post-conflict objectives and the strategic framework for Iraq before President Bush was briefed on US military plans in August.

262. On 2 July, Mr Hoon proposed that Mr Blair convene a “small group of colleagues” specifically to consider “how best to get the US to address the strategic, as opposed to the narrowly military, dimension”.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Minute Shireff to PS/SofS [MOD], 27 June 2002, ‘Iraq Planning’.

¹⁴⁴ Minute Fry to MA/DCDS(C), 26 June 2002, ‘US Planning for possible military action against Iraq’.

¹⁴⁵ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

¹⁴⁶ [Minute Watkins to Manning, 2 July 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

¹⁴⁷ [Minute Watkins to Manning, 2 July 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

263. Mr Hoon also recommended that officials from the MOD, FCO and Cabinet Office “do some more homework urgently” to put Mr Blair in a better position to influence President Bush and Dr Rice before they were briefed on an updated CENTCOM plan during August.

264. Sir Kevin Tebbit advised Mr Hoon on 3 July that Ministers who had not been exposed to the issues over the previous three months might “run a mile” from the picture of “a military plan being worked up in a policy vacuum, with no strategic framework” and “no clearly defined end state”.¹⁴⁸ It might be that an Iraq campaign was unlikely to happen, but that was not certain. If it did happen, the UK might not be able to avoid being linked to a US military campaign. In those circumstances, it was not responsible for the UK “to let matters run without greater active engagement designed seriously to influence US conceptual as well as operational thinking”. The UK needed “some early careful engagement with the US policy machine, rather than just with the Pentagon”.

265. Mr Straw endorsed Mr Hoon’s proposals on 8 July.¹⁴⁹ He advised Mr Blair:

“We are all agreed that we must act to remove the threat posed by Iraqi WMD. If the US decide that to do so requires military action then the UK will want to support them. But this will be harder for us to do without serious US action to address some of the lacunae in their plan, notably:

- no strategic concept for the military plan and, in particular, no thought apparently given to ‘day after’ scenarios. Although other parts of the US Administration have done some work on such aspects, US military planning so far has taken place in a vacuum.”

266. Mr Straw added: “Regional states in particular will want assurance that the US has thought through the ‘day after’ questions before giving even tacit support.”

267. Mr Straw concluded:

“The key point is how to get through to the Americans that the success of any military operation against Iraq – and protection of our fundamental interests in the region – depends on devising in advance a coherent strategy which assesses the political and economic as well as military implications. They must also understand that we are serious about our conditions for UK involvement.”

268. The question of whether a satisfactory plan for post-conflict Iraq should have been a condition for UK involvement in military action is addressed later in this Section and in Section 6.5.

269. Mr Hoon’s proposal prompted Mr Nye to advise Mr Brown to write to the MOD to propose that all options for UK participation in military operations (including smaller and

¹⁴⁸ [Minute Tebbit to Secretary of State \[MOD\], 3 July 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

¹⁴⁹ [Letter Straw to Prime Minister, 8 July 2002, ‘Iraq: Contingency Planning’.](#)

more specialised options) should be costed.¹⁵⁰ That would enable the Government to assess how much it wished to devote to securing a degree of influence over US policy and operations, in terms of risk to UK troops, the opportunity cost of withdrawing from other operations, and the financial cost.

270. The Treasury told the Inquiry that Mr Brown decided not to write to the MOD.¹⁵¹

271. On 4 July, the JIC assessed the cohesion of the Iraqi regime.¹⁵² It acknowledged an absence of “detailed knowledge about the significance of particular motivators and alternative loyalties (eg to tribe versus State) for regime insiders”, but judged that “real loyalty and support for Saddam Hussein’s regime is confined to the top of the hierarchy”.

272. The JIC reported, as had earlier DIS papers, that Ba’ath Party membership was compulsory for anyone holding an official position and that the “extensive party network provides all-pervasive oversight of Iraqi society, with representatives in most Iraqi social, government and military organisations”. While the Sunni officer corps of the Iraqi military was likely to remain loyal, the Shia rank-and-file was less likely to, and mass desertions seemed likely.

273. On 11 July, Lt Gen Pigott sent a revised version of the SPG paper on UK military strategic thinking to a limited number of senior MOD addressees.¹⁵³

274. The only change to the material on post-conflict planning in the June edition of the paper was the addition of references to the “weakness” of US planning, which needed “much greater definition”.¹⁵⁴

275. The advice from the SPG was discussed in a restricted Chiefs of Staff meeting on 17 July, described in more detail in Section 6.1.¹⁵⁵ At the meeting, Adm Boyce concluded that “the UK needed greater visibility of US intent in a number of areas”.

276. In his discussions with President Bush at Crawford in April, Mr Blair set out a number of considerations that were subsequently described by others as “conditions”.

277. The Cabinet Office paper, ‘Iraq: Conditions for Military Action’, was issued on 19 July to inform Mr Blair’s meeting with Mr Straw, Mr Hoon, Lord Goldsmith (the Attorney General) and key officials on 23 July.

278. The paper advised that an analysis of the post-conflict phase was among the preparations needed to fulfil Mr Blair’s “conditions”.

¹⁵⁰ [Minute Nye to Bowman, 5 July 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

¹⁵¹ Email Treasury to Iraq Inquiry, 26 February 2010, [untitled].

¹⁵² [JIC Assessment, 4 July 2002, ‘Iraq: regime cohesion’.](#)

¹⁵³ [Minute DCDS\(C\) to MA/CDS, 11 July 2002, ‘UK Military Thinking on Iraq’ attaching Paper \[SPG\], 11 July 2002, ‘UK Military Strategic Thinking on Iraq’.](#)

¹⁵⁴ [Paper \[SPG\], 11 July 2002, ‘UK Military Strategic Thinking on Iraq’.](#)

¹⁵⁵ Minutes, 17 July 2002, Chiefs of Staff (Restricted) meeting.

279. Mr Jonathan Powell advised Mr Blair to avoid a repeat of the Afghanistan experience, where there had been a “scramble” to get post-conflict arrangements ready. He advised that post-conflict planning for Iraq needed to start immediately.

280. In his diaries, Mr Chris Mullin, Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee from 2001 to 2003, recorded that he raised post-conflict issues with Mr Blair at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) on 17 July.¹⁵⁶ Mr Mullin stated that the UK needed to be thinking about a number of issues, including what Saddam Hussein would do if cornered, the extent of the collateral damage and “how much help would we get from the Americans when it came to clearing up afterwards?”

281. Mr Mullin recorded that Mr Blair had replied that those questions needed to be answered:

“... if we can't answer them we won't do it.' He [Mr Blair] added that, contrary to what most people seemed to believe, the Americans had stayed engaged both in Kosovo and in Afghanistan.”

282. On 19 July, OD Sec issued ‘Iraq: Conditions for Military Action’.¹⁵⁷ The paper, described in more detail in Section 3.3, reminded Ministers that Mr Blair had discussed Iraq with President Bush at Crawford in April, where he had said the UK would support military action to bring about regime change, provided certain conditions were met.

283. The paper stated that the considerations and preparations that needed to be addressed to “fulfil the conditions” set out by Mr Blair included an analysis of whether the benefits of military action outweighed the risks, including whether a “post-war occupation of Iraq could lead to a protracted and costly nation-building exercise”. US military plans were “virtually silent” on that point and Washington could look to the UK to “share a disproportionate share of the burden”. Further work was needed on what form of government might replace Saddam Hussein’s regime and the timescale for identifying a successor.

284. Mr Powell made a similar point in a note for Mr Blair on 19 July, in which he suggested points to put in writing to President Bush. Those included:

“... we need a plan for the day after. Loya Jirga¹⁵⁸ and peacekeeping in Afghanistan have worked well but we had to scramble to get them ready in time. We need to be working on this now for Iraq ...”¹⁵⁹

285. Sir Kevin Tebbit visited Washington from 17 to 20 July for talks with senior US officials, including Mr Paul Wolfowitz (Deputy Secretary of Defense), Mr Stephen Hadley

¹⁵⁶ Mullin C. *A View from the Foothills: The Diaries of Chris Mullin*. Profile Books, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ [Paper Cabinet Office, 19 July 2002, 'Iraq: Conditions for Military Action'](#).

¹⁵⁸ A grand assembly of elders in Afghanistan or Pashtun areas of Pakistan.

¹⁵⁹ [Minute Powell to Prime Minister, 19 July 2002, 'Iraq'](#).

(Deputy National Security Advisor), Mr Richard Armitage (Deputy Secretary of State) and Mr Frank Miller (NSC Senior Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control).¹⁶⁰

286. The British Embassy reported that Sir Kevin emphasised the need for clarity on aftermath management and that Mr Wolfowitz, although he endorsed Sir Kevin's view, suggested that aftermath management was in many ways an easier issue than military planning.

287. Mr Wolfowitz restated that position in public later in the year.¹⁶¹

288. On his return, Sir Kevin Tebbit informed No.10 of growing US resolve on aftermath management and widespread recognition in Washington that the US would remain in Iraq for several years after military intervention. At the same time, he reported "an air of unreality, given the enormity of what is envisaged and the absence of planning detail or policy framework to credibly make it happen".¹⁶²

289. On 23 July, Mr Blair discussed Iraq with Mr Straw, Mr Hoon, Lord Goldsmith, Sir Richard Wilson, Adm Boyce, Sir Richard Dearlove, Sir Francis Richards (Head of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ)), Mr Scarlett, Mr Powell, Baroness Morgan (No.10 Director of Political and Government Relations), Mr Campbell and Sir David Manning (see Section 3.3).¹⁶³

290. Sir David Manning's annotated agenda for Mr Blair indicated that there would be a lot of ground to cover in a short time. It made no reference to post-conflict issues.¹⁶⁴

291. Mr Rycroft's record of the meeting said that there had been "little discussion in Washington of the aftermath" and that Mr Blair's meeting had concluded that the UK needed a fuller picture of US planning before taking any firm decisions on its own commitment.¹⁶⁵

292. In a note commissioning further work from the FCO, MOD and Cabinet Office, Mr Rycroft recorded that Adm Boyce would send Mr Blair "full details of the proposed military campaign and options for a UK contribution".¹⁶⁶ No work was commissioned on post-conflict issues.

293. Maj Gen Fry raised post-conflict issues in a minute to Lt Gen Pigott on 25 July.¹⁶⁷ Maj Gen Fry commented that work on "post-operational" effects had focused so far

¹⁶⁰ Telegram 970 Washington to FCO London, 20 July 2002, 'Iraq: Sir K Tebbit's Visit to Washington, 18-19 July'.

¹⁶¹ US Department of Defense News Transcript, 18 December 2002, *Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with Tom Ricks, Washington Post*.

¹⁶² Letter Tebbit to Manning, 22 July 2002, 'Iraq'.

¹⁶³ [Minute Rycroft to Manning, 23 July 2002, 'Iraq: Prime Minister's Meeting, 23 July'](#).

¹⁶⁴ [Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 22 July 2002, 'Iraq Meeting: 23 July: Annotated Agenda'](#).

¹⁶⁵ [Minute Rycroft to Manning, 23 July 2002, 'Iraq: Prime Minister's Meeting, 23 July'](#).

¹⁶⁶ [Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 23 July 2002, 'Iraq: Prime Minister's Meeting, 23 July: follow up'](#).

¹⁶⁷ Minute Fry to MA/DCDS(C), 25 July 2002, 'Developing Work on UK Options for Operations Against Iraq.'

on the consequences for UK force-regeneration: “what is beginning to emerge in the development of our work is the need for a possible post-conflict stabilisation force in order to meet the grand strategic end state of a new acceptable government”.

294. The concept of a stabilisation force does not re-emerge in the papers seen by the Inquiry until the second half of December.

295. Mr Watkins sent Mr Rycroft MOD advice on three options for a UK contribution to US-led military operations in Iraq on 26 July.¹⁶⁸ Mr Watkins reported that US “thinking about dealing with the aftermath of a successful attack remains sketchy”.

296. The three options identified by the MOD, known as Packages 1, 2 and 3, made no explicit reference to possible post-conflict commitments. They remained the broad framework for discussions until the end of 2002.

297. Mr Rycroft commented to Mr Blair:

“The military are not yet ready to make a recommendation on which if any of the three options to go for. Nor can they yet judge whether the US have a winning concept. They are continuing to work with the US military. You do not need to take decisions yet.”¹⁶⁹

298. Mr Straw spoke to Mr Colin Powell, US Secretary of State, on 26 July. Reporting the outcome to Mr Blair, he explained that the “day after” was a shared anxiety: military action would work, but the US and UK would need “an army of occupation for many years afterwards. That was the only way. The dissidents would not run a government.”¹⁷⁰

299. As a contingency for a possible follow-up visit to the US by Mr Straw, Mr Ricketts commissioned briefing from Mr Chaplin on a number of issues, including “Prospects for post-war stability” on 30 July.¹⁷¹ Questions for Mr Chaplin to consider included:

- was the US doing “serious work on how to hold Iraq together”?
- was the US military prepared to stay on in the numbers needed?
- where would an Iraqi Karzai¹⁷² emerge from?
- would the UN lead reconstruction and nation-building?

300. Mr Chaplin provided answers to some of those questions in early September.

301. In his address to a CENTCOM conference on 2 August, described in more detail in Section 6.1, Major General David Wilson, Senior British Military Adviser (SBMA) at CENTCOM, made a number of observations about the US military plan, including that:

¹⁶⁸ [Letter Watkins to Rycroft, 26 July 2002, 'Iraq'](#).

¹⁶⁹ Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 31 July 2002, 'Iraq: Background Papers'.

¹⁷⁰ Letter Straw to Blair, 26 July 2002, 'Iraq'.

¹⁷¹ [Minute Ricketts to Chaplin, 30 July 2002, 'Iraq'](#).

¹⁷² Mr Hamid Karzai, Chairman of the Afghan Interim Administration, 2001-2002.

“it would be helpful for my colleagues in London to have a better feel for the ‘post-conflict’ thinking and aftermath management”.¹⁷³ The experience of Afghanistan had shown:

“... that it is every bit as important to win the peace as it is to win the war. That will be even truer in Iraq. I would not wish to over state the case, but it is undoubtedly true that both UK politicians and my military colleagues would like to know what we are getting ourselves into in the longer term.”

302. Mr Blair raised post-conflict issues with President Bush at the end of July.

303. Mr Blair made clear that his own thinking on what might follow Saddam Hussein was still fluid.

304. Mr Blair sent a personal Note to President Bush on 28 July.¹⁷⁴ The ‘Note on Iraq’, which is addressed in detail in Section 3.3, stated that removing Saddam Hussein was the right thing to do, but that establishing a new regime would take time. The US and UK would need to commit to Iraq for the long term and, without coalition partners, there was a possibility the unintended consequences of removing Saddam Hussein would persist beyond the military phase. Part of the message to win round potential partners might be that regime change must protect Iraq’s territorial integrity and provide security. That might involve another key military figure, but should lead in time to a democratic Iraq, governed by the people. Mr Blair would need advice on whether that approach was feasible, but just swapping one dictator for another seemed inconsistent with US and UK values.

305. Sir David Manning delivered the ‘Note on Iraq’ to Dr Rice on 29 July.¹⁷⁵

306. Sir David told the Inquiry that he had a “pre-meeting” with Mr Armitage.¹⁷⁶ During that meeting, Mr Armitage said that the US was thinking through “day after” scenarios and that “it was better to be right than to hurry”.¹⁷⁷

307. The record of Mr Blair’s conversation with President Bush on 31 July included a brief reference to post-conflict Iraq: that focusing on the end state of a democratic Iraq would give the US and UK the moral high ground.¹⁷⁸

308. In his statement to the Inquiry, Mr Blair explained:

“I did ask ... President Bush in July 2002 whether it might be feasible to install a military leader then move to democracy in Iraq. I cannot recall specifically calling for formal advice, but the subject of what sort of Iraq we wanted to create was part

¹⁷³ Paper Wilson, [undated], ‘CENTCOM Iraq Planning – A UK Perspective’.

¹⁷⁴ [Note Blair \[to Bush\], 28 July 2002, ‘Note on Iraq’.](#)

¹⁷⁵ Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 31 July 2002, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

¹⁷⁶ Public hearing, 30 November 2009, page 17.

¹⁷⁷ Minute Rycroft to Manning, 31 July 2002, ‘Iraq: Armitage’.

¹⁷⁸ Minute Rycroft to Manning, 31 July 2002, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Bush, 31 July’.

of a perpetual discussion, interaction with various Iraqi opposition groups and the analysis of the country set out in the various FCO papers.”¹⁷⁹

309. On 12 September, Sir David Manning commissioned advice from the FCO on what a post-Saddam Hussein government might look like.¹⁸⁰

310. At his request, Mr Blair received a pack of reading material on Iraq at the beginning of August 2002, including on the extent of economic degradation in Iraq since 1991 and the complex interaction between tribal allegiance, ethnic identity, religious affiliation and political persuasion.

311. In late July, Mr Blair asked his staff to assemble a pack of “summer reading material” on Iraq.¹⁸¹

312. The material supplied by the FCO, DIS and Mr Scarlett included the DIS papers on removing Saddam Hussein, Iraq’s infrastructure, the role of the Ba’ath Party and the role of Iraq’s tribes in internal security produced earlier in the year.

313. Mr Scarlett sent Mr Blair an assessment of the cohesiveness of the Iraqi regime, in which he stated:

“Conditions inside Iraq are better now than they were immediately before the start of the Oil-for-Food (OFF) programme in late 1996. OFF rations guarantee that at least basic needs are met ... The ‘winners’ under sanctions are those with a hand in sanctions-busting trade ... The greatest losers under sanctions have been the middle classes ... The poorer, rural communities in the south may have suffered less. The agricultural economy may actually have benefited from the rise in prices ...”¹⁸²

314. Mr Scarlett advised that the Kurds “would probably demand a reversal of the ‘Arabisation’ of the north” after Saddam Hussein’s departure, leading to “a risk of inter-ethnic fighting and the expulsion of the Arab community from areas of the north”.

315. A JIC Assessment of 5 August on the attitudes of regional states to military action against Iraq stated that the US needed to convince them of its “determination and ability to remove Saddam Hussein quickly”, and to offer “credible plans for the aftermath”.

316. The Assessment also stated that, after a US attack began, “Iran would probably boost its support for Shia groups working against Saddam”.

¹⁷⁹ Statement, 14 January 2011, pages 15-16.

¹⁸⁰ Letter Manning to McDonald, 12 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.

¹⁸¹ Minute Rycroft to Blair, 31 July 2002, ‘Iraq: background papers’; Minute Scarlett to Powell, 1 August 2002, ‘Iraq: classified reading material’.

¹⁸² [Minute Scarlett to Manning, 31 July 2002, ‘The Iraqi regime: risks and threats’.](#)

317. On 5 August, at the request of the MOD, the JIC reviewed the likely attitude of regional states to military action against Iraq.¹⁸³ The JIC assessed that:

“Most regional governments would be happy to see Saddam’s demise. But they would be likely to have profound misgivings about a campaign without a well-constructed plan for a new Iraq. All agree that Iraq’s territorial integrity must be maintained. But there are differing regional concerns about the place of the Kurds and Shia in any new regime, the type of government and its relationship with the West.”

318. After a US attack began, “Iran would probably boost its support for Shia groups working against Saddam”. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) “would be likely to work directly to undermine US influence, eg by manipulating Iraqi groups through propaganda and the selective provision of money and arms, although it would not provoke anything that would provoke US military retaliation”.

319. The JIC concluded that: “The US must continue to convince regional governments of its determination and ability to remove Saddam quickly and offer credible plans for the aftermath.”

320. The Pigott Group discussed US and UK military planning on 8 August.¹⁸⁴ Although the MOD judged that progress had been made towards “a winning military concept”, the Group expressed concern at the “absence of a clear strategy for the morning after”.

321. The MOD reported on 12 August that President Bush had authorised preparatory military activities.

322. The British Embassy Washington described the “day after” as the “most vexed” issue.

323. Mr Straw warned Secretary Powell of the dangers of introducing democracy to a country with no democratic tradition.

324. A letter from Mr Hoon’s Private Office to No.10 on 12 August reported that President Bush had authorised preparatory military activities costing \$1bn and that an inter-agency process in Washington had been launched.¹⁸⁵

325. Mr Tony Brenton, Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy Washington, advised Mr Straw’s Private Office on 15 August that:

“Despite repeated affirmations that no decisions have yet been taken, there is a general assumption that the [US] Administration is moving towards military action to

¹⁸³ JIC Assessment, 5 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Regional Attitudes and Impact of Military Action’.

¹⁸⁴ Minute Drummond to McKane, 8 August 2002, ‘Iraq’.

¹⁸⁵ Letter Davies to Wechsberg, 12 August 2002, ‘Iraq: US contingency planning’.

remove Saddam ... The private language of the vast majority of those to whom we speak is 'when rather than if'.

...

"But the most vexed issue is probably the 'day after' question – what does the US do with a conquered Iraq. [Mr William] Burns [State Department Assistant Secretary Near East] has told me that they are increasingly thinking in terms of some form of democracy, but recognised that this would need to be propped up by a long term international (i.e. almost certainly US) security presence. They have of course been working hard on their contacts with the Iraqi opposition ... to prepare for this eventuality. However the opposition have made clear they want to be in charge – this should not be a 'foreign invasion'. And some Administration contacts are realistic about the democracy objective – the nature of the opposition groups and the political culture of Iraq; and the difficulty of justifying pursuing the conflict if a benign dictator overthrew Saddam."¹⁸⁶

326. Mr Brenton's letter was seen by Mr Blair before a telephone call between Mr Blair and Mr Straw on 19 August in preparation for Mr Straw's meeting with Secretary Powell.¹⁸⁷

327. On 19 August, Dr Michael Williams, Mr Straw's Special Adviser, sent Mr Straw a paper on the lessons for Iraq of other US military interventions since 1945.¹⁸⁸ Dr Williams advised that:

"... a UN mandate will be essential for post-war Iraq. It will simply not be possible for the US to do this alone as it found out after UK intervention in Afghanistan. Experience elsewhere – in Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor – has underlined the necessity of the UN as the mechanism indispensable for the marshalling of global, political and economic support in the context of post-war construction."

328. At Mr Straw's request, Dr Williams' paper was copied to Sir Michael Jay and Sir David Manning.¹⁸⁹

329. On 20 August, Mr Straw visited the US for talks on Iraq with Secretary Powell (see Section 3.4).¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ [Letter Brenton to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 15 August 2002, 'Iraq'](#).

¹⁸⁷ Manuscript comment Wechsberg, 19 August 2002, on Letter Brenton to Private Secretary [FCO], 15 August 2002, 'Iraq'.

¹⁸⁸ [Minute Williams to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 19 August 2002, 'The United States and Iraq: Historical Parallels'](#).

¹⁸⁹ [Manuscript comment McDonald on Minute Williams to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 19 August 2002, 'The United States and Iraq: Historical Parallels'](#).

¹⁹⁰ [Letter McDonald to Manning, 21 August 2002, 'Foreign Secretary's Visit to the US, 20 August 2002'](#).

330. Mr Straw told Secretary Powell that he had discussed the position with Mr Blair the previous day. Mr Straw explained that:

“The key issue for the Prime Minister was whether the US wanted an international coalition or not. The US could go it alone if they wanted that, they only had to tell us.”

331. Mr Straw’s view was:

“... that the case for an international coalition was overwhelming: first for basing and access, and then for what happened after getting rid of Saddam. But also, especially, if things went wrong. In such circumstances the US would need the international community at the scene of the crime ...”

332. Commenting on the “day after”, Mr Straw pointed out that Iraq had been an artificial creation of the UK in 1921. Iraq had “no experience of democracy and democracy could pull it apart”.

333. Secretary Powell commented that: “Some of his colleagues did not want UN involvement in any shape: it might frustrate their purpose.”

334. The record of the discussion was not to be seen by anyone other than Sir David Manning and Mr Blair.

335. On 30 August, Mr Blair set out his position on Iraq in a note to No.10 officials.¹⁹¹ He stated that the basic strategy to deal with those arguing against any action should be to answer their questions and, in doing so, to set Iraq in a bigger context. That included working on a post-Saddam Hussein Iraqi regime:

“The conundrum is: if it is merely changing Saddam for another military dictator, that hardly elicits support from the rest of Iraq, especially the Shia majority, and is in any event, not in line with our principles; on the other hand, if the whole nature of the regime changes, the Sunni minority in power may be less tempted to fold and acquiesce in Saddam’s removal. But there are ways through this.”

336. Mr Blair’s note is addressed in more detail in Section 3.4.

The DFID Iraq programme

337. In August 2002, DFID completed a review of its programme in northern Iraq.

338. The review, which was not sent outside DFID, drew on a range of sources to present as clear a picture as possible of the humanitarian situation in northern Iraq.

¹⁹¹ [Note Blair \[to No.10 officials\], 30 August 2002, \[extract ‘Iraq’\].](#)

339. The authors stated that they were aware of MOD contingency planning for military action against Iraq, but not of its extent.

340. DFID was not involved in cross-Whitehall planning on Iraq until September 2002.

341. During the first half of 2002, DFID involvement in Whitehall discussion of Iraq was limited to the humanitarian impact of the proposed Goods Review List (GRL), addressed in more detail in Section 3.2. The GRL was adopted in May 2002 and introduced fast track procedures for the export to Iraq of all goods other than WMD- and military-related items of concern.¹⁹² DFID did not participate in discussion of post-conflict issues or wider Iraq strategy.

342. On 10 May, DFID officials recommended to Ms Clare Short, International Development Secretary, that the department review its existing humanitarian programme for Iraq to inform its strategy for the next three years.¹⁹³

343. In their advice of 10 May, officials described the purpose of DFID's existing (2002/03) programme for Iraq, as being: "to improve the provision of effective humanitarian support by UN agencies and NGOs for the poor affected by internal and regional conflict in Iraq".

344. Officials explained that there were problems assessing the humanitarian situation in Iraq: "The Gol's [Government of Iraq's] strict censorship policy of key data has inhibited comprehensive analyses from other [non-UN] sources ... UN reports offer the most reliable means of reaching whatever information is available." Although DFID had conducted "informal consultations" with UN agencies, those agencies respected Iraqi Government conditions on sharing information.

345. The paper stated that, despite the shortage of reliable survey evidence assessing human development in Iraq, there was a consensus in the international development community that the situation had "deteriorated severely" since 1990. UN/Government of Iraq joint sectoral surveys showed a "general deterioration" in areas such as health, nutrition, and child and maternal mortality. UNICEF assessed that, while the food ration provided under OFF had arrested the rate of decline in the humanitarian situation, it had not reversed it, and interference by the Iraqi Government meant that the benefits had not been evenly distributed across Iraq. UNICEF was also concerned that there was a high level of dependency on the food ration.

¹⁹² [Minute DFID \[junior official\] to Private Secretary \[DFID\], 10 May 2002, 'Proposed humanitarian activities 2002/03'.](#)

¹⁹³ [Minute Western Asia Department \[junior official\] to Private Secretary \[DFID\], 10 May 2002, 'Proposed humanitarian activities 2002/03' attaching Paper Western Asia Department, May 2002, 'Iraq – Humanitarian Assistance Programme for 2002/03'.](#)

The UN Oil-for-Food programme

The UN Oil-for-Food (OFF) programme was established by resolution 986 in April 1995. Implementation began in May 1996 after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the UN and the Iraqi Government.¹⁹⁴

The programme allowed Iraq to export its oil and use a portion of the proceeds to buy humanitarian supplies.¹⁹⁵ Revenue from the oil sales was allocated to different tasks:

- 72 percent for humanitarian supplies;
- 25 percent for the UN compensation fund for Kuwait;
- 2.2 percent for the UN's OFF administration costs;
- 0.8 percent for the UN's Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC).

Funds allocated for humanitarian supplies were used in accordance with a distribution plan approved by the UN.

The Iraqi Government implemented OFF in central and southern Iraq, with the UN in an observer role. UN agencies implemented OFF in northern Iraq, either directly or through contractors and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Nine UN agencies operated in Iraq under the OFF: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); the UN Settlements Programme (HABITAT); the International Telecommunications Union (ITU); the UN Development Programme (UNDP); the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF); the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS); the World Food Programme (WFP); and the World Health Organization (WHO).

By 2002, OFF had been expanded to include infrastructure rehabilitation and 24 "sectors", including health, electricity, education, water and sanitation, and oil industry parts and spares.¹⁹⁶

The UN published reports on its activities under OFF, both on the UN Office of the Iraq Programme (UNOIP) website¹⁹⁷ and on individual agency websites.¹⁹⁸

The UN Secretary-General provided regular reports on the performance of the programme to the Security Council.¹⁹⁹

346. According to the DFID report, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) assessed that about half of Iraq's schools were physically unsafe and unfit for teaching, and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) estimated that around a third of six-year-olds had no access to basic education. Adult literacy levels were estimated to have fallen from 89 percent in 1985 to 57 percent in 1997, and to have continued to decline thereafter. UNICEF also reported that infant and child mortality levels in central and southern Iraq

¹⁹⁴ UN Office of the Iraq Programme, *About the Programme: Oil-for-Food*.

¹⁹⁵ [Paper DFID, 11 October 2002, 'Iraq: Potential Humanitarian Implications'](#).

¹⁹⁶ UN Office of the Iraq Programme, *About the Programme: Oil-for-Food*.

¹⁹⁷ UN Office of the Iraq Programme, *Oil-for-Food*.

¹⁹⁸ UNICEF.org.

¹⁹⁹ Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraphs 7 and 8 of Security Council resolution 1409 (2002).

had increased by up to 160 percent since 1990, placing Iraq bottom of 188 countries assessed. Malnutrition problems were also on the increase. Problems were less acute in northern Iraq.

347. On 1 August, the Cabinet Office reported to Sir David Manning that Ms Short had agreed proposals to make the DFID bilateral programme in Iraq “more structured”.²⁰⁰ It also reported that a review of DFID activity in Iraq was under way, but that the focus of officials’ concern was the need to improve the UK’s understanding of the existing humanitarian situation in Iraq.

348. The first product of DFID’s review of its Iraq programme, the ‘Northern Iraq Desktop Review’, was circulated within DFID on 8 August.²⁰¹ The Inquiry has seen no evidence that it was copied outside the department.

349. The ‘Desktop Review’ drew on a combination of DFID papers and consultations with UN agencies, NGOs and western European donor countries. It did not take account of UK military planning. The reviewers commented: “Although we are aware that the ... MOD ... is carrying out contingency planning for military action against Iraq, the extent of this planning is not known.”

350. Among their conclusions, the DFID reviewers stated that:

- OFF had significantly improved the humanitarian situation in northern Iraq, but it could be argued that it “had served to undermine the viability of local economic initiatives and has been detrimental to coping mechanisms, contributing to a high degree of vulnerability now and for the foreseeable future”.
- 60 percent of the population was dependent on the OFF food basket and “highly vulnerable to external shocks”.
- Many civil servants had resorted to alternative sources of income or left the country in order to secure a stable income.
- Development projects aimed at building livelihoods were “significantly hampered” by the scale of OFF and its destructive effect on local markets, particularly in the agricultural sector.

351. In her memoir, Ms Short explained that:

“DFID had been involved over many years in supporting efforts to ease Iraqi suffering. It was easier to work in the north but we had some projects in central Iraq and were well aware of how bad things were.”²⁰²

352. The Inquiry asked Sir William Patey what assessments the UK Government had made of the humanitarian situation in Iraq before 2003 and in particular the effect of sanctions. Sir William explained that the UK had great difficulty in establishing whether

²⁰⁰ Minute Dodd to Manning, 1 August 2002, ‘Iraq’.

²⁰¹ [Minute CHAD Operations Team \[junior official\] to \[DFID junior official\], 8 August 2002, ‘Northern Iraq Desktop Review and Background Briefing Document’ attaching Paper, Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, July 2002, ‘Northern Iraq Desktop Review and Background Briefing Document’.](#)

²⁰² Short C. *An Honourable Deception: New Labour, Iraq and the Misuse of Power*. The Free Press, 2004.

allegations made by Saddam Hussein's regime that sanctions were damaging the people of Iraq were true.²⁰³ The UK had tried to get the World Health Organization (WHO) into Iraq to assess the situation, but Saddam Hussein had refused permission. Sir William judged that:

“... it was in Iraq's interest not to have a reasonable assessment because, obviously, if the picture was left to them to tell, they would exploit that picture. So there wasn't a good assessment, mainly because UN agencies couldn't get in to do it, and the claims that were coming out of Iraq were pretty spurious at best.”

353. Military and humanitarian planning began to converge in September, with DFID's partial integration into Whitehall's reorganised Iraq planning machinery. That change was reflected in a second DFID review, described later in this Section, which was produced in October and included material on the possible impact of military action on central and southern Iraq.²⁰⁴

UK and US organisational changes

354. President Bush signed the US national security document setting out US goals, objectives and strategy for Iraq on 29 August 2002.

355. The document stated that the US was prepared to play a sustained role in the reconstruction of post-Saddam Hussein Iraq with contributions from and the participation of the international community.

356. On 29 August 2002, President Bush signed the national security document 'Iraq: Goals, Objectives, Strategy'.²⁰⁵ The stated goal of the US was to free Iraq in order to:

- eliminate WMD;
- end Iraqi threats to its neighbours;
- stop the Iraqi government tyrannising its own people;
- cut Iraqi links to terrorism; and
- “[l]iberate the Iraqi people from tyranny and assist them in creating a society based on moderation, pluralism and democracy.”²⁰⁶

357. The document stated that the US was “prepared to play a sustained role in the reconstruction of post-Saddam Iraq with contribution from and participation of the international community”, and that it would work closely with the Iraqi opposition to liberate and build a new Iraq.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Public hearing, 24 November 2009, pages 164-165.

²⁰⁴ Paper Conflict & Humanitarian Affairs Department, October 2002, 'Central/southern Iraq humanitarian situation analysis'.

²⁰⁵ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

²⁰⁶ Feith DJ. *War and Decision*. Harper, 2008.

²⁰⁷ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

358. A revised version, modified to reflect developments in US thinking on post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, was sent to Principals by Dr Rice on 29 October. The document, published in *War and Decision*, the memoir of Mr Douglas Feith, US Under Secretary of Defense for Policy 2001-2005, stated the need to:

“Demonstrate that the US and Coalition partners are prepared to play a sustained role in providing security, humanitarian assistance, and reconstruction aid in support of this vision ...”²⁰⁸

359. The document was not shown to the UK until 31 January 2003 (see Section 6.5).

360. The US made a number of organisational changes to implement the goals approved by President Bush on 29 August.

361. *Hard Lessons* records that the US took a number of steps to help implement the goals approved by President Bush on 29 August:

- The Joint Staff in the Pentagon instructed CENTCOM to start planning to administer Iraq for an interim period after an invasion.
- Mr Feith enlarged the office in the Pentagon responsible for policy planning in Iraq in a new Office of Special Plans.
- Dr Rice established an NSC Executive Steering Group on Iraq, chaired by Mr Miller, to “jump-start” post-conflict planning across the US government.
- Inter-agency working groups responsible for energy, diplomacy, global communications and humanitarian issues were established under the umbrella of the Executive Steering Group.²⁰⁹

362. The inter-agency Humanitarian Working Group was set up in September.²¹⁰ It was headed by Mr Elliot Abrams, NSC Senior Director for Democracy, Human Rights and International Organizations, and Mr Robin Cleveland, Associate Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget. Membership included representatives of the Joint Staff and the Departments of Defense, State, Treasury, Justice and Commerce, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). It was USAID’s first formal involvement in the Iraq planning process.

363. The Humanitarian Working Group focused on the response to large-scale humanitarian contingencies, including the possible use of WMD by Saddam Hussein. It also considered the administration of revenue generated under OFF, liaised with the international aid community to identify critical civilian infrastructure for a military “no-strike” list and began to assess the demands of post-war reconstruction.

²⁰⁸ Feith DJ. *War and Decision*. Harper, 2008.

²⁰⁹ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

²¹⁰ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

364. *Hard Lessons* explained that the Working Group's task was hampered by the absence of detailed assessments of the state of Iraq's economy and infrastructure, and poor integration with other planning:

"The few detailed reports reviewed by the Working Group suggested that sanctions had significantly limited Iraq's recovery from the first Gulf War ... In light of Iraq's substantial oil wealth, however, the scope of expected infrastructure repairs seemed manageable. The Group assumed that long-term repairs could be undertaken and funded by the Iraqis.

"With military, political and democratization plans developed out of sight of the Humanitarian Working Group, its members could consider only in general terms how reconstruction might help legitimize a new Iraqi state. The Group asked for but never received a briefing on how public-order requirements would be met ... The Defense Department asserted that it had plans for post-war security well in hand ..."

365. The UK Government also made organisational changes.

366. Officials began to discuss changes to the Government's machinery for Iraq policy and planning in June 2002.

367. Recommendations to improve Whitehall co-ordination at official and Ministerial level were put to Mr Blair in mid-September.

368. At official level, the cross-Whitehall Ad Hoc Group on Iraq (AHGI) met for the first time on 20 September. It became the principal forum for co-ordination of planning and preparation for a post-Saddam Hussein or post-conflict Iraq.

369. Mr Blair put on hold proposals for the creation of a separate Ministerial Group.

370. On 26 June, Mr Webb informed Mr Hoon's office that MOD officials were encouraging the Cabinet Office to supplement the Pigott Group with a broader body involving a wider range of departments with a policy interest in Iraq and the region.²¹¹

371. Those ideas began to take shape on 8 August, when Mr Jim Drummond, Assistant Head (Foreign Affairs) OD Sec, informed Mr McKane that he had spoken to Sir David Manning about possible changes to Whitehall structures.²¹² Mr Drummond explained that one consequence of existing Whitehall mechanisms for discussing Iraq, including in particular the Pigott Group's focus on military matters, was that "we are focusing a lot on military aspects and less on the alliance building, morning after, unintended consequences etc. Come September there may be a case for a tighter grip from the Centre."

²¹¹ Minute Webb to PS/Secretary of State [MOD], 26 June 2002, 'Iraq'.

²¹² Minute Drummond to McKane, 8 August 2002, 'Iraq'.

372. Mr Drummond raised the issue with Sir David Manning again on 30 August.²¹³ He recalled that Sir David had commented earlier in the summer that it was too soon to think about management of the unintended consequences of conflict, but that the issue would probably need to be discussed in the autumn.

373. Mr Drummond enclosed a “skeleton” paper on the subject prepared by a Cabinet Office junior official and suggested meeting to discuss the paper and Whitehall machinery for Iraq at the same time.

374. The Cabinet Office paper on unintended consequences focused on the possible impact of war on UK interests and on countries in the region, rather than on post-conflict Iraq.

375. The FCO produced a more substantial paper on the unintended consequences of conflict for the region and beyond on 20 September.²¹⁴ The paper is described later in this Section.

376. Also attached to Mr Drummond’s minute was a “list of headings for future work” on unintended consequences, which included: “avoiding fragmentation of a failed state in Iraq”.

377. Sir David Manning replied to Mr Drummond: “Let us discuss p[lea]se with Tom McKane before he goes. We need to do this work: there is a question about timing.”²¹⁵

378. Mr McKane sent Sir David Manning a note on possible machinery “for managing Iraq” on 2 September.²¹⁶ He recalled that he and Sir David had already agreed that, “following the pattern of Afghanistan”, there should be two groups of officials; an “inner group” chaired by Sir David (or Mr Desmond Bowen who would shortly be taking over from Mr McKane as Sir David’s Deputy in OD Sec) and a more junior “wider group”, chaired by Mr Bowen or Mr Drummond.

379. Mr McKane proposed that the inner group “should begin work once you [Sir David Manning] decide that the time is right”. It would comprise the Chair of the JIC or Chief of the Assessments Staff, the FCO Middle East Director, the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Commitments) (DCDS(C)) and/or Mr Ian Lee (MOD Director General Operational Policy (DG OpPol)), and representatives of all three Intelligence Agencies and the Home Office. Mr McKane asked whether it should also include the DIS and a No.10 information specialist. He proposed that the wider group “should meet periodically from now on and, inter alia, address the issues set out in Jim Drummond’s minute of 30 August”.

²¹³ [Minute Drummond to Manning, 30 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Unintended Consequences’ attaching Note Cabinet Office, 30 August 2002, ‘Outline of a Paper: Iraq: Managing the Unintended Consequences’ and Paper Cabinet Office, 28 August 2002, ‘Unintended Consequences of War on Iraq: Skeleton of Paper’.](#)

²¹⁴ Paper Directorate for Strategy and Innovation, [undated], ‘Iraq – Consequences of Conflict for the Region and Beyond’.

²¹⁵ [Manuscript comment Manning on Minute Drummond to Manning, 30 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Unintended Consequences’.](#)

²¹⁶ [Minute McKane to Manning, 2 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

380. Mr McKane wrote that “we also need to consider the composition of a Ministerial Group”. He recommended the creation of a separate Ad Hoc Sub-Committee of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (DOP), chaired by the Prime Minister, with the participation of the Foreign and Defence Secretaries and the Intelligence Chiefs. DOP “could meet less frequently and be the means of formalising decisions”. Mr McKane also suggested that Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General, be invited “to be in attendance at both these groups, as required” and Mr Robin Cook, the Leader of the House, “be invited to attend DOP”.

381. Sir David Manning put the proposals to Mr Blair on 12 September.²¹⁷ At official level, Sir David recommended that he or Mr Bowen would chair an inner group, to include the JIC, FCO, MOD, SIS, Security Service, GCHQ, Home Office and Sir David Omand, the Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary.

382. A wider group, chaired by OD Sec, would be “tasked as necessary by the inner group”.²¹⁸ The additional members would include DFID, the Metropolitan Police, the Treasury, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and media specialists from No.10 and the FCO.

383. In his advice to Mr Blair, Sir David Manning adjusted Mr McKane’s proposal for a Ministerial Group. He suggested:

“If we follow the Afghan precedent, we would set up an Ad Hoc Group (perhaps technically a Sub-Committee of DOP under your chairmanship) to include Jack [Straw], Geoff [Hoon], CDS [Adm Boyce], C [Sir Richard Dearlove] and No.10. The idea would be to keep it tight with meetings in the Den. If we move to military action, we would, of course, need to widen this to include John Prescott [the Deputy Prime Minister], David Blunkett [the Home Secretary] and perhaps others.

“This leaves the question of what to do about the Attorney. I assume that you would not want him to attend your Ad Hoc Group except by invitation on specific occasions.”

384. Ms Clare Short, the International Development Secretary, was not on Sir David’s list of recommended participants.

385. Mr Blair wrote on Sir David Manning’s advice: “Yes but we can wait before setting up a key Cabinet Group.”²¹⁹

386. Mr Jonathan Powell, Mr Blair’s Chief of Staff, instructed Sir David Manning: “to progress official groups and leave Minist[eria]l groups for now”.²²⁰

387. Mr Blair’s decision not to establish a Ministerial Group in September 2002, in the face of advice to the contrary from officials, limited the opportunities for

²¹⁷ [Minute Manning to PM, 12 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

²¹⁸ [Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 12 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

²¹⁹ [Manuscript comment \[unattributed\] on Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 12 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

²²⁰ [Manuscript comment Powell on Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 12 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

Ministerial consideration, challenge and direction of post-conflict planning and preparation.

388. Asked by the Inquiry whether having more stress testing by very senior Ministers not directly involved with Iraq issues might have helped to highlight some of the weaknesses in areas such as post-conflict planning, Mr Blair replied:

“... in one sense I would like to say ‘yes’, because it would be in a way an easy enough concession to make. My frank belief is it would not have made a great deal of difference, no. The committee meetings that we had, small ‘a’, small ‘h’, ad hoc meetings, I think there were 28 of them, 14 of which were minuted. I had the right people there ... no-one was saying to me ‘Do it a different way’. I mean, if someone had I would have listened to it, but I have to say to you in addition when I looked, for example, at Mrs Thatcher’s War Cabinet, it didn’t have the Chancellor of the Exchequer on it ... you have there the people that you need there.”²²¹

389. No Ministerial Group along the lines recommended by Sir David Manning was convened until the “War Cabinet” met on 19 March 2003, the day the invasion began (see Section 2).²²²

390. The inner group of officials, which discussed a range of issues including counter-terrorism and Afghanistan, was known as the Restricted COBR or COBR(R). Records of the meetings were not produced, although actions were recorded in some instances.

391. The Wider Group, known as the Ad Hoc Group on Iraq (AHGI), met for the first time on 20 September.

392. Sir Kevin Tebbit expressed concern to Mr Hoon about the new Whitehall arrangements.

393. Sir Kevin Tebbit set out his views to Mr Hoon on 17 September:

“Mindful of the difficulties (and frustrations) we have experienced in the past in establishing the right machinery and processes to run crucial politico/military campaigns, I saw David Manning yesterday to discuss the arrangements which might be presented to the Prime Minister, designed to help successful delivery of an Iraq campaign.

“I reminded David of the importance of a small ‘core’ Ministerial team, meeting very regularly to execute daily business (as distinct from less frequent policy meetings and Cabinet itself). I outlined the linkage needed with the wider COBR and DOP machinery that would pull in government departments and agencies as a whole ...

“David said that he had little influence over such matters as distinct from Jonathan [Powell]. However, he took the point, especially about the importance of acting

²²¹ Public hearing, 21 January 2011, pages 26-27.

²²² [Minute Drummond to Rycroft, 19 March 2003, ‘Iraq Ministerial Meeting’.](#)

through key Ministers in small groups. The position at present was that the Prime Minister had decided over the weekend on the following:

- a. no Ministerial meetings at this stage;
- b. a preference, when they became necessary, for the ‘late Afghan’ model to apply - ie PM; Defence Secretary; Foreign Secretary; CDS; C; Scarlett; Attorney General and Alastair Campbell as appropriate;
- c. meanwhile for Restricted COBR meetings to begin on a twice weekly basis under Manning’s chairmanship;
- d. for a wider DOP Committee of officials to begin work, under Bowen’s chairmanship, which would be the vehicle for bringing in OGDs [other government departments] – DFID, Customs etc.”²²³

394. Sir Kevin commented:

“This seems satisfactory for the time being, although we shall need to watch to ensure that (b) does not begin without you being present and that (c) provides the framework we need to link effectively with the contingency planning in the MOD (and perhaps to begin to consider tricky issues of wider relevance, eg the effect on energy prices and oil aftermath management). I should have preferred Bowen to run a restricted officials forum, given the other pressures on Manning’s time, the need to begin setting a regular rhythm, and some of the wider issues to be confronted. But I do not think we can do better for the present.”

395. The clearest statement of the composition and remit of the AHGI seen by the Inquiry is in a letter from Mr Drummond to government departments on 18 September, in which he stated:

“Desmond Bowen here will be chairing a new committee, known as the Ad Hoc Group on Iraq (AHGI), which will pull together wider issues (both overseas and domestic), and some elements of contingency planning. The Group will have to consider both the inspection route, and the implications if that route failed and military action follows. I will be Desmond’s alternate with Tom Dodd as secretary. The Group will comprise representatives of the FCO, MOD, Treasury, Home Office, DfT [Department for Transport], Intelligence Agencies, Cabinet Office, DTI, DFID and ACPO [Association of Chief Police Officers]. Other departments will be invited as and when they have an interest in the agenda. We will be looking to have a fairly settled membership at Head of Department level or above as much of the work will need to be conducted in a discreet manner. At this stage we envisage AHGI meeting on a weekly basis, with the first meeting later this week. Detailed pol/mil [politico-military] co-ordination will be handled separately.

²²³ [Minute Tebbit to Secretary of State \[MOD\], 17 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Machinery of Government’.](#)

“In parallel, the (Cabinet Office) Information Strategy Group (ISG) will be considering the information aspects. This will focus very much on the co-ordination of cross-government strategic messages relating to Iraq, rather than day-to-day media handling. It will meet on an ad hoc basis, and will be chaired by Alastair Campbell or, in his absence, Desmond Bowen.”²²⁴

396. At the first meeting of the AHGI, departments agreed the proposed composition and remit, adding the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to the list of participants “to cover environmental aspects”.²²⁵

397. Asked by the Inquiry to explain the Whitehall arrangements, Sir David Manning said that the restricted group chaired by him or his deputy included “all those who had access to the most sensitive intelligence”.²²⁶ It was not focused solely on Iraq, and often had other pressing issues to deal with but:

“... it was an opportunity ... to report on the progress that different departments had made, on the latest assessment that may have come out of the agencies, the political issues that were being confronted by the Foreign Office, the difficulties that the Ministry of Defence might be encountering and so on and so forth.”

398. Sir David explained that the AHGI drew in those with less or very little access to sensitive intelligence.

399. Mr Bowen told the Inquiry that, when the AHGI started its work in September 2002, the context was “a serious policy commitment to deal with weapons of mass destruction in Iraq”. Conflict was just one of “any number of outcomes”.²²⁷

400. At the end of August 2002, Sir Michael Jay identified the need to put the FCO’s Iraq work on a new footing.

401. Mr Ricketts was put in charge of ensuring the FCO’s approach was “suitably dynamic and coherent”.

402. Between September and mid-November 2002, the FCO’s principal preoccupation on Iraq was the negotiation of UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1441.

403. Mr Straw and Mr Ricketts were heavily engaged in those negotiations.

404. On 30 August, Mr Gray sent Sir Michael Jay a draft minute from Sir Michael to Mr Straw, setting out the steps Sir Michael was taking to “draw together threads of activity on Iraq” in the FCO.²²⁸ The draft explained that, in addition to intensifying work

²²⁴ [Letter Drummond to Wright, 18 September 2002, ‘Iraq Co-ordination’.](#)

²²⁵ Minute Drummond to Manning, 23 September 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

²²⁶ Public hearing, 30 November 2009, page 45.

²²⁷ Public hearing, 7 December 2009, page 10.

²²⁸ [Minute Gray to PS/PUS \[FCO\], 30 August 2002, ‘Iraq’ attaching Minute \[draft\] PUS \[FCO\] to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 30 August 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

on a UN Security Council resolution (see Section 3.5), Sir Michael was setting up a “strategy group” reporting to Mr Ricketts to ensure FCO work on Iraq was “suitably dynamic and coherent”. The group would meet weekly; more often if necessary.

405. The Inquiry has not seen a final version of that minute and it is not clear whether it was seen by Mr Straw, but Mr Gray’s draft was seen by officials in No.10.

406. The Inquiry has seen no further reference to an FCO “strategy group”, but Mr Ricketts did chair the first “FCO Iraq Co-ordination Meeting” on 6 September.²²⁹ Among the issues discussed was a paper on the consequences of military action in the region and beyond being prepared by the Directorate of Strategy and Innovation (DSI).

407. It is not clear whether officials from outside the FCO attended the meeting, but the record was copied to the Cabinet Office Assessments Staff and to the MOD. It was not copied to OD Sec.

408. A second meeting was scheduled for 18 September, but the Inquiry has seen no record of it taking place.

409. From mid-September, Mr Ricketts was increasingly focused on the negotiations for what was to become resolution 1441.

410. In his witness statement, Mr Stephen Pattison, Head of FCO United Nations Department (UND), who was responsible for the formulation of policy on Security Council resolutions and provided instructions to the UK Permanent Mission to the UN in New York (UKMIS New York), explained that the key tactical decisions on how to handle negotiations on the text were taken at twice daily meetings chaired by Mr Ricketts.²³⁰ The instructions were complemented by daily telephone conversations between Mr Ricketts and Sir Jeremy Greenstock, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, and by correspondence with other members of UKMIS New York.²³¹

411. The first reference to Iraq in the minutes of the FCO Board during the period covered by the Inquiry was on 20 September 2002, when members observed that Iraq had risen up the agenda since August and asked whether the FCO was “prepared for a crisis”.²³² The Board was informed by officials that work was in hand on how the FCO should handle concurrent crises and on the possible need to commit resources “in preparation for any need to move quickly into Baghdad”.

412. Preparations for the reopening of an Embassy in Baghdad are described in Section 15.1.

²²⁹ Minute [FCO junior official] to Gray, 6 September 2002, ‘Iraq Coordination Meeting’.

²³⁰ Statement, 6 January 2011.

²³¹ Public hearing, 31 January 2011, pages 22-23.

²³² Minutes, 20 September 2002, FCO Board.

The potential scale of the post-conflict task

413. During late August and early September, UK analysts advised on:

- the likely need for sustained international commitment to Iraq's reconstruction;
- the importance of starting preparations early; and
- the need for greater clarity on US thinking.

414. An FCO paper on the economic consequences of military action assessed that “an enormous task of reconstruction and economic and financial normalisation” lay ahead. If serious preparatory work did not begin many months before regime change, there was likely to be a “serious and politically embarrassing hiatus”.

415. A paper by Treasury officials compared the reconstruction of Iraq with Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and East Timor. It concluded that reconstruction in Iraq could prove more expensive, but might also be less challenging.

FCO PAPER: 'REGIONAL ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAQ'

416. On 29 August, the FCO Economic Adviser for the Middle East and North Africa produced an assessment of short- and long-term economic consequences of military action for the region and for Iraq.²³³ The paper identified a number of priorities for the UK, including mobilising the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank as soon as possible to begin building up a picture of Iraq's economy:

“An enormous task of reconstruction and economic and financial normalisation lies ahead. For all Iraq's oil wealth it will take many years before the country can get back to levels of prosperity seen in the 1990s.

“... [T]here will be a huge job of reforming Iraqi economic policies and institutions: dismantling Ba'ath Party economic control and corruption and replacing it with competent, transparent market-orientated management will probably be akin to dismantling Communist Party control in Central and Eastern Europe. A strategy for reconstruction and long-term development will have to be worked out.

“... [T]here is a desperate shortage of available information on Iraq's economy which will delay assessment of both the financial position and the requirement for institutional change/technical assistance. Unless serious preparatory work is put in hand many months before regime change there is likely to be a serious and politically embarrassing hiatus.”

²³³ [Minute Economic Policy Department \[junior official\] to Gray, 29 August 2002, 'Iraq: economic issues raised by military action and regime change' attaching paper, undated, 'Regional economic consequences of military action against Iraq'.](#)

417. The assessment was copied widely within the FCO, including to Mr Chaplin, and to Trade Partners UK (TPUK). The Inquiry has seen no evidence that it was copied to other departments.

418. Mr Creon Butler, the FCO Chief Economist, endorsed the economic adviser's analysis and the importance of thinking about economic issues "at the same time" as military options.²³⁴ He advised that:

"... a few \$bn spent on a Jordan safety net [to cushion the economic shock of conflict] and more rapid intervention in Iraq post-conflict is likely to be small beer vis-a-vis the total costs of military intervention and could do a great deal to ensure the ultimate success of the exercise."

419. Mr Butler added that:

- The Government would need to make special provision for the costs.
- It was important to learn the lessons of post-Milošević Yugoslavia, where a "first rate" economic team, largely from the Yugoslav diaspora, had made "a tremendously positive impact" on economic management. Did such people exist in Iraq's case?
- International financial institutions (IFIs) were unlikely to sanction any significant work on Iraq until there was a clear international mandate. If they did not, it could still make sense for the UK to do work in-house and start a dialogue with the US.

420. Mr Butler did not copy his email to Mr Chaplin, Mr Ricketts, or outside the FCO.

TREASURY PAPER: 'WHAT WOULD BE THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF WAR IN IRAQ?'

421. On 6 September, Treasury officials sent Mr Brown a paper on the economic impact of military action on the global, regional and Iraqi economies.²³⁵ The paper addressed three scenarios: a large-scale invasion leading to relatively quick regime change (identified as the most likely scenario); regime change through an internal uprising; and regime change after a prolonged campaign during which WMD had been used.

422. The paper assessed that oil prices could rise by \$US10 per barrel. Over a year, that could reduce global growth by 0.5 percent and raise inflation by 0.4-0.8 percent. Investor and consumer confidence could fall and there was limited room for easing monetary and fiscal policy across the G7.²³⁶

423. In the region, "a small group of countries could lose out quite heavily" as a result of a range of factors from reduced tourism to disruption of trade with Iraq.

²³⁴ [Email Butler to Gray, 30 August 2002, 'Iraq: Economic Issues Raised by Military Action and Regime Change'](#).

²³⁵ Email Crook to Bowman, 6 September 2002, 'What would be the economic impact of a war in Iraq?' attaching Paper, September 2002, 'What would be the economic impact of war in Iraq?'

²³⁶ The G7 group of industrialised countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States.

424. The paper’s analysis of the impact on Iraq drew on three recent precedents: the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), Afghanistan and East Timor. The paper concluded that there were four reasons why reconstruction in Iraq might be “even more expensive” than in the FRY, which had already cost nearly US\$10 billion:

- Iraq’s infrastructure might be in a worse condition.
- Iraq’s economy would need stabilising after years of sanctions, reckless spending and high inflation, and there was a huge external debt burden.
- A large peacekeeping force would be needed to “keep a lid on” ethnic and religious tensions.
- The UK should expect “heavy moral pressure” to make a generous contribution to the reconstruction effort.

425. The paper added that, although reconstruction in Iraq might be more expensive than in the FRY, it might be less challenging: Iraq already had “institutions of government”, the private sector had not been completely destroyed, and Iraq was much richer.

426. That analysis informed a paper on Treasury policy towards post-conflict Iraq produced in February 2003 (see Section 6.5).

SPG PAPER, 4 SEPTEMBER 2002: ‘UK MILITARY STRATEGIC THINKING ON IRAQ’

427. In the 4 September edition of its paper on UK military strategic thinking, the SPG stated:

“Given fractious nature of Iraqi politics, broad regional concern on nature of new Iraqi government, and poor state of Iraqi infrastructure, delivery of stated post-conflict objectives will require lengthy engagement.”

428. The SPG also stated that:

- **“lack of clarity in US on post-conflict Iraq means we do not yet have a winning concept”;**
- **the “key military question” to be addressed was whether there was a winning military concept; and**
- **the absence of a clear post-conflict strategy would be a reason for not participating in the US plan.**

429. It is not clear who outside the MOD saw the SPG paper.

430. On 4 September, the SPG issued the third edition of its paper on military strategic thinking, previously updated on 11 July.²³⁷

²³⁷ [Paper \[SPG\], 4 September 2002, ‘UK Military Strategic Thinking on Iraq’.](#)

431. In a new list of “key deductions”, the SPG advised:

“Given fractious nature of Iraqi politics, broad regional concern on nature of new Iraqi government, and poor state of Iraqi infrastructure, delivery of stated post-conflict objectives will require lengthy engagement.

“Successful post-conflict delivery of US support to a new, broad-based government will require co-operation and agreement of regional states on acceptability of the outcome, if its efforts are not to be undermined.”

432. The SPG also listed strategic issues needing resolution before there could be a “winning concept”. They included:

- the “likely model for Iraqi governance, security structures, and economy, to inform estimates of post-conflict engagement”; and
- the likely post-conflict role of the UN.

433. In the section on post-conflict tasks, the list of likely short-, medium- and long-term post-conflict military tasks from earlier versions was replaced with a briefer description of planning priorities. The SPG stated that US military planners were working on detailed post-conflict plans, but drawing on very broad assumptions about the nature of the new regime. The SPG recommended that:

“... clarity and broad agreement on [the] following is needed before coherent plans can be effectively delivered:

- **Political.** Nature of regime, extent of franchise, land tenure, and relations with other states.
- **Economic.** Ownership and redevelopment of oil resources and development of other economic activity.
- **Security.** Security structures and security sector reform (SSR). Purpose, size and nature of Iraqi Armed Forces and internal security forces.”

434. The SPG continued:

“Planning will need to be undertaken with DFID in order to effectively manage [the] NGO response to humanitarian consequences. Saddam may well use mass movement of refugees as an operational tool to slow Coalition advance and as part of a strategic attack on Coalition ... domestic public support ...

“Without clear post-conflict plans potential scale ... of UK military commitment remains an unknown.”

435. The SPG stated that “lack of clarity in US on post-conflict Iraq means we do not yet have a winning concept”, but:

“US military planners are fully aware of the need to establish a strategic context and for an inter-agency approach, and considerable work has been done to address these concerns. Our analysis and judgements are now based on a sound knowledge of the CENTCOM plan and recent military developments to which we are privy, and our assessment of whether to engage or not is (now based on a much surer footing) predicated on this imperfect basis.

“... The key **military** question to be addressed is:

‘Is there a winning military concept and plan?’”

436. The SPG set out two responses: a list of conditions to be met before the answer could be “yes” and a list of reasons why the answer should be “no”:

- The list of conditions for participation included:
 - preparation of an acceptable post-conflict administration (US military planners were reported to have identified the military tasks to be addressed, but how those would be co-ordinated with other aspects of nation-building was not yet clear); and
 - UK post-conflict tasks to be “limited in scope and time”.
- Reasons for not participating in the US plan included the absence of a clear post-conflict strategy, which would make it likely that the UK military commitment would become open-ended.

Mr Blair’s commitment to post-conflict reconstruction

437. Before Mr Blair’s meeting with President Bush at Camp David on 7 September, Sir Christopher Meyer advised that pacifying Iraq would make Afghanistan look like “child’s play”. Afghanistan had shown that the US was not good at consolidating politically what it had achieved militarily.

438. On 2 September, a few days before Mr Blair’s visit to Camp David, Mr Rycroft showed Mr Blair, Mr Powell and Sir David Manning an article by *New York Times* columnist Mr Thomas L Friedman about the scale of the post-conflict task.²³⁸ In the article, Mr Friedman commented:

“... we are talking about nation-building from scratch. Iraq has ... none of the civil society or rule of law roots that enabled the United States to quickly build democracies out of the ruins of Germany and Japan ...

...

²³⁸ [Manuscript comment Rycroft to Prime Minister on *International Herald Tribune*, 2 September 2002, *Remaking Iraq looks like a tall order*.](#)

“This is not a reason for not taking Saddam out. It is a reason to prepare for a potentially long, costly nation-building operation and to enlist as many allies as possible to share the burden.

...

“My most knowledgeable Iraqi friend tells me he is confident that the morning after any US invasion, US troops would be welcomed by Iraqis and the regime would fold quickly. It is the morning after the morning after that we have to be prepared for.

“In the best case, a ‘nice’ strongman will emerge from the Iraq army to preside over a gradual transition to democracy, with America receding into a supporting role. In the worst case, Iraq falls apart, with all its historical internal tensions – particularly between its long-ruling Sunni minority and its long-frustrated Shia majority. In that case, George W Bush will have to become Iraq’s strongman – the iron fist that holds the country together, gradually re-distributes the oil wealth and supervises a much longer transition to democracy.

“My Iraqi friend tells me that anyone who tells you he knows which scenario will unfold doesn’t know Iraq.”

439. Sir Christopher Meyer reported on 5 September that the US Government was considering starting to make the case against Saddam Hussein, including by using President Bush’s speech at the UN General Assembly to indict him and circulating a draft resolution the following week.²³⁹ Congressional resolutions authorising military action would be sought in early October.

440. On 6 September, Sir Christopher Meyer advised that, while President Bush’s decision to take the UN route and to consult widely at home and abroad was welcome, it left “a raft of questions unanswered”.²⁴⁰

441. Sir Christopher judged that a military invasion and its aftermath would be “less perilous [for the US] in company”. On post-conflict issues, he wrote:

“The preconditions for military action are a focal point for Camp David. So are post-war Iraq and the MEPP [Middle East Peace Process] ... The President seems to have bought the neo-con notion that with the overthrow of Saddam all will be sweetness and light in Iraq, with automatic benefits in the rest of the Middle East (which partly explains his inactivity on the latter). In reality, it will probably make pacifying Afghanistan look like child’s play. The US is probably in greater need of coalition and UN support for what is likely to be a very protracted post-war phase, than for the attack itself. Afghanistan has shown that the US is not good at consolidating politically what it has achieved militarily.”

²³⁹ Telegram 1130 Washington to FCO London, 5 September 2002, ‘Iraq: The US Diplomatic Game Plan’.

²⁴⁰ [Telegram 1140 Washington to FCO London, 6 September 2002, ‘PM’s visit to Camp David: Iraq’.](#)

442. Mr Blair discussed options for a UK military contribution in Iraq with Mr Hoon on 5 September.²⁴¹ Mr Straw was also present.

443. There was no No.10 record of the discussion, but Mr Watkins recorded that no decisions were taken and Mr Blair “did not expect President Bush to commit himself imminently to a military campaign”.

444. On 6 September, Mr Watkins sent No.10 an assessment of US military plans and factors informing a UK military contribution in Iraq. He cautioned that the assessment was “necessarily provisional”, partly because the US plan was still evolving, and partly because there had not yet been “detailed joint planning with the US”.²⁴²

445. Mr Watkins described three UK military options (Packages 1 to 3) ranging from minimum to maximum effort. He also drew attention to the “sketchy” post-conflict plans and the importance of keeping in mind the US timetable when identifying the contribution the UK might offer and the influence it was hoped to bring.

446. Copies of the letter were sent to Mr Straw’s and Sir Andrew Turnbull’s Private Secretaries, and to Mr Bowen in the Cabinet Office.

447. The letter is addressed in more detail in Section 6.1.

448. On 6 September, Mr Webb told Mr Lee that Mr Feith had asked for UK advice on post-Saddam Hussein regimes.²⁴³ Mr Webb suggested that officials work on an FCO-led piece “to contribute to a key gap in US thinking”.

449. The FCO produced papers on post-Saddam Hussein regimes during September and October and the subject was discussed at the first round of US/UK/Australia talks on post-conflict issues in Washington on 6 November. The papers and the Washington talks are described later in this Section.

450. Although it is likely that UK papers were shared with the US in the context of those talks, the Inquiry has seen no documentary evidence of a UK paper on post-Saddam Hussein administrations being shared with the US until 12 December.

451. At Camp David, Mr Blair told President Bush that an enormous amount of work would be needed to get post-Saddam Hussein Iraq right.

452. The meeting between President Bush and Mr Blair at Camp David on 7 September was in two parts, addressed in more detail in Section 3.4.

453. Mr Blair, supported only by Sir David Manning, discussed Iraq with President Bush, Vice President Cheney and Dr Rice from 1600 to 1745.²⁴⁴ Sir David recorded that, during

²⁴¹ Minute Watkins to DG Op Pol, 5 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.

²⁴² [Letter Watkins to Manning, 6 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Military Planning’](#).

²⁴³ Minute Webb to DG Op Pol, 6 September 2002, ‘Close Allies: Berlin 4 September: Iraq Margins’.

²⁴⁴ Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 8 September 2002, ‘Your Visit to Camp David on 7 September: Conversation with President Bush’.

the meeting, Mr Blair warned that, even if Saddam Hussein were overthrown relatively quickly, the big issue would remain of what followed his departure in a country that had never known democracy. There would be an enormous amount of work needed to get post-Saddam Hussein Iraq right, even if US troops were to remain in Iraq for up to 18 months after any conflict.

454. A plenary meeting between President Bush and Mr Blair and their teams followed the restricted discussion.²⁴⁵ During the plenary meeting, Mr Hadley put forward three principles for post-Saddam Hussein Iraq: territorial integrity, democracy and a role for the UN.

455. Detailed consideration of the options for UK force contributions in Iraq began in September 2002.

456. Military planners advised that, in the event of the deployment of UK land forces, there was a judgement to be made on whether the UK military should be engaged in the conflict or post-conflict phase. Both would be difficult to sustain.

457. Adm Boyce described it as “inconceivable” that the UK military would not contribute “in some manner” to post-conflict tasks.

458. On 9 September, the MOD prepared advice for the meeting between Mr Hoon and Secretary Rumsfeld on 11 September, including some high level questions on post-conflict planning:

- “How does the military plan work” after regime change?
- What role would the US and others have in reconstruction?
- How long would military engagement last?²⁴⁶

459. There is no indication that those issues were raised during Mr Hoon’s visit to Washington.²⁴⁷

460. On 19 September, the Chiefs of Staff discussed a commentary on options for UK force contributions in Iraq prepared by the SPG.²⁴⁸

461. The SPG paper presented four options for a UK military contribution and highlighted a number of continuing strategic uncertainties: the shape of the campaign, its timing, post-conflict commitments and the legal basis for military action.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Letter Rycroft to Sedwill, 8 September 2002, ‘Prime Minister’s Meeting with Bush, Camp David, 7 September: Public Presentation of Iraq Policy’.

²⁴⁶ Minute Cholerton to APS/Secretary of State [MOD], 9 September 2002, ‘Iraq – Defence Secretary’s Meeting with Rumsfeld’.

²⁴⁷ Telegram 1159 Washington to FCO London, 11 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Mr Hoon’s Visit to Washington, 11 September’.

²⁴⁸ Minutes, 19 September 2002, Chiefs of Staff meeting.

²⁴⁹ [Paper SPG, 19 September 2002, ‘Iraq Package Options – Military Strategic Commentary at 19 September 2002’.](#)

462. On post-conflict commitments the paper stated:

“The likely post-conflict scenarios and demands have yet to be clearly articulated. Scenarios include immediate and catastrophic regime collapse, the mounting of an internal coup as the campaign commences, or at the opposite end of the spectrum an exhausted Iraq suing for peace. Each of these will require a different response. The infant US inter-agency process has just started to identify the means by which transition to a post-Saddam regime might take place. This commences with a CENTCOM-led military government.”

463. In the section headed “Conflict vs Post-conflict”, the SPG asked whether, if UK forces were to participate in the military campaign, “our effort should be against the need to meet US short-term planning for combat, or the equally demanding and pressing need for preparations for the post-conflict phase”. It continued:

“Conflict phase. Commitment to this phase may carry with it inherent risks with regard to post-conflict engagement with little choice on role, timing, location, or future extraction. An alternative approach that offers a UK lead, or UK participation in the post-conflict phase may be equally attractive to the US as our commitment to a land role in the conflict phase.

“Post-Conflict. Given the wide range of possible post-conflict scenarios these forces would have to be combat capable forces at high readiness, and in all probability with key elements forward deployed during the conflict phase. The length and scale of our post-conflict commitment will determine our ability to fulfil a range of other operations, and most notably our Balkan commitment. An enduring medium scale²⁵⁰ commitment in Iraq would preclude continued medium scale engagement in the Balkans.

“Strategic Balance. We are currently committed to two medium scale land operations (FRESCO²⁵¹ and the Balkans), and a land commitment to Iraq at anything above small scale²⁵² will commit us to **three medium scale** land operations. Although with a full Package 3²⁵³ commitment to the conflict phase we retain the SLE [Spearhead Land Element], our ability to deploy and sustain even a small scale force package has yet to be determined, and anything above this Scale of Effort will be impossible ... Recovery and recuperation will also be key to our judgements as to which phase to commit to. Hard and fast judgements are not possible, however, commitment of Package 3 will have an effect for at least two years.”

²⁵⁰ Defined in the 1998 Strategic Defence Review as “deployments of brigade size or equivalent” for war-fighting or other operations, such as the UK contribution in the mid-1990s to the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia.

²⁵¹ The use of military forces to provide cover in the event of a strike by the Fire Brigades’ Union.

²⁵² Defined in the 1998 Strategic Defence Review as “a deployment of battalion size or equivalent”.

²⁵³ The most ambitious of the four options and the only one involving the deployment of UK land forces (to northern Iraq).

464. The SPG concluded:

“Assuming that UK land participation is a requirement, there is a judgement to be made on whether we should be engaged in the conflict or post-conflict phases. Both would be difficult to sustain.”

465. Lt Gen Pigott and Lieutenant General John Reith, Chief of Joint Operations (CJO), briefed the Chiefs of Staff Committee on the options available, explaining that “Package 4 was being developed to address the inevitable post-conflict tasks”.²⁵⁴ Adm Boyce commented that it was “inconceivable that the UK would not contribute in some manner, to those tasks”.

466. The Chiefs of Staff Committee on 19 September and subsequent correspondence and discussions involving No.10 and Mr Blair are covered in more detail in Section 6.1.

467. Post-conflict military operations were not addressed in Mr Watkins’ letter of 20 September to Sir David Manning on the potential UK contribution to military action.²⁵⁵

468. Nor do they appear in the record of the discussion between Mr Blair and Mr Hoon on 23 September, at which it was decided that land forces, while not being ruled out altogether, should not be put forward as part of the potential UK contribution at the CENTCOM planning conference later that week (see Section 6.1).²⁵⁶

469. The Chiefs of Staff discussed Iraq planning on 25 September.²⁵⁷ They recognised that the post-conflict phase of military operations (Phase IV) “would not have a clear-cut start” and that the UK should “guard against any accusation that the ‘US does the war-fighting while the UK does the peacekeeping’”. Not being involved in Package 3 at all “would be difficult to manage”.

470. The Chiefs of Staff commissioned Lt Gen Pigott to: “Explore options for potential UK involvement in Phase IV”, with a deadline of 2 October.

471. Lt Gen Pigott summarised the potential scale of the UK military contribution in Iraq in a minute to Lt Gen Reith on 26 September.²⁵⁸ He explained that aftermath requirements were still to be addressed and “could impact on the final shape” of the force packages he was describing.

472. The 30 September edition of the SPG paper on UK military strategic thinking included more detail on post-conflict issues and is described later in this Section.

²⁵⁴ Minutes, 19 September 2002, Chiefs of Staff meeting.

²⁵⁵ [Letter Watkins to Manning, 20 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Potential UK Contribution To Any Military Action’.](#)

²⁵⁶ [Minute Watkins to DG Op Pol, 23 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Meeting with the Prime Minister: 23 September’.](#)

²⁵⁷ Minutes, 25 September 2002, Chiefs of Staff meeting.

²⁵⁸ Minute DCDS(C) to CJO, 26 September 2002, ‘Iraq – Potential Scale of UK Force Contribution for use in UK/US Contingency Planning’.

473. Mr Blair told Cabinet on 23 September that the international community had to be committed to Iraq’s reconstruction.

474. Cabinet met on 23 September (see Section 3.5). Points made in discussion included:

“... in the event of military action, a clear vision was required of the outcome we wanted in reconstructing Iraq: this would be a major task”.²⁵⁹

475. Summing up the discussion, Mr Blair said that a “crunch point” had been reached:

“The sanctions regime ... was being eroded and Saddam Hussein was on the way to acquiring new capability in weapons of mass destruction. Iraq had to comply with the obligations placed on it by the United Nations. A tough line was required. If military action was required, the job could be done. There would be a discussion about the military options ... civilian casualties should be kept to a minimum, but there could be no doubt that the main beneficiaries of the removal of Saddam Hussein would be the Iraqi people. Iraq was basically a wealthy country. The international community had to be committed to Iraq’s reconstruction.”

476. Mr Cook wrote in his memoir that he closed his contribution:

“... by stressing the vital importance of getting approval for anything we do through the UN. ‘What follows after Saddam will be the mother of all nation-building projects. We shouldn’t attempt it on our own – if we want the rest of the international community with us at the end, we need them in at the start.’”²⁶⁰

477. Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries that Mr Brown had made “a few long-term points for the US, the need to think through post-Saddam, the importance of the MEPP”.²⁶¹

478. Late on 23 September, Mr Brenton reported that the US Administration was “starting to get to grips with ‘Day After’ questions – in [the] State [Department]’s case, with considerable trepidation”.²⁶² A senior State Department official had suggested that anything other than an Iraqi General succeeding Saddam Hussein would be extremely challenging and involve the US in a massive presence for an indefinite period.

479. Parliament was recalled to discuss Iraq on 24 September. There was considerable concern in both Houses about arrangements to support Iraq after an invasion.

480. Mr Blair drew attention, in the context of Afghanistan, to the UK’s commitment to “stick with” the Afghan people “until the job of reconstruction is

²⁵⁹ [Cabinet Conclusions, 23 September 2002.](#)

²⁶⁰ Cook R. *The Point of Departure*. Simon & Schuster UK, 2003.

²⁶¹ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

²⁶² Telegram 1221 Washington to FCO London, 23 September 2002, ‘US/Iraq’.

done”. He maintained that the question of who might replace Saddam Hussein did not yet require a decision.

481. Parliament was recalled to discuss Iraq on 24 September (see Section 3.5).

482. In his statement to the House of Commons, Mr Blair drew attention to the UK’s continuing commitment to Afghanistan:

“Afghanistan is a country now freed from the Taliban but still suffering. This is a regime we changed, rightly. I want to make it clear, once again, that we are entirely committed to its reconstruction. We will not desert the Afghan people. We will stick with them until the job of reconstruction is done.”²⁶³

483. During the adjournment debate that followed, Mr Charles Kennedy, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, observed that:

“In his statement, the Prime Minister spoke about the need for Iraq to be led by someone who variously can abide by international law, bring Iraq back into the international community, make the country rich and successful, and make its government more representative of the country. However, he was silent on the question of who or where that person or set of people is. The Prime Minister, quite rightly, with our support and that of others, was able to point to the mobilisation of forces in Afghanistan, which could lead to an alternative, more acceptable government there. Is there capacity or potential for a similar mobilisation to take place within Iraq?

“In the context of Afghanistan, the Prime Minister made it clear that, if such a course of action proved successful – which it did – the country and the international community would not walk away. Is a similar approach being identified for Iraq? Does such an approach encompass the mindset of the present American Administration? If we were not to walk away following the toppling of Saddam, who would provide the necessary presence to police and create the ongoing stability in Iraq that would be essential because of the shell-shocked nature of that country?

“When the American Defense Secretary speaks of a ‘decapitation strategy’ with a view to Iraq does he reflect the mind processes of the British Government? Should we not instead be talking about the longer-term need for a rehabilitation strategy for Iraq, not least for its innocent, oppressed people with whom none of us has any argument whatever?”²⁶⁴

484. Mr Blair responded:

“As for not walking away, we should not walk away from the situation in Afghanistan, and the US Administration themselves have made clear that should it come to

²⁶³ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 6.

²⁶⁴ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 10.

regime change in Iraq they will not walk away from that either. I simply emphasise this point. Of course all sorts of issues will have to be resolved, but the fact is, as I said a few weeks ago, that the first decision we must make is this: do we allow the situation to continue, with this weapons of mass destruction programme?"²⁶⁵

485. In response to a question from Mr Jon Owen Jones (Labour) about what threats would ensue if the Iraqi regime were replaced by force of arms, Mr Blair stated:

"Although some of these questions – if we get to the stage of regime change, what replaces Saddam – do not arise for decision now, as I have said throughout I of course agree that they are very serious questions, which we need to look at. The only thing that I would say to my honourable Friend about regime change is that it is hard to think of an Iraqi regime that would be worse than Saddam, but that said, it is obviously important that we deal with all these issues, including making it quite clear to the people of Iraq that should it come to the point of regime change, that has to be done while protecting the territorial integrity of Iraq. That is an important point."²⁶⁶

486. Mr Bruce George (Labour) proposed a number of criteria to be satisfied before any decision was taken on whether to go to war, including: "a credible military strategy with considerable thought given to what the consequences would be if war were undertaken and strong consideration given to post-operation peace support".²⁶⁷

487. Ms Glenda Jackson (Labour) and Mr Doug Henderson (Labour) both warned that, although the US and UK were certain to win a war in Iraq, there was no such certainty about who would win the peace.

488. Ms Jackson asked whether the UK was ready to commit itself to "a massive commitment of money, materials and personnel to bring about change".²⁶⁸

489. Mr Henderson warned: "If we do not start with a coalition of public support, it will be impossible to build any stable society in Iraq and neighbouring countries afterwards."²⁶⁹

490. Several speakers raised post-conflict issues in the House of Lords.

491. Lord Strathclyde (Conservative), in expressing support for the Government's position on Iraq, asked, among other questions:

"What vision do the Government have of a post-Saddam Iraq, which is surely in itself the most important question for those who want regime change?"²⁷⁰

²⁶⁵ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 12.

²⁶⁶ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 20.

²⁶⁷ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, columns 47-48.

²⁶⁸ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 96.

²⁶⁹ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 112.

²⁷⁰ House of Lords, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 865.

492. Baroness Williams (Liberal Democrat), spoke of “facing up to the necessity of force should that prove inevitable”, but expressed:

“... grave concerns about the exit strategy that was followed in Afghanistan, a country that appears to be sliding back to anarchy rather rapidly ... In some ways Afghanistan represents a failure of the international community to build upon the military victory that it claimed would open the door to a democratic and just Afghanistan”.²⁷¹

What assurance could be given that the UK and US would “turn their minds more seriously to the matter of the exit strategy and what follows victory”? Without that, it remained unclear what the strategy was or how to ensure it “will not enrage and unite the Muslim world against us”.

493. Baroness Symons, joint FCO/DTI Minister of State for International Trade and Investment, set out the Government’s position:

“Many will ask what will happen next if there is armed intervention. How will it be done? When and how would those undertaking such action withdraw from Iraq? What is the exit strategy? The truth is that discussion of those questions in detail is not for today.”²⁷²

494. Lord Howell (Conservative), expressing full support for Mr Blair’s approach on Iraq, asked:

“What will happen later? Do we have a vision – I do – of a federal, democratic Iraq ... Is there a possibility of a benign Iraq; a force for stability in the Middle East, instead of a force for evil and the culture of death? Is that wider vision in the Government’s mind? We have not heard much about that, but it is important we should have such a wider vision. If we do, how is it to be secured? Should US troops, thousands of whom are already in the region, stay there for a long time and occupy the whole area? Are they ready to go into other areas that might be at risk?

“Those questions hang in the air. We must have from the Government some indication of where we are going. As Clausewitz said, you should not take the first step ... towards war unless you have thought about the last step as well.”²⁷³

495. Lord Hurd (Conservative), warned of the scale of the reconstruction task:

“We must not delude ourselves. The process of nation rebuilding in Iraq will be a slow and strenuous one. We have to consider – it will be difficult; it will be the problems of Afghanistan on a much bigger scale – whether we and the Americans are prepared to keep troops after an immediate military victory to support and prop

²⁷¹ House of Lords, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 868.

²⁷² House of Lords, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 875.

²⁷³ House of Lords, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 879.

up whatever government emerges until it establishes its own authority against a background where such occupation would inevitably soon become unpopular.”²⁷⁴

496. The Earl of Onslow (Conservative) called on the Government to plan for the worst. If force were used and the Iraqi Government collapsed, “what is the worst-case scenario, are we thinking about it and do we know what to do?”²⁷⁵

Initial analysis of the issues and the Ad Hoc Group on Iraq

497. From 20 September 2002, the Cabinet Office-chaired Ad Hoc Group on Iraq (AHGI) co-ordinated all non-military cross-government work on post-conflict issues.

498. The AHGI was not tasked to consider in detail the operational requirements for humanitarian relief or wider reconstruction.

499. Nor was it required to examine systematically the different policy options for post-conflict Iraq, the UK’s potential involvement in different scenarios or the associated risks.

500. The focus of the AHGI’s work during autumn 2002 was a series of analytical papers by the FCO and other departments on the post-conflict administration and reconstruction of Iraq, and the possible consequences of conflict for the UK.

501. There was some visibility between military and civilian post-conflict analysis, but the two strands of work remained largely separate until the creation of the IPU in February 2003 (see Section 6.5). None of the analytical material produced by the AHGI in 2002 was put to Ministers for decision.

502. The AHGI was chaired by Mr Bowen and overseen by Sir David Manning. Its work was not shown routinely to Mr Blair.

503. The AHGI held its first meeting on 20 September.²⁷⁶

504. Mr Drummond wrote to Mr Bowen beforehand, suggesting topics for discussion and proposing departmental responsibilities for different subjects:

“In the absence of initiatives from the centre, a few departments have done their own work on the consequences of action in Iraq. We need to find out what has already been done and encourage departments to share it. So far I have only seen an FCO note on unintended consequences ... This identifies them but stops short

²⁷⁴ House of Lords, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 916.

²⁷⁵ House of Lords, *Official Report*, 24 September 2002, column 1002.

²⁷⁶ Minute Drummond to Manning, 23 September 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

of suggesting ways of mitigating and managing them. I suggest we focus on the following:

- The morning after in Iraq. What is the political process that secures a compliant, representative successor regime while Iraq retains its existing borders (FCO)? Reforming the security sector, civil service (MOD and DFID).
- Tactics for securing international support before and after the action. FCO need to write a paper ...
- Impact on world growth and trade, and on the UK economy (HMT [the Treasury] to write a note if they haven't already).
- Securing oil supplies and effect of regime change on world oil markets (DTI).
- Consequences for air travel including viability of airlines (DfT).
- Environment. The after effects of CBW [chemical and biological weapons], oil fires, pollution in the Gulf etc ... (DEFRA).
- Impact on the UK ... (Home Office and Security Service should lead).²⁷⁷

505. Mr Drummond suggested focusing on the main points needing discussion with the US, “probably the morning after and handling the region”. He recommended that work on campaign objectives be kept in OD Sec and the Restricted COBR.

506. The AHGI remained the principal Whitehall co-ordination mechanism for non-military Iraq planning until the creation of the inter-departmental Iraq Planning Unit (IPU) in February 2003. Military planning continued to be restricted to a very narrow circle.

507. The record of the first meeting confirmed that:

“Most [departments] have begun considering implications of military action. These include Treasury on the macro economic impact, DTI on oil markets, DFID on humanitarian aspects, CCS [Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat] on UK contingency planning, DfT on aviation security and the police and agencies on their range of issues ...

“We should give priority to thinking through the morning after questions. The FCO have work in hand on this [in] preparation for talks with the US. They will share a draft with interested departments ... They are already deeply engaged in discussions with the US about handling the regional players.”²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Minute Drummond to Bowen, 19 September 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq (AHGI)’.

²⁷⁸ Minute Drummond to Manning, 23 September 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

508. Mr Gray, the FCO attendee at the first meeting, commented to FCO colleagues:

“In practice this first meeting was largely an exercise in telling the FCO how to suck eggs. I’m sure future meetings will improve.”²⁷⁹

FCO PAPER: ‘IRAQ – CONSEQUENCES OF CONFLICT FOR THE REGION AND BEYOND’

509. The first FCO paper for the AHGI identified possible consequences of conflict for the Middle East and beyond. They included:

- a refugee crisis;
- heightened anti-Western feeling;
- an easier environment for terrorists to operate in; and
- higher oil prices.

510. The paper stated: “By preparing for the worst, we should be better placed to avoid it.”

511. In Washington on 17 September, Mr Miller told Mr Ricketts that he had started a lot of work on post-conflict issues and expected to have the basics in place in two or three weeks.²⁸⁰ Mr Ricketts suggested that UK and US experts should get together at that point and “stressed the importance of this work. We had to think through the unintended consequences of any action we might launch.”

512. On 20 September, the FCO sent Sir David Manning a DSI paper on the regional and international impact of conflict in Iraq.²⁸¹ ‘Iraq – Consequences of Conflict for the Region and Beyond’ was the first of five FCO papers on post-conflict issues prepared over the following weeks and tabled at the AHGI on 11 October. The four others were:

- ‘Scenarios for the Future of Iraq after Saddam’;²⁸²
- ‘Models for Administering a Post-Saddam Iraq’;
- ‘Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People’;
- ‘What sort of relationship could the EU have with a rehabilitated Iraq?’, shown to the AHGI in final form on 4 November.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Manuscript comment Gray on Minute Drummond to Manning, 23 September 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

²⁸⁰ Telegram 1192 Washington to FCO London, 17 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Ricketts’ Visit to Washington, 17 September.

²⁸¹ [Letter Sedwill to Manning, 20 September 2002, ‘Iraq – Consequences of Conflict for the Region and Beyond’ attaching Paper Directorate for Strategy and Innovation, undated, ‘Iraq – Consequences of Conflict for the Region and Beyond’.](#)

²⁸² A first version of this paper was also sent to Sir David Manning on 20 September. The Inquiry has seen no response. A revised version was sent on 26 September.

²⁸³ [Paper Middle East Department, 4 November 2002, ‘What sort of relationship could the EU have with a rehabilitated Iraq?’](#)

513. The introduction to the paper on international consequences stated:

“This paper identifies some of the possible impacts of war with Iraq on the immediate region and beyond over the short term. One of the aims is to identify the unintended consequences which could easily produce problems (cf the displacement of the Kurds in 1991). **The intention is not to predict catastrophe. But by preparing for the worst, we should be better placed to avoid it.**”

514. The FCO suggested that much would depend on the nature of the military campaign, but that it was possible to identify certain risks:

- “Humanitarian emergency in Iraq”. This was possible unless the war ended quickly. The UK would be expected to play a major role in any international response. That response would need military support and to be co-ordinated with the military campaign. That would be difficult, with the US military unlikely to want humanitarian agencies on the ground complicating things.
- “Refugee Crisis”. This might result from a prolonged or inconclusive conflict during which the Iraqi regime targeted parts of the population. Meeting refugees’ needs would be a significant challenge and potentially destabilising for some of Iraq’s neighbours. Senior Ba’athists would probably try to blend in with other refugees. There might need to be “some sort of screening process to identify those we would wish to interrogate and possibly bring criminal charges against”.
- “Demonstrations, riots and political stability”. Military action would heighten anti-Western feeling in the region. That could pose a threat to British nationals or interests and destabilise governments in the region. Much would depend on whether there was UN support and which countries joined the Coalition.
- “Terrorist attacks”. With the US and others distracted, war in Iraq might create an easier environment for terrorists to operate in and would create a new incentive for them to act. UK Embassies and other interests might be attractive targets.
- “Environmental”. Depending on Saddam Hussein’s actions, a major environmental clean-up might be needed.
- “Non-related but potentially linked crises”. With attention focused on Iraq, other crises “could easily flare up”. Afghanistan and India/Pakistan were the main concerns. Russia might “increase suppression of the Chechens” or “turn the heat up on Georgia”.
- “Economic”. Oil prices would rise; stock markets would fall. Both should be short-term, but could be longer lasting. War would also be expensive. Germany, Saudi Arabia and Japan had been major players in 1991.²⁸⁴ Would they be again? There were also potentially significant costs linked to reconstruction and Iraqi debt.

²⁸⁴ Germany, Saudi Arabia, Japan and other countries made significant financial contributions to military operations in the 1991 Gulf Conflict.

- Two “problem multipliers” could make the situation worse: use of WMD by Iraq and an attack on Israel.

515. A month later, on 24 October, Sir David Manning asked Ms Anna Wechsberg, No.10 Private Secretary: “I have failed to do anything with this. Should I?”²⁸⁵

516. On 1 November, she replied that there was probably nothing in the paper that would be new to him and that the AHGI had taken it into account in their work.²⁸⁶

517. By then, a revised version, including comments from other departments, had been circulated to the AHGI. It is not clear whether it was seen by Sir David.

FCO PAPER: ‘SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE OF IRAQ AFTER SADDAM’

518. ‘Scenarios for the future of Iraq after Saddam’, the second FCO paper for the AHGI, listed scenarios under which Saddam Hussein might lose power, the UK’s four “overarching priorities” for Iraq, and how those priorities might be achieved.

519. The FCO recognised that the US would have the decisive voice in any externally-driven regime change, but concluded that the UK should be able to exert influence through its close relationship with the US, activity in the UN and its likely role in any military campaign.

520. The FCO concluded that the UK should:

- argue strongly for Iraq to remain a unitary state;
- avoid the root and branch dismantling of Iraq’s governmental and security structures;
- argue for political reform, but not necessarily full democracy in the short term;
- aim for a political outcome to emerge from within Iraq;
- recognise the likely need for an interim administration and an international security force.

521. On 12 September, Sir David Manning had commissioned a paper from the FCO on what a post-Saddam Hussein government might look like:

“If ... there is military action ... what sort of government structures should we try to construct? What should the relationship be between Baghdad and the regions ...? Who might make up this government?”²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ [Manuscript comment Manning to Wechsberg, 24 October 2002, on Letter Sedwill to Manning, 20 September 2002, ‘Iraq – Consequences of Conflict for the Region and Beyond’.](#)

²⁸⁶ [Manuscript comment Wechsberg to Manning, 1 November 2002, on Letter Sedwill to Manning, 20 September 2002, ‘Iraq – Consequences of Conflict for the Region and Beyond’.](#)

²⁸⁷ Letter Manning to McDonald, 12 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.

522. The following day Mr Chaplin set out his views in a note to Mr Gray:

“In the aftermath of military action ... we would have a particular responsibility to help hold the ring while a new government emerged ... eg facilitating humanitarian relief, assuring minimum functioning of utilities and so on. But ... unless the military campaign has been extremely destructive, civilian ministries should be able to resume work fairly quickly.

“... The job of the Coalition will then be to ensure stability, to allow a nation-building process of eg: a representative assembly; appointment of a provisional government; drawing up a new constitution; elections; formation of a new government.

“This process could take 6 to 9 months. Apart from providing security and humanitarian assistance, we may be in the business of providing technical help (eg reconstruction planning; constitution drafting). We will also have a role in preventing interference from neighbours, especially Iran.”²⁸⁸

523. Mr Richard Stagg, FCO Director Public Diplomacy, raised with Mr Chaplin his “concern about the need to have greater clarity about our long-term vision for the Middle East post-Saddam, if we are to convince people that military conflict is the best available approach”.²⁸⁹

524. Mr Stagg advised:

“We will make little or no headway with Arab opinion if our apparent goal is to install a pro-US puppet regime in Baghdad. We need an outcome which is not a victory for the US ... but a victory for the region – by delivering benefits across the board in terms of stability and prosperity.

...

“I am not suggesting that we should be in a position now to say which individuals or parties will rule Iraq after Saddam, nor on what basis. But I think it would be helpful to have considerably greater clarity about:

- (a) how we will go about establishing a future government in Iraq;
- (b) how we will manage problems flowing from a more democratic system ...;
- (c) what sort of international presence we expect to remain in Iraq after a conflict (is there any chance of giving a major role to the UN?);
- (d) what does this all mean for neighbouring countries ...;
- (e) who will control, and benefit from, Iraq’s oil wealth;

²⁸⁸ Minute Chaplin to Gray, 13 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Post-Saddam Issues’.

²⁸⁹ [Minute Stagg to Chaplin, 13 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Winning the War of Words’.](#)

- (f) what economic assistance will be available ...;
- (g) read-across to the MEPP.”

525. The FCO paper ‘Scenarios for the future of Iraq after Saddam’ was sent to No.10 on 26 September.²⁹⁰ It was circulated separately to the AHGI.

526. The covering letter explained that FCO officials had discussed some of the issues covered in the paper briefly with US officials earlier that day.

527. The paper, written by DSI and Research Analysts, addressed three themes:

- scenarios under which Saddam Hussein might lose power;
- the UK’s four “overarching priorities” for Iraq; and
- how those priorities might be achieved.

528. The potential scenarios listed for Saddam Hussein’s departure were: assassination by a member of his inner circle; resignation; military coup; popular insurgency; and externally-driven regime change.

529. The paper stated that popular uprisings were most likely “during or in the aftermath of any military campaign”, when the situation would be most fluid and “after regular army units had been fragmented”. Uprisings were unlikely to be successful “unless Saddam’s military structures had collapsed and/or they received significant external assistance”. If they did succeed, “the outcome would probably be chaos”.

530. The FCO judged that Iraq’s neighbours might find it difficult not to get sucked in and included an explicit reference to Iran as the neighbour most likely to become involved.

531. In the section on externally-driven regime change, the FCO reiterated that popular uprisings were one of the possible consequences of Coalition forces entering Baghdad and ejecting Saddam Hussein. If that happened and external rather than internal factors were the trigger, “the Coalition should have far more influence in shaping events. It would have large numbers of forces in many sensitive areas” and the local population would “probably be relatively passive”.

532. The FCO stated that in each scenario, much would lie outside the UK’s control:

“In most circumstances, the decisive voice would be that of the US. But we should be able to influence developments, through our close relationship with the US, our diplomatic activity in the UN and elsewhere and our likely role in any military campaign.”

²⁹⁰ [Letter McDonald to Manning, 26 September 2002, ‘Scenarios for the future of Iraq after Saddam’ attaching Paper FCO, ‘Scenarios for the future of Iraq after Saddam’.](#)

533. The UK would need “the clearest possible sense of our objectives for Iraq”. The UK’s “fundamental interest in a stable region providing secure supplies of oil to world markets” suggested four overarching priorities:

- termination of Iraq’s WMD programme and permanent removal of the threat it posed;
- more inclusive and effective Iraqi government;
- a viable Iraq which was not a threat to its neighbours; and
- an end to Iraqi support for international terrorism.

534. The FCO advised:

“We have stated that regime change is not one of our objectives. But once ground-war started it would rapidly become an almost inevitable outcome. The US would not settle again for a 1991-style solution. The question then arises of what constitutes the regime. It would certainly mean the removal of the whole of Saddam’s family and inner circle.

“It is less clear how much of any remaining military and governmental structures we would want to see dismantled. This apparatus has facilitated much of what Saddam has done. His influence permeates the system. But removing it entirely would mean the removal of most of the structures of authority in Iraq. This could inhibit political and economic reconstruction.”

535. The FCO stated that it was difficult to judge the extent to which government structures would survive Saddam Hussein’s departure, but concluded:

- “The national Ba’ath superstructure would almost certainly collapse if Saddam fell as a result of military action, with the leadership seeking refuge. At lower levels, Ba’ath structures might continue ...”
- Local power lay with the Ba’ath Party leadership. The limited supporting bureaucracy was unlikely to be able to take on a more extensive role “without a radical overhaul”.
- If Saddam Hussein fell, particularly after US-led military action, “tribal, regional and religious differences would probably come to the fore” in the army, causing splits within and between units. It was more likely that tribal leaders would seek to establish their own power bases than that the armed forces and security services would transfer their allegiance en masse to any new government.
- It was not clear whether there would be any enthusiasm for clerical rule or whether religion would be an effective rallying point for any post-Saddam Hussein administration.

536. On the scope of representative government, the paper stated:

“Some Americans have openly stated they want to see the establishment of democracy. We have avoided this position, because it is an unrealistic ambition in the short term.”

537. Even if democracy were not a short-term option, presentationally it would be important for the international community to show that intervention was leading to better government. Difficult issues included:

- Iraq had no successful experience of representative or democratic government.
- A democratic Iraq would not necessarily be pro-Western.
- The Sunni minority would probably feel threatened by a more representative system.
- External opposition was weak and probably lacked sufficient legitimacy in Iraq to be credible.
- None of Iraq’s neighbours would be keen to see a democratic Iraq.

538. The paper stated:

“To the extent possible, the Iraqis themselves should have the primary role in determining their future government and external intervention should appear to come from within the Arab world or the UN – perhaps through an international conference (but the Afghanistan model is not necessarily relevant).”

539. Because of the likely delay in putting in place longer term arrangements, the international community was likely to need to establish and provide staff for an interim administration:

“This would need to be set up quickly and on a large scale. It would maintain stability and provide basic services such as food rationing. It should probably have a UN mandate and would need strong support and participation from Arab countries. There are various models which could be adopted or drawn on, including the transitional administrations in Afghanistan, Cambodia, East Timor and Kosovo. We should start exploring what would be appropriate in the Iraqi context.”

540. The FCO concluded that, in order to achieve its overarching priorities, the UK should:

- argue strongly for Iraq to remain a unitary state;
- “if possible avoid the root and branch dismantling of Iraq’s governmental and security structures”;
- accept that the political situation after Saddam Hussein’s departure would “almost certainly be messy and unstable”, that a new government “will possibly be military” and that “we should argue for political reform, but not necessarily full democracy in the short term”;

- aim for a political outcome to emerge from within Iraq, but with the international community perhaps needing to host a conference to help reach a decision on Iraq's future government; and
- recognise the likely need for a plan for an interim administration and an international security force.

541. The AHGI concluded that the FCO paper on scenarios for Iraq after Saddam Hussein needed to be more ambitious.

542. Mr Jonathan Powell described it as “fairly useless”. He advocated a UN administration in waiting followed by “some sort of democratic choice” and highlighted the importance of finding a way to stop the “terrible bloodletting of revenge”.

543. Early indications from Washington suggested that the US favoured a post-conflict military governorate followed by a civilian administration before the transfer of authority to an Iraqi government.

544. There was no apparent role for the UN in the US approach.

545. Sir David Manning commissioned further advice from the FCO on possible models for a post-Saddam Hussein administration, including on where the UN would fit in.

546. When the AHGI discussed the FCO paper on scenarios for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq on 27 September, it concluded that something more ambitious was required.²⁹¹ Six areas needed expanding:

- the duration of any international involvement in Iraq;
- the sustainability of UK forces there;
- the shape of Iraqi governance;
- SSR;
- economic recovery; and
- the humanitarian response.

547. The AHGI observed that US officials would not be available to discuss the paper until late October, but should be sent a copy well in advance.

548. Mr Powell commented to Sir David Manning:

“I think this is fairly useless. We need a UN Administration in waiting with some exiled Iraqi technocrats supported by an international military force. Then we need to come to some sort of democratic choice for the Iraqi people – a convention (or Loya Jirga!). The key things are to start identifying an Iraqi Karzai and to come up with a

²⁹¹ Minute Dodd to Manning, 30 September 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

way of stopping a terrible bloodletting of revenge after Saddam goes. Traditional in Iraq after conflict.”²⁹²

549. On 28 September, the British Embassy Washington updated London on initial US thinking on the post-conflict administration of Iraq.²⁹³ The latest NSC view was that an initial military governorate should be succeeded by a civilian administration, with the gradual draw down of the military presence ahead of the transfer of authority to an Iraqi government. The size of the military footprint, economic governance, oil and humanitarian and reconstruction needs were among issues yet to be properly addressed.

550. Sir David Manning drew on the comments from Mr Powell and the Washington Embassy in his response to the FCO paper on scenarios for the future of Iraq on 29 September.²⁹⁴ He asked for more detailed advice on which were the most plausible of the possible models for a post-Saddam Hussein administration. With the US reported to be proposing a military governorate, the most immediate question was where the UN would fit in. In particular, what scope was there for preparing the blueprint for a UN administration-in-waiting drawing on currently exiled technocrats. Being very careful not to draw false analogies with Afghanistan, should a UN administration set out an early timetable promising democratic consultation on the Loya Jirga model, or would this risk chaos?

551. The MOD raised with the FCO the need to consider how assumptions about the UK’s post-conflict role might inform decisions on the UK’s military contribution to conflict.

552. Sir Christopher Meyer highlighted the need to keep sight of the UK’s post-conflict commercial interests.

553. DFID commented on the importance of learning from DFID and inter-departmental experience elsewhere.

554. On 30 September, Mr Lee instructed Mr David Johnson, Head of the MOD Iraq Secretariat, to send the MOD’s views to the FCO. He suggested that the FCO paper should include more detail on de-Ba’athification, how an international security force might be put together and how large it would need to be. Mr Lee also requested the inclusion of questions and assumptions that would make clear “the speculative nature of the current state of thinking”. Those might include: whether the UN Security Council would supervise reconstruction if the US acted unilaterally; the role of neighbours, Russia, France and international bodies other than the UN; and whether it was possible to “determine criteria for UK military involvement”.²⁹⁵

²⁹² [Manuscript comment Powell to Manning on Letter McDonald to Manning, 26 September 2002, ‘Scenarios for the future of Iraq after Saddam’.](#)

²⁹³ Telegram 1251 Washington to FCO London, 28 September 2002, ‘US/Iraq’.

²⁹⁴ Letter Manning to McDonald, 29 September 2002, ‘Scenarios for the future of Iraq after Saddam’.

²⁹⁵ Minute Lee to Head of Sec(Iraq), 30 September 2002, ‘Scenarios for the Future of Iraq after Saddam’.

555. Mr Johnson set out the MOD's views in a letter to Mr Gray on 2 October.²⁹⁶ He recommended that the FCO paper be clear about:

- The circumstances in which the UK might seek to establish democracy or set up “some kind of authoritarian regime” in Iraq. The UK's public position should “not raise expectations that we may subsequently disappoint”.
- How much of Iraq's bureaucracy was “either redeemable or necessary”. In the paper the FCO argued against root-and-branch dismantling of a system permeated by the Ba'ath Party, but also suggested that much of the Party would collapse anyway. “The key issue is surely the extent to which the existing bureaucratic structure will need to be retained (and no doubt re-educated) in order for the country to be governable in practice.”
- The different options for an interim government. The paper needed to distinguish between the situation following military action explicitly authorised by the UN and that following what might be called “US unilateral action”. In the latter case, was it still safe to assume the UN would take on the role of supervising reconstruction?
- The locus and role of other Permanent Members of the UN Security Council and neighbouring states.
- The potential role of multilateral institutions and states in reconstruction and security provision. For the UK, “a long-term commitment significantly over and above the forces currently in theatre, particularly following on from a war-fighting campaign, would have serious consequences for our ability to respond to other contingencies, or even perhaps our ability to sustain current tasks”.

556. Mr Johnson commented that, although many of those questions might not be easy to answer at that stage, they needed to be raised, as did the issue of “whether and how an assumption about UK post-conflict involvement might feed back into our decision-making about our contribution to conflict (if it comes to that)”.

557. Mr Johnson added that the DoD had expressed an interest in the subject. Mr Webb was planning to send a copy of the next version of the paper to Mr Feith.

558. Some of the MOD's suggestions were picked up in the next FCO paper, on models for administering Iraq, described later in this Section.²⁹⁷

559. Sir Christopher Meyer questioned whether the paper was right to classify the securing of UK reconstruction contracts as a second order objective.²⁹⁸ Russia and France were, by all accounts, anxious about their economic interests in Iraq after Saddam Hussein's demise. UK interests were not something to press immediately, but

²⁹⁶ [Letter Johnson to Gray, 2 October 2002, 'Scenarios for the future of Iraq after Saddam'](#).

²⁹⁷ [Paper FCO, \[undated, version received at AHGI, 11 October 2002\], 'Models for Administering a Post-Saddam Iraq'](#).

²⁹⁸ Telegram 1256 Washington to FCO London, 1 October 2002, 'Iraq: Dividing the Spoils'.

should be a “top priority” in post-Saddam Hussein contingency planning. Mr Blair would have to pursue the issue with President Bush if the UK was to have any impact.

560. Sir Christopher returned to the same theme during November, in the context of Iraqi oil contracts. The issue of oil contracts is addressed later in this Section.

561. DFID commented on the importance of learning from DFID and inter-departmental experience elsewhere.²⁹⁹ Areas to consider included: SSR; civil-military co-ordination (CIMIC); DDR; economic recovery; UN co-ordination structures; donor financing; and the role of IFIs.

562. Some minor changes were made to the version of the FCO paper submitted to the AHGI on 11 October, including the addition of a reference to the need to plan on the basis that there would have to be “a major international effort, possibly for an extended period”.³⁰⁰

STATE DEPARTMENT PAPER ON LESSONS OF THE PAST

563. On 26 September, Mr Richard Haass, State Department Director of Policy Planning, produced a 15-page policy paper on Iraq reconstruction for Secretary Powell.³⁰¹ Mr Haass described the paper, reproduced in full in *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, as “the largest single project we undertook during my tenure at Policy Planning”. The paper was built on “an in-depth examination of the lessons of US experiences with nation building throughout the twentieth century” and concluded with:

“Seven Lessons for Iraq

- We must decide on the scale of our ambitions in Iraq, recognizing that goals that go beyond disarmament and regional stability and seek to build democracy, prosperity, and good governance will require a heavy commitment in resources, military involvement and diplomatic engagement. The strategic importance of Iraq points toward ambitious long-term goals ...
- We must prevent a security vacuum from emerging in Iraq that could be exploited by internal spoilers, encourage external meddlers, and preclude reconstruction and humanitarian efforts ...
- We should help formulate specific plans to transform the UN Oil-for-Food program into a mechanism that will simultaneously support the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, fund the broader reconstruction effort, and address outside claimants’ justified interests ... At the same time, the United States should avoid taking ‘ownership’ of the Iraqi oil industry.

²⁹⁹ Letter Conflict & Humanitarian Affairs Dept [junior official] to Gray, 4 October 2002, ‘After Saddam’.

³⁰⁰ [Paper FCO, \[undated, version received at AHGI, 11 October 2002\], ‘Scenarios for the future of Iraq after Saddam’.](#)

³⁰¹ Haass RN. *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of two Iraqi Wars*. Simon & Schuster, 2009.

- We should preclude only a small number of members of the old regime ... from participating in the post-Saddam political order. We will most likely need the assistance of many associated in some way with the old regime to maintain order and establish a new viable state ...
- We should avoid imposing a particular ruler or party on Iraq, but cannot allow Iraq to degenerate into chaos ... We should work with our partners to launch a political process that will allow the Iraqi people to move toward self-government ...
- We need to contain potential meddling by Iraq's neighbours, as well as by other international actors ... We need to maintain broad and effective bilateral dialogue with these countries, forge a six plus two-like forum³⁰² for co-ordination among Iraq's neighbours and most interested outside powers, and ... strive to develop new mechanisms to manage security concerns in the region as well as promote economic linkages ...
- ... We should assert forceful, public [US] leadership of the security operations, and then guide the other components of the reconstruction effort from behind the scenes as we are now doing in Afghanistan.”

564. The Haass memorandum did not have an impact in Washington. Mr Haass recorded that Secretary Powell agreed most of it and sent copies to Secretary Rumsfeld, Dr Rice and Vice President Cheney:

“No one could argue that these perspectives had not been raised, although it was true that the lack of any meaningful inter-agency process or oversight of the aftermath made it too easy for the Defense Department (which was essentially left by the NSC to oversee itself) to ignore advice from the outside.”

565. A copy of the memorandum was handed to UK officials by the State Department in late 2002.³⁰³

SPG PAPER, 30 SEPTEMBER 2002: 'UK MILITARY STRATEGIC THINKING ON IRAQ'

566. The “aftermath” section of the fourth edition of the SPG paper on UK strategic military thinking:

- **raised concerns about US post-conflict policy, including the US approach to de-Ba'athification, which could run counter to the need for basic governance and increase post-conflict reliance on the external authority;**
- **listed the principal post-conflict challenges in Iraq, including law and order and effective administration;**

³⁰² Afghanistan's six neighbours (Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, China and Pakistan), the US and Russia.

³⁰³ Manuscript comment [unattributed] on Paper [unattributed and undated], 'Reconstruction in Iraq – Lessons of the Past'.

- **identified “key drivers” that would determine the extent and nature of post-conflict engagement, including levels of consent and damage to Iraq’s infrastructure; and**
- **listed pre-invasion planning tasks, including establishing an FCO/DFID/ MOD “framework plan”.**

567. The 30 September edition of the SPG paper on UK strategic military thinking included an expanded section on what it called the “aftermath – resolution phase”, the word “resolution” added in recognition of the possibility of a non-military, diplomatic resolution to the Iraq crisis.³⁰⁴

568. The paper summarised what was known about current conditions in Iraq:

- “• Iraq though suffering from economic sanctions has great natural wealth, adequate water resources (with an antiquated urban distribution network) and an agricultural sector that is capable of producing food though in need of reform.
- Security structures are bound to the current leadership through ties of kinship and patronage at senior levels, and economic advantage and fear at the bottom.
- Iraq has a sophisticated though choking bureaucracy.
- Iraqi infrastructure is poorly maintained by the current regime with damage from the war of 1991 still not repaired, and water supplies becoming contaminated in major urban centres.
- Population has been ethnically mixed by current regime by internal displacement to weaken opposition; however though mixed ethnic, cultural, and religious divides persist with old scores remaining unsettled.
- Indebtedness to Russia. Other regional debts may also exist.”

569. On US policy the paper stated:

- “• US plans envisage a period of military authority exercised through a military governor. This would be followed by a gradual transition to civil authority and finally Iraqi self-rule.
- Allied to this is an extensive programme to dismantle and remove elements of the Iraqi regime closely related to Ba’athist rule.
- The UK will need to assess whether it can comfortably support the US intent to provide military stewardship rather than rapidly establishing an Iraqi transitional authority at the earliest opportunity.
- The US desire to remove the influence of the previous regime may also run counter to the need for basic administration and governance, further increasing the reliance on external authority. This may prove counter-productive.”

³⁰⁴ [Paper \[SPG\], 30 September 2002, ‘UK Military Strategic Thinking on Iraq’.](#)

570. The principal challenges would be:

- “• Law and order and effective administration.
- Ethnic/factional conflict.
- Humanitarian welfare.
- Regional agendas and interference.
- Remnant forces.
- Infrastructure shortfalls.”

571. The paper also listed “key drivers” that would determine the extent and nature of post-conflict engagement:

- “• Relationship with new leadership.
- Level of consent.
- Level of international support/perceived legitimacy.
- Speed of collapse/defeat.
- Extent of damage to infrastructure.
- Compliance/extent of defeat of Iraqi security forces.
- Requirement to remove elements of security apparatus to allow good governance.”

572. Lists of post-conflict military tasks, dropped from the 4 September version of the paper, were reinstated with small amendments. Pre-invasion planning tasks were included for the first time:

“Pre-conflict:

- Establish FCO/DFID/MOD framework plan. Confirm in-country liaison arrangements.
- Explore US intent and acceptable scale of consequence management commitment.
- Develop agreed responsibilities for elements of consequence management.
- Account for post-conflict needs in targeting process.
- Identify Coalition sp [support] to Phase IV and any potential burden sharing.
- Identify regional attitudes to conflict and any possible reactions to outcomes.”

573. The Chiefs of Staff agreed on 2 October that: “Phase IV considerations needed to be clearly understood, given that the inevitable UK involvement might result in an

even greater burden than war-fighting per se.”³⁰⁵ The 25 September instruction to Lt Gen Pigott to “Explore options for potential UK involvement in Phase IV”, remained on the list of “actions arising” attached to the minutes of the 2 October meeting, with an extended deadline of 16 October.

574. Lord Boyce told the Inquiry he doubted there had been very many Chiefs of Staff meetings where Phase IV had not been discussed:

“... half of most meetings was on Phase IV or half of the meetings about Iraq would be spent talking about Phase IV.”³⁰⁶

575. More material on Phase IV was added to the 6 November edition of the SPG paper, described later in this Section.

576. The proposal for an FCO/DFID/MOD framework plan was not acted upon until late January 2003 (see Section 6.5).

JIC ASSESSMENT, 10 OCTOBER 2002: ‘INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: THE THREAT FROM IRAQ’

577. A JIC Assessment on 10 October judged that US-led military action against Iraq would motivate extremist groups and individuals to carry out terrorist attacks against Coalition targets.

578. On 10 October, at the FCO’s request, the JIC assessed the terrorist threat from Iraq in the event of US-led military action or imminent military action.³⁰⁷ The Assessment made no explicit reference to terrorist attacks against Coalition targets in Iraq, other than by Saddam Hussein during conflict, but stated:

“US-led military action against Iraq will motivate other [non-Iraqi] Islamic extremist groups and individuals to carry out terrorist attacks against Coalition targets. Al Qaida will use a Coalition attack on Iraq as further ‘justification’ for terrorist attacks against Western or Israeli interests ...

“A number of anti-West terrorist groups exploited the situation during the 1991 Gulf War ... Such attacks could be conducted again, by individuals and groups unconnected with Iraq. This may be exacerbated by weaker international support for Coalition action compared to 1991.

“We judge that the greatest terrorist threat in the event of military action against Iraq will come from Al Qaida and other Islamic extremists, but they will be pursuing their own agendas, not responding to direction from Iraq. In the longer term, a Coalition attack may radicalise increasing numbers of Muslims, especially Arabs, and boost support and recruitment for extremist groups.”

³⁰⁵ Minutes, 2 October 2002, Chiefs of Staff meeting.

³⁰⁶ Public hearing, 27 January 2011, page 81.

³⁰⁷ [JIC Assessment, 10 October 2002, ‘International Terrorism: The Threat from Iraq’.](#)

579. The JIC addressed the wider terrorist threat in the event of military conflict on 10 February 2003 (see Section 6.5).

POSSIBLE MODELS FOR ADMINISTERING A POST-SADDAM HUSSEIN IRAQ

580. The FCO paper ‘Models for Administering a Post-Saddam Iraq’ identified a number of arguments against establishing a US military governorate, concluding that:

- A UN mandate would be critical in any post-conflict scenario.
- The Coalition would need to retain responsibility for security for some time.
- The Coalition would also need to control and administer Iraq for an unknown period before the creation of an interim administration.
- A UN-led Transitional Authority would be most appropriate model for the interim administration.

581. The FCO recommended that work should begin on examining a possible UN role in more detail.

582. It did not address the implications of the different models for the UK.

583. On 4 October, the FCO sent Sir David Manning a draft of the third paper in its series on post-conflict issues: ‘Models for Administering a Post-Saddam Iraq’.³⁰⁸

584. A second version with a small number of revisions was handed to the AHGI on 11 October.³⁰⁹

585. The analysis in the paper rested on three assumptions:

- a. the US-led Coalition takes control of Iraq following a short campaign which does not cause a humanitarian crisis or extensive damage to infrastructure;
- b. there has been no significant WMD usage; and
- c. Saddam’s regime has been removed almost entirely, no alternative regime had replaced him (eg a military junta) and there have been no uprisings by the Kurds or Shia.”

586. The authors warned: “These assumptions are optimistic. The reality is likely to be more complicated, making the transition to a civilian administration harder.” They also emphasised that much would depend on the legal basis of the campaign: in the absence

³⁰⁸ [Letter McDonald to Manning, 4 October 2002, ‘Models for Administering a Post-Saddam Iraq’ attaching Paper \[draft\] FCO, \[undated\], ‘Models for Administering a Post-Saddam Iraq’.](#)

³⁰⁹ [Paper FCO, \[undated, version received at AHGI, 11 October 2002\], ‘Models for Administering a Post-Saddam Iraq’.](#)

of a UN mandate it would be harder for the US-led Coalition to draw on the support of others in the “aftermath”.

587. The body of the paper set out the immediate challenges and responsibilities the Coalition would face on arrival, and suggested models for managing the transfer of power to an Iraqi government. Immediate challenges included administering Iraq, providing security and preparing to hand over power:

- Administering Iraq would involve: “Provision of basic necessities ... Restoration of critical infrastructure ... Managing the economy ... Medical treatment ... Resettlement of refugees ... [and] Public information”.
- A “strong security presence” would be needed to “Ensure the effective destruction of Iraq’s WMD programme ... Provide internal and external security ... Protect any transitional administration ... Manage Prisoners of War ... [and] Initiate a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme.”
- Preparing for the successful handover of power meant going into Iraq “with a clear idea of how [to] get out again”. Iraqis should determine their own government, but it should be “representative of Iraq’s diversity and ... deliver effective government”. Three options were identified:
 - democracy (a government elected by a free vote and universal suffrage);
 - representative government (reflecting ethnic and regional interests); or
 - a unifying leader (although none was immediately identifiable).

588. The paper stated that, although it would be:

“... possible to explore ideas with Iraq exiles ... they have little credibility within Iraq. Any solution would almost certainly have to be sorted out once Saddam had gone ... We should avoid making promises (eg on the timing of any consultation process and possible government structures) which may later prove unworkable.”

589. The section describing possible models for the transfer of power focused on the nature of the transitional authority to be established after the immediate post-conflict period:

“The US-led Coalition would almost certainly have to retain responsibility for the security function for some time after any conflict ...

“In the immediate aftermath of any war, the Coalition military forces would need to take control and administer Iraq at a basic level, including eg ensuring food and medical supplies. It is not clear how long this would last. Ideally, it would be a matter of weeks. But much would depend on the security situation. It is quite possible that it could become an extended period.”

590. Once security had stabilised, “the Coalition would look to establish a clearer structure to carry out the full range of administrative functions ... the ideal would be to make as much use as possible of the existing Iraqi administrative apparatus”.

591. One of the most difficult questions was the form that administration should take. Two options had been suggested: a US military governorate (with or without a UN mandate); and a UN or UN-supported transitional authority. The US preference was for a military governorate.

592. The authors cast doubt on any analogy with the rebuilding of Germany and Japan after the Second World War, but suggested that a military governorate could have advantages for the UK:

“It could guarantee US political and financial commitment to the reconstruction process. It would help ensure the civil administration and security elements of post-war government remained interconnected.

“But there are major disadvantages. It is questionable whether a military governorate would be able to carry out all the tasks outlined above effectively. Much would depend on who the US brought in to take on the key roles, including civilian personnel. It would be essential that full attention was paid to civilian reconstruction tasks ...

“It is not clear what the legal basis for a governorate would be ...

“Presentationally a US-led military governorate would be unattractive. Even with a UN mandate it would not be seen as impartial in the same way as a UN operation.”

593. There were two possible models for a UN administration: a UN transitional authority as in Cambodia and East Timor, or a UN-supported transitional administration on the Afghanistan model. Ideally they would be endorsed by some sort of Iraqi political process. The paper explained:

“Under the Cambodia model, international personnel would take over the main governmental and military/security structures, replacing the senior officials and running the organisations themselves. More junior staff would remain in place ...

“We consider the Cambodia model likely to be most appropriate for post-Saddam Iraq. Many senior figures in Iraq’s bureaucracy and military are compromised by their connections with Saddam’s regime, and also lower down. Rather than deciding immediately after any conflict who to retain and who to push out, it would be neater for the UN Transitional Authority to replace the top tier of leadership with international personnel immediately.

“Once this system was in place, the UN could then move towards the Afghanistan model, by gradually re-installing senior Iraqi officials as appropriate ...”

594. The UN approach raised two further questions:

“a) Who would be the domestic figurehead? ... There is no obvious candidate amongst the Iraqi exile/diaspora communities. It is doubtful whether they

would have the credibility. But we should be open to suggestions. It is possible someone would emerge in the aftermath of conflict – Karzai did.

- b) Who would head the Transitional Authority? It would be critical to identify a heavyweight figure to head the Transitional Authority. He or she would need to be acceptable to the Iraqis, within the region and wider Muslim world and to the US-led Coalition members ...”

595. The authors concluded:

- “– **Whatever we do, a UN mandate would be critical in any ‘Day After’ situation ...**
- **The US and coalition partners would need to retain responsibility for Iraq’s security for some time after any conflict, irrespective of the administrative arrangements [removed from the 11 October version] ...**
 - **The US-led military coalition would need to control and administer Iraq at a basic level for a period after the end of the conflict and before the creation of an interim administration. It is not clear how long this period would last [replaced in the 11 October version with: “The US-led military coalition would need to secure Iraq for a period after the conflict, including during the creation of an interim administration. It is not clear how long this period would last. We would want it to be as short as possible”].**
 - **Our initial assessment is that a UN-led Transitional Authority would be most appropriate for the interim administration of Iraq ...**
 - **There are strong arguments against a US military governorate – practical, presentational and legal. We should not rule it out entirely, but need to understand better why the Americans favour this option and how it would work.”**

596. The paper stated that work should begin on examining a possible UN role in more detail, in particular:

- mapping key tasks and posts to be filled;
- identifying someone who could head a transitional authority;
- identifying Iraqis who could work in an international administration; and
- identifying “appropriate British personnel to take over key roles” [amended to “appropriate personnel (particularly Iraqis)” in the 11 October version].

597. The 11 October version of the paper contained an additional recommendation that:

“Irrespective of the administrative arrangements, the US and Coalition partners would need to retain overall responsibility for Iraq’s security for some time after the conflict. How the different security-related tasks (including security sector reform) should be carried out and by whom needs further consideration.”

598. The FCO circulated follow-up papers on the possible shape of an international administration for Iraq and on SSR to the AHGI on 18 October. Both are described later in this Section.

599. Sir Peter Ricketts told the Inquiry:

“We started planning in the autumn of 2002, and at that point, of course, it wasn’t clear exactly what scenario there would be in terms of a new regime in Iraq, but we assumed, I think, from that point onwards, that we would be dealing with an Iraq without Saddam Hussein and in the aftermath of a military intervention.

“Therefore, we based our planning on the assumption that the right vehicle for that would be the UN, which had had extensive experience of post-conflict stabilisation work in a number of different countries. But we looked at a range of scenarios and a range of possible outcomes from ones where it might be possible to work with large parts of the previous Iraqi administration to scenarios where it would not, and we had to look at a fairly wide range of scenarios.”³¹⁰

600. Iraq was discussed at a meeting Mr Ricketts attended with his US, French and German counterparts in Berlin on 14 October.³¹¹ The record stated that there was an emerging consensus from the US Future of Iraq Project that “the Republican Guard and Ba’ath Party would have to go; but some feeling that medium and lower levels of government might remain, as might non-senior members of the military”. Mr Ricketts indicated he thought it “likely the Ba’ath Party would implode post-Saddam”.

601. In the US, the CIA considered the Ba’ath Party in two reports in October 2002.³¹²

602. The first, ‘Iraq: the Day After’, dated 18 October, assessed that the Ba’ath Party would collapse along with Saddam Hussein’s regime, but added:

“Despite the improbability that Ba’ath ideology will persist after Saddam, much of the infrastructure of the Party within civilian sectors, such as professional and civil associations, may sustain to facilitate a restoration of government services.”

603. On the role of Iraqi military and security services, the paper stated that “many troops must be quickly disarmed and demobilized to remove a potential focal point for Sunni coup plotting”, and that “certain units are so dominated by ... pro-Saddam tribesmen or otherwise so intimately linked to the regime that their continued existence will be incompatible with democracy”. The paper judged that officers who favoured a professional military ethos or saw themselves as guardians of Iraqi national values “may play a role in the post-Saddam military”.

³¹⁰ Public hearing 9 December 2003, pages 62-63.

³¹¹ Telegram 390 Berlin to FCO London, 14 October 2002, ‘Iraq Restricted: Close Allies: 14 October: Iraq Post-Saddam’.

³¹² US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report on Prewar Intelligence Assessments about Post-war Iraq*, 25 May 2007.

604. The second CIA report, 'The Iraqi Ba'ath Party: Inexorably Tied to Saddam', dated 31 October, assessed that many bureaucrats had joined the Ba'ath Party to attain their positions, were not "ardent supporters of Saddam" and "could probably remain ... [after having been] investigated and vetted". The report stated, however, that the CIA did not know much about the loyalties, party affiliations, or potential criminal activities of most Iraqi military officers and government bureaucrats.

605. It is not clear whether either report was seen by officials in the UK.

606. FCO briefing on post-conflict issues for Mr Straw's visit to Washington on 14 and 15 October, prepared on 10 October, reflected the conclusions of the FCO papers for the AHGI.³¹³

607. Suggested points for Mr Straw to raise included a list of reasons why it would not be easy to decide what new governmental structures should look like:

- ethnic/religious/tribal mix;
- residual Ba'ath influence;
- uneven distribution of resources;
- lack of political infrastructure or unifying figure;
- scope for neighbours to meddle."

608. Officials suggested that Mr Straw seek agreement to "a few underlying principles:

- Iraq to remain a unitary state;
- no need for root and branch dismantling of government;
- Iraqis should determine their own government; and
- need for more representative government, but not necessarily full democracy in short term."

609. Other points covered in the briefing included the need for:

- "a credible legal base and UN framework";
- a clear exit strategy built on an understanding of what Iraq could look like and a process for getting there;
- a commitment to stay "as long as necessary"; and
- recognition that although it would be difficult to minimise the risk of Iraq's disintegration, it was important not to fall into the "opposite trap of exaggerating Iraq's fragility."

³¹³ [Paper Middle East Department, 10 October 2002, 'Foreign Secretary's visit to Washington, 14-15 October, Iraq: forward thinking'.](#)

610. On oil and gas, the briefing stated:

- “• ... current speculation on post-Saddam arrangements in Iraqi oil sector are damaging public perceptions of our motives. See some risk of creating misimpression we are in this for the sake of spoils;
- any new regime in Baghdad will need to be seen to honour legitimate existing commitments, and to maintain open bidding procedure for oil and gas investment (unlike Kuwait after 1991).”

611. Mr Straw and Secretary Powell discussed post-conflict issues on 14 and 15 October.³¹⁴

FCO PAPER: ‘VISION FOR IRAQ AND THE IRAQI PEOPLE’

612. The FCO’s ‘Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People’ was a statement of the UK’s aspirations for Iraq.

613. It was intended to have a positive impact on UK and Iraqi Public opinion, but did not appear to reflect any assessment of the degree to which Iraqi citizens might share the UK’s aspirations.

614. The ‘Vision’ was never used in its original form, but did inform the Government’s statements on the future of Iraq in the run up to the invasion (see Section 6.5).

615. The fourth FCO paper on post-conflict Iraq, the ‘Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People’, was put to the AHGI on 11 October. The record of the meeting stated that the paper was to “remain in reserve”.³¹⁵

616. The ‘Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People’ was a one-page document by DSI containing echoes of the 2001 ‘Contract with the Iraqi People’, described earlier in this Section.³¹⁶ It set out the UK’s aspirations for the Iraqi people and how it would help achieve them. It stated that the UK had “no quarrel” with Iraqis and wanted to help them “restore Iraq to its proper dignity and place in the community of nations”.

617. The UK’s five aspirations were:

- “• Freedom: an Iraq which respects fundamental human rights, including freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the dignity of family life, and whose people live free from repression and the fear of torture or arbitrary arrest.
- Good Government: an independent Iraq respecting the rule of law and ruled in accordance with democratic principles, whose government reflects the diversity of its population.

³¹⁴ [Minute Straw to Prime Minister, 16 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Powell: No US Interlocutors’.](#)

³¹⁵ Minute Dodd to Manning, 14 October 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

³¹⁶ Paper [draft] FCO, [undated], ‘Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People’.

- International Respect: an Iraq respected by its neighbours and the wider international community.
- Peace: a unified Iraq within its current borders living at peace with itself and with its neighbours.
- Prosperity: an Iraq sharing the wealth created by its economy with all Iraqis.”

618. The UK would help by:

- working to bring an early end to sanctions;
- supporting Iraq’s reintegration into the region;
- encouraging generous debt rescheduling;
- promoting increased aid from the international community;
- supporting an international reconstruction programme, “if one is needed”;
- promoting investment in Iraq’s oil industry;
- encouraging renewal of international education and cultural links;
- promoting institutional and administrative reform.

619. A revised ‘Vision’ was prepared in late February 2003 and is described in Section 6.5.

DFID PAPER: ‘IRAQ: POTENTIAL HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS’

620. During October, DFID produced two papers on Iraq: a paper on humanitarian contingency planning for the AHGI and a desktop analysis of central and southern Iraq for internal use in DFID.

621. The paper on humanitarian planning outlined possible humanitarian consequences of military action and the likely emergency requirements. It warned that DFID funds were likely to prove insufficient and that the international humanitarian system was becoming overstretched.

622. Before the 11 October meeting of the AHGI, Mr Alistair Fernie, Head of DFID Middle East and North Africa Department, circulated a draft paper on humanitarian planning not yet seen by Ms Short or other departments.³¹⁷ The paper outlined the provisions of OFF, considered the potential humanitarian consequences of military action and possible responses, and summarised NGO and multilateral agency contingency planning.³¹⁸

623. The draft paper made two assumptions:

- “a. That the UN is able to mount a coherent response to the developing situation in Iraq – before, during and after any conflict.

³¹⁷ Letter Fernie to Dodd, 11 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Humanitarian Contingency Planning’.

³¹⁸ [Paper DFID, 11 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Potential Humanitarian Implications’.](#)

- b. That the UK role should be to develop and sustain a broad international coalition to deal with the humanitarian crisis in co-operation with the UN and other key international players.”

It added:

“Assumption a) is credible if the UN has a mandate and active support from its members to do so. The situation might be different in the event of military action not backed by the UN. Assumption b) is in line with current UK humanitarian policy.”

624. The draft listed possible humanitarian consequences of military action, including:

- large-scale civilian loss of life;
- internal and international population displacement;
- significant infrastructure and environmental damage;
- inter-factional clashes within Iraq; and
- use of chemical and biological weapons.

Likely emergency requirements included provision of basic needs and: “Early focus on recovery initiatives, particularly linking into infrastructure and environmental damage, and the impact on livelihoods.”

625. The draft explained that DFID’s Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department (CHAD) was undertaking a “short-term desktop study of the humanitarian situation” in central and southern Iraq. If restrictions on external contacts with humanitarian agencies were lifted, CHAD would obtain a fuller picture of contingency planning and agency capacities. The CHAD Operations Team (OT) was accelerating its post-Afghanistan refit and being brought up to its full authorised strength of 30.

626. The draft also stated that:

“Any large-scale UK humanitarian response would require additional funding from the Central Reserve. DFID’s existing small (£6m) humanitarian programme in Iraq is fully committed; available humanitarian funds within CHAD are likely to be grossly insufficient and most of DFID’s contingency reserve has already been allocated.”

627. The draft paper did not consider whether there was a need for contingency plans should either of the underlying assumptions prove wrong.

628. The Inquiry has seen no indication that DFID addressed that possibility in any detail until February 2003.

DFID PAPER: ‘CENTRAL/SOUTHERN IRAQ HUMANITARIAN SITUATION ANALYSIS’

629. The DFID desktop analysis of central and southern Iraq highlighted the extent of economic decline, the deterioration in public services and the vulnerability of the population.

630. The problems with Iraq’s infrastructure and public services highlighted by the review were not addressed by DFID’s planning for post-conflict Iraq over the coming months, which focused almost exclusively on the provision of humanitarian relief.

631. The DFID desktop analysis of central and southern Iraq, the second half of the Iraq review programme initiated in May, was completed on 17 October.³¹⁹

632. Like the northern Iraq review in August, the ‘Central/southern Iraq humanitarian situation analysis’ was marked for DFID internal circulation only. The Inquiry has seen no evidence that it was distributed more widely.

633. Unlike the northern Iraq review, because of restrictions on external contacts by DFID officials, the analysis of central and southern Iraq was produced without consulting the UN, NGOs or bilateral partners, but did draw widely on external (including UN) publications.

634. Observations, some of which were repeated from DFID’s report to Ms Short in May, included:

- “serial decline” or “collapse” in non-oil sectors of the economy;
- the negative impact on public services of the large number of public employees leaving their jobs;
- 50 percent of schools physically unsafe, unfit for teaching or learning and considered a public health hazard for children;
- 80 percent of primary schools in a “deteriorated” state;
- Umm Qasr port in a “dilapidated” state;
- only 50 percent of electricity demand being met;
- rising levels of waterborne diseases and salt intrusion in water systems in southern Iraq;
- transport infrastructure improving slowly “from a highly degraded base”;
- the vulnerability of the population could be expected to increase as international pressure on the government grew; and
- in the event of military action, the scale and duration of a humanitarian crisis would be “dependent on efforts to stabilise the situation and address political, security, humanitarian and economic considerations coherently and rapidly”.

635. Officials recommended that better data be sought as soon as contact with international agencies was authorised.

636. The two DFID reviews of northern and southern Iraq constituted a significant body of information on the scale of Iraq’s social and economic decline.

³¹⁹ [Email DFID \[junior official\] to Fernie, 17 October 2002, ‘CSI analysis’ attaching Paper Conflict & Humanitarian Affairs Department, October 2002, ‘Central/southern Iraq humanitarian situation analysis’.](#)

637. DFID should have shared that material with other participants in the AHGI to inform cross-government analysis of the state of Iraq and preparations for post-conflict reconstruction.

638. Sir Suma Chakrabarti, DFID Permanent Secretary from 2002 to 2008, told the Inquiry that DFID's knowledge of Iraq when it began contingency planning in 2002 was "pretty scanty" as DFID had not itself implemented humanitarian programmes in Iraq in the period leading up to the invasion, working instead through the UN agencies, NGOs and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).³²⁰

639. Sir Suma also stated that DFID focused on humanitarian issues "because we assumed that the UN would come in and show leadership on the post-conflict reconstruction and recovery phase" and there was "optimism about the UN being able to play that role".³²¹

640. Mr Webb told the Inquiry that DFID was helpful on humanitarian issues and was ready "to bring in some of their expertise to help with some of the reconstruction".³²² He stated that: "the concentration on the humanitarian side, which we had expected might go on for a few months, had probably taken people's eye a bit off the reconstruction side ..."

UK STRATEGIC POLICY OBJECTIVES FOR IRAQ

641. Mr Blair agreed draft UK strategic policy objectives for Iraq in early October.

642. Those objectives were published in January 2003.

643. There is no indication that Mr Blair sought Ministers' collective view on the strategic policy objectives between October 2002 and January 2003.

644. Nor did Mr Blair seek advice on whether the strategic policy objectives were achievable, and, if so, in what timeframe and at what cost.

645. The preparation of the objectives is described in detail in Section 3.5.

646. On 4 October, Mr Bowen submitted draft strategic policy objectives for Iraq, on which the Cabinet Office had been working with other departments, to Sir David Manning.³²³ The "prime objective" was removal of the threat from Iraqi WMD. Other draft objectives included the end state approved by Mr Straw and Mr Hoon in May, to which a reference to "effective and representative government" had been added:

"As rapidly as possible, we would like Iraq to become a stable, united and law-abiding state, within its present borders, co-operating with the international

³²⁰ Public hearing, 8 December 2009, page 9.

³²¹ Public hearing, 8 December 2009, pages 61-62.

³²² Private hearing, 23 June 2010, page 59.

³²³ [Minute Bowen to Manning, 4 October 2002, 'Iraq: Strategic Policy Objectives'](#).

community, no longer posing a threat to its neighbours or to international security, abiding by all its international obligations and providing effective and representative government to its own people.”

647. Mr Bowen commented that some had argued that the aspirations for the future of Iraq should be translated into the main objective. He had resisted “on the grounds that our purpose has been plainly stated by the Prime Minister as disarmament and because the effective implementation of that policy does not necessarily deliver our wider aspirations”. The objectives would also need to “evolve with changing circumstances”. If military action were authorised, the paper would need to be revised.

648. Mr Lee sent a copy of the draft to Mr Hoon’s office, commenting that, while the text was “helpful in acknowledging the need to make military plans and preparations in case military action is required it does not, from our point of view, go far enough in providing direction for current military activity and an information strategy”.³²⁴ Mr Lee did not expect the draft to move forward until there was a clear UN position. He added that the Cabinet Office and No.10 accepted that the objectives would need to evolve. They were not for publication at that stage.

649. Draft military campaign objectives, building on the policy objectives, were prepared in late January 2003 and are addressed in Section 6.5.

650. On 22 October, Sir David Manning informed members of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (DOP) and the Home, Environment and Transport Secretaries that Mr Blair had approved the strategic policy objectives, which “should help guide work in departments for the current phase of activity”.³²⁵

651. A version of the objectives was published as a Written Ministerial Statement by Mr Straw on 7 January 2003.

AHGI STOCKTAKE OF CONTINGENCY PLANNING

652. On 10 and 11 October, the House of Representatives and the Senate authorised US use of force in Iraq.³²⁶

653. Sir Christopher Meyer reported on 11 October that President Bush was “intensely suspicious of the UN”, but had “bought the argument that it is worth trying to maximise international support by giving the Security Council one last chance”.³²⁷ That argument had “got stronger as the administration started to focus ... on ‘day after’ issues: it is one thing to go to war without ... UN cover, quite another to rule Iraq indefinitely without UN backing”.

³²⁴ [Minute Lee to PS/Secretary of State \[MOD\], 7 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Strategic Policy Objectives’.](#)

³²⁵ [Letter Manning to McDonald, 22 October 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

³²⁶ Almanac of Policy Issues, 15 October 2002, *Congressional Resolution Authorizing Force Against Iraq.*

³²⁷ [Telegram 1326 Washington to FCO London, 11 October 2002, ‘US/Iraq: Will the President go to war’.](#)

654. In a separate telegram on post-conflict issues sent the same day, Sir Christopher Meyer reported that the US media, briefed by an unnamed senior official, was saying that US views were coalescing around the idea of Iraq being governed by a US military commander in the initial period after Saddam Hussein's removal.³²⁸ Sir Christopher explained that US Government views were yet to crystallise, but there was a strong inclination towards that approach, which was at odds with the UN-led solution in the recent FCO paper.

655. Sir Christopher concluded:

“The bottom line is that the US will be firmly in the driving seat in organising any post-Saddam administration. We need to wake up to this reality and consider how best we can align ourselves to ensure not only a stable Iraq but also the maximum benefit for UK plc.”

656. On 14 October, the Cabinet Office produced a grid of military and non-military contingency planning under way in Whitehall. Organised into “external” and “domestic” issues, work ranged from the FCO paper on administering post-Saddam Hussein Iraq to an ACPO review of counter-terrorism and counter-extremism policing.³²⁹

657. The grid listed 11 papers attributed to the FCO, including the five already circulated to the AHGI, and six others, “not yet ready for circulation”, covering:

- consular contingencies in the region;
- reopening an Embassy in Baghdad (see Section 15.1);
- economic issues in Iraq and the region;
- SSR in Iraq;
- the vulnerabilities of UK diplomatic missions in the region; and
- contingency planning for a CBW attack on UK diplomatic missions.

658. The record of the meeting of the AHGI on 11 October stated that “sanitised” versions of the FCO paper on consequences of conflict had been shared with the US, and the scenarios for post-conflict Iraq with the US, France and Germany.³³⁰

659. The Cabinet Office grid listed three “external” MOD contingency planning activities:

- UK/US military liaison;
- discussion of Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs) with the Treasury and industry; and
- reorganisation of Operation FRESCO, the contingency plans to manage a prospective firefighters' strike (see Section 6.1).

³²⁸ Telegram 1327 Washington to FCO London, 11 October 2002, 'Iraq: The Day After: US Views'.

³²⁹ Minute Dodd to Manning, 14 October 2002, 'Ad Hoc Group on Iraq' attaching Paper Cabinet Office, 14 October 2002, 'Whitehall Iraq Contingency Planning'.

³³⁰ Minute Dodd to Manning, 14 October 2002, 'Ad Hoc Group on Iraq'.

660. In addition, DFID was working on the paper on potential humanitarian implications of conflict in Iraq, and British Trade International (BTI) was identifying priority sectors in Iraq for British companies.

661. The grid also listed departments responsible for different aspects of domestic contingency planning, including community relations, refugee and asylum issues, the terrorist threat, and the economic consequences of conflict.

662. That work was later consolidated in a single paper produced by the CCS on 27 November, described later in this Section.

FCO PAPER: 'INTERNATIONAL ADMINISTRATION FOR IRAQ: WHAT, WHO AND HOW?'

663. The FCO paper 'International Administration for Iraq: what, who and how?' examined possible models for a UN role in the administration of Iraq.

664. The FCO concluded that a UN transitional administration working alongside an international security force would work, but planning needed to start as soon as possible.

665. Mr Gray sent the draft of a 12th FCO paper to the AHGI on 18 October.³³¹ 'International Administration for Iraq: what, who and how?' appears to have been produced in response to the recommendation in the FCO paper on models for administering a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq that work begin on examining a possible UN role in more detail. It drew on recent UN experience in Afghanistan, Cambodia, East Timor and Kosovo to distinguish between two approaches to international administration:

- a "light" approach, monitoring a local administration's decisions against principles set out in a mandate provided by the Security Council; and
- a more intrusive international administration implementing the mandate directly.

If the Iraqi regime fought to the end or the damage to Iraq was extensive, the international administration would need to assume control of key areas. If Saddam Hussein were overthrown quickly or "the bulk of Ba'ath apparatchiks switched sides", the lighter approach might be manageable.

666. In both cases, key elements of the Security Council mandate would include:

- reconstruction of war damage and delivery of humanitarian assistance;
- internal and external security;
- stopping Iraq's WMD programmes;
- ensuring respect for Iraq's territorial integrity;

³³¹ [Letter Gray to Drummond, 18 October 2002, 'Papers for the AHGI' attaching Paper \[unattributed\], 17 October 2002, 'International Administration for Iraq: what, who and how?'](#)

- a plan for a political process, which might emerge from the Iraqi opposition or within the country;
- ensuring full respect for human rights;
- administering OFF;
- reintegration of Iraq into the world economy; and
- a realistic exit strategy.

667. Security would remain the responsibility of the Coalition:

- internal security (“pacification of unrest”), which would fall to the military and be provided initially by the Coalition;
- external security, where Iraqi forces “would probably have to be replaced”; and
- “law and order issues”, which “might be handled by local police forces but with strong international monitoring”.

668. The FCO advised that tackling Iraq’s administration and reconstruction called for a focus on key ministries, including defence, interior, justice, finance and oil, and the regional administration (18 governorates and Baghdad).

669. Some institutions (election machinery, parliament, a regional affairs ministry and Human Rights Commission) would need complete replacement or setting up from scratch. Some (the Revolutionary Command Council, intelligence and internal security services, the Ba’ath Party and the presidential apparatus) would need to be dismantled. Institutions in other areas (labour, planning, education, health and agriculture) could be left largely in Iraqi hands. That analysis applied whether the administration was headed by the US military or the UN.

670. The FCO suggested that the civilian administration be divided into “pillars” on the Kosovo model, with the Coalition taking on, as a minimum, defence and interior. Other pillars might include civil administration, reconstruction, economic reintegration, institution-building and justice and home affairs.

671. On the appointment of a UN “figurehead”, the draft stated: “We would need a heavyweight Special Representative, ideally a Muslim, who would be prepared to spend time in Iraq leading the IA [interim administration], backed up by high-calibre senior staff.”

672. There was no reference to any UK contribution.

673. The FCO advised that the number of Iraqis and non-Iraqis needed for civil administration would be large, but that the UN system was “unlikely to be able to produce all the people needed on time”. The UK “should look at a range of other sources:

- Other international institutions, e.g. IMF and World Bank
- Coalition players

- Regional players and structures such as the EU and OIC [Organization of the Islamic Conference].³³² NATO?”

674. Previous interim administrations had cost up to US\$500 million per year, with civil components of between 200 and 5,000 personnel, and military components between 40 and 15,000. Civilian police, where necessary, had numbered from 1,000 to 4,000. Iraq was comparable in size and population to Afghanistan, but much more developed:

“... the scale of intervention in its affairs will be much greater and more intrusive. Costs and numbers of personnel are likely therefore to be much greater than previous missions. Who paid would be a key question.”

675. The FCO concluded:

“Administering Iraq and guiding it back to a sustainable place in the world community will be a major task. A UN transitional administration could do it, in parallel with an International Force to provide security and cover for the eradication of WMD. A model that could work would [be] an extensive Interim Authority, divided into pillars under the control of a variety of international players. The pace of eventual handover to Iraqi control could be different for each pillar ... But to be successful, planning needs to start as soon as possible.”

676. The Inquiry has not seen a final version of the FCO paper, but material from the 17 October draft was used in the 1 November Cabinet Office paper on models for Iraq after Saddam Hussein.

WAR CRIMES AND THE CREATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR IRAQ

677. In October, No.10 instructed the Attorney General’s Office and the Cabinet Office to take account of the potential need to bring Saddam Hussein and his inner circle to justice as part of Whitehall work on the future of Iraq.

678. The creation of an international body to try senior members of Saddam Hussein’s regime for war crimes was the founding purpose of INDICT, an NGO chaired by Ms Ann Clwyd, Vice-Chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP).

679. Ms Clwyd raised the possibility of using INDICT “as an alternative to war” at a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee (the executive body of the PLP) in July 2002.³³³ Mr Blair is reported to have replied: “Why don’t we do it?”

680. In his diaries, Mr Mullin recorded that Ms Clwyd told Mr Blair at the meeting of the PLP on 17 July: “We can indict the Iraqis now.”³³⁴ That had “seemed to come as news”

³³² Known since 2011 as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

³³³ Statement Clwyd, January 2010, ‘The Work of INDICT’, page 24.

³³⁴ Mullin C. *A View from the Foothills: The Diaries of Chris Mullin*. Profile Books, 2009.

to Mr Blair even though Ms Clwyd “had been pressing the point for ages”. Ms Clwyd offered to look into the issue for Mr Blair and get back to him.

681. At No.10’s request, during September and October 2002, FCO officials started to consider the possibility of an international criminal tribunal for Iraq (ICTI).

682. In late September, the FCO advised Mr Blair that the UK would support international moves to prosecute leading members of Saddam Hussein’s regime, but that there were a number of obstacles.³³⁵ Those included the lack of International Criminal Court (ICC) jurisdiction over crimes committed before the ICC Statute entered into force on 1 July 2002 and limited support for the idea of establishing a UN tribunal for Iraq among members of the Security Council.

683. On 27 September, material was submitted to Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General, on behalf of INDICT, arguing that the UK should assert jurisdiction over crimes committed against UK nationals by Saddam Hussein and Tariq Aziz (Iraqi Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister) in 1990 and promote the formation of an ad hoc tribunal to deal with Saddam Hussein after he left office.³³⁶

684. Ms Clwyd sent the material to Mr Blair, who asked officials: “Can I have some proper work done on why this isn’t a good idea, or could it have PR [public relations] value?”³³⁷

685. In their response on 15 October, FCO officials pointed out that, although President Bush had warned Saddam Hussein’s generals in a speech on 7 October “that all war criminals will be pursued and punished”, he had not identified the mechanism to be used.³³⁸ They cautioned that “to pursue efforts to set up an ICTI now, when we are seeking to engage the UNSC on a range of substantive Iraq-related issues, would be a serious own goal”.

686. Officials put forward four alternatives in the event of a change in the Iraqi administration:

- a special hybrid domestic tribunal, in connection with the UN and including international judges and prosecutors, similar to the tribunal established in Sierra Leone;
- special hybrid panels within the Iraqi criminal justice system along the lines of the panels established in East Timor and Kosovo;

³³⁵ [Letter Sedwill to Rycroft, 23 September 2002, ‘Iraq: INDICT’.](#)

³³⁶ Note Montgomery, 27 September 2002, ‘In the Matter of Iraqi Crimes Against Humanity’.

³³⁷ [Manuscript comment Blair on Note Montgomery, 27 September 2002, ‘In the Matter of Iraqi Crimes Against Humanity’.](#)

³³⁸ Letter Sedwill to Rycroft, 15 October 2002, ‘ICTY-Type Tribunal for Iraq’; Speech Bush, 7 October 2002, Cincinnati Museum Center.

- truth and reconciliation commissions for lower-level accused or where there was insufficient evidence for prosecution; and
- use of the existing criminal justice system in Iraq.

687. Mr Rycroft explained to Mr Blair that he expected Lord Goldsmith to reject the arguments put forward on behalf of INDICT relating to the 1990 hostage-taking cases on the grounds that there was almost no prospect of a successful prosecution. He also commented that the FCO advice on a tribunal “will ... not enhance your view of government lawyers”.³³⁹

688. Mr Rycroft advised Mr Blair that No.10 officials were “pushing back” on both issues. Mr Blair should tell Ms Clwyd he was interested in both proposals and that he had asked for “proper legal advice”. On the tribunal, Mr Blair’s line should be:

“... it is essential that we take a strong line on human rights in Iraq (as we did in the dossier). We are considering whether we should propose the establishment of an International Criminal Tribunal for Iraq, or some other mechanism, to ensure that Saddam and others guilty of the most horrendous crimes can be brought to justice.”

689. Mr Rycroft instructed the FCO, the Attorney General’s Office and the Cabinet Office to take account of the potential need to bring Saddam Hussein and his inner circle to justice as part of Whitehall work on the future of Iraq.³⁴⁰ He asked the FCO to do more work on options, including how best to let Saddam Hussein’s inner circle know that their interests would be best served by breaking with him, and the Attorney General’s Office to look again at the prosecution of the 1990 crimes: “On the face of it, there is much advantage in letting it be known that we are starting investigations against Saddam for these crimes.”

690. The Attorney General’s Office sent a holding reply on 17 October, explaining that Lord Goldsmith was still considering the material submitted on behalf of INDICT and had not yet responded to Ms Clwyd or INDICT.³⁴¹

691. Lord Goldsmith sent a substantive reply to Ms Clwyd on 24 January 2003, which is addressed in the Box on INDICT in Section 3.6.³⁴²

692. Prosecution for war crimes was discussed at the first round of US/UK inter-agency talks on post-conflict Iraq in Washington on 6 November.

693. Updated FCO advice to No.10 followed in early December.

694. Both are addressed later in this Section.

³³⁹ [Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 16 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Indicting Saddam’.](#)

³⁴⁰ [Letter Rycroft to Sedwill, 23 October 2002, ‘ICTY-type tribunal for Iraq’.](#)

³⁴¹ Letter Adams to Rycroft, 17 October 2002, ‘INDICT – Correspondence with Ann Clwyd MP’.

³⁴² [Letter Goldsmith to Clwyd, 24 January 2003, ‘Saddam Hussein, Tariq Aziz, Ali Hassan Al-Majid and Taha Ramadan’.](#)

UK military options: war-fighting and reconstruction

695. Military planning for the deployment of UK land forces in northern Iraq as part of a US-led force gathered pace during October 2002.

696. On 31 October, Adm Boyce advised Mr Blair that a major contribution to the military campaign would reduce pressure on the UK to finance a share of the post-conflict reconstruction effort.

697. Mr Bowen informed Sir David Manning on 9 October that the Chiefs of Staff had concluded that a decision in principle in favour of Package 3 in the next few weeks would help the UK to influence US thinking to a greater extent than had been possible up to that point, “especially in relation to the aftermath of any military action”.³⁴³

698. Section 6.1 sets out the detail of the discussion and the pressures driving the debate.

699. The need for a decision on the potential UK contribution to any US-led action against Iraq was set out in an urgent minute to Mr Hoon from Mr Johnson on 11 October.³⁴⁴ Mr Johnson advised that US thinking on the “Day After” was “under-developed at present” and warned:

“... there is likely to be a need for a substantial, potentially long-enduring commitment of forces. Assuming that military action had taken place under a UN umbrella, it is likely that the US would look to allies and the UK to play a major role in this, perhaps including providing a framework capability through the ARRC [Allied Rapid Reaction Corps]. We clearly have an interest in minimising the risk of a longstanding commitment ... in a part of the world that will not be retention-positive for our personnel: in terms of Defence Planning Assumptions, a rouled [rotating] medium scale PSO [peace support operation] in Iraq would only be manageable if our commitments elsewhere ... were capped at small scale. The more substantial our contribution to military action in the first place, the more plausibly we will be able to argue that we have done our bit.”

700. After a meeting with senior advisers on 14 October, Mr Hoon wrote to Mr Blair on 15 October, seeking a decision that week on whether to tell the US they could assume a UK Land contribution in addition to the air, maritime and Special Forces package already offered for planning purposes.³⁴⁵ Mr Hoon wrote:

“There is likely to be a substantial and continuing post-conflict stabilisation task in Iraq. If we do not contribute Package 3, we may be more vulnerable to a US request to provide a substantial force for this potentially open-ended task.”

³⁴³ Minute Bowen to Manning, 9 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Chiefs of Staff Meeting on 9 October’.

³⁴⁴ [Minute Johnson to PS/Secretary of State \[MOD\], 11 October 2002, ‘Iraq: UK Contingency Planning’.](#)

³⁴⁵ [Minute Hoon to Prime Minister, 15 October 2002, ‘Iraq: UK Military Options’.](#)

701. Sir David Manning advised Mr Blair:

“I am not much persuaded ... that if we help with the war fighting, we shall be spared the post-conflict washing up. It didn’t work like that in Afghanistan. Experience shows that once you are in, you’re in deep, without queues of grateful countries waiting to take over when the shooting stops.”³⁴⁶

702. Sir David suggested that Mr Blair explore a number of questions with Mr Hoon, including: “Can we afford Package 3?”

703. Mr Edward Oakden, Head of FCO Security Policy Department, advised Mr Straw to question whether the decision really had to be made that week.³⁴⁷ Mr Oakden wrote that the MOD’s suggestion that the UK could trade a more active role in fighting for “a smaller military role during reconstruction” seemed “optimistic”: “On the contrary, if we have fought without international legal sanction, we could be left on our own with the US.”

704. On 16 October, Mr Straw updated Mr Blair on his discussions with Secretary Powell on 14 and 15 October.³⁴⁸ He and Secretary Powell had discussed the risks of acting without international backing and the problems of the “day after” which would be the “largest and most hazardous exercise in nation-building”; it would not be as straightforward as some thought.

705. Mr Blair, Mr Straw, Mr Hoon and Adm Boyce met on 17 October to discuss military options.³⁴⁹ Mr Blair acknowledged the arguments in favour of Package 3, but:

“... remained concerned about costs. He concluded that he wanted to keep open the option of Package 3. But we must not commit to it at this stage.”

706. Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries that at the meeting, Mr Blair said “it was not no, but it was not yet yes, and he wanted more work done analysing the cost”.³⁵⁰

707. The minutes of the meeting of the Chiefs of Staff on 28 October stated that “it would be important to emphasise within forthcoming submissions that, although Package 3 might be considered expensive, the alternative of committing to ops [operations] during the aftermath would also require considerable resources”.³⁵¹

708. Mr Blair, Mr Straw, Mr Hoon and Adm Boyce discussed the MOD’s wish to offer Package 3 to the US for planning purposes on 31 October.³⁵² Mr Blair asked about the additional costs of Package 3 and whether they had been discussed with the Treasury. Adm Boyce said that “he believed that if we made a major financial contribution to the

³⁴⁶ [Minute Manning to Blair, 16 October 2002, ‘Iraq: UK Military Options’.](#)

³⁴⁷ Minute Oakden to Private Secretary [FCO], 16 October 2002, ‘Iraq’.

³⁴⁸ [Minute Straw to Prime Minister, 16 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Powell: No US Interlocutors’.](#)

³⁴⁹ [Letter Rycroft to Watkins, 17 October 2002, ‘Iraq: UK Military Options’.](#)

³⁵⁰ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq.* Hutchinson, 2012.

³⁵¹ Minutes, 28 October 2002, Chiefs of Staff meeting.

³⁵² [Letter Wechsberg to Watkins, 31 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Military Options’.](#)

campaign through Package 3, we would be under less pressure to finance a share of the post-conflict reconstruction effort”.

709. Mr Blair decided that the MOD should tell the US that the UK was prepared to “put Package 3 on the same basis as Package 2 for planning purposes, in order to keep the option open”.

710. Asked why there might have been a reluctance in government during September and October to go beyond Package 2, Sir Kevin Tebbit told the Inquiry that one reason was:

“... the lack of clarity of the overall plans still at that point. I think the Chiefs of Staff were very assiduous throughout this period of always asking whether, in the discussions with the United States ... the US had ‘a winning concept’.

“... [U]nless and until the Chiefs of Staff were satisfied there was a winning concept – and remember, we were talking about aftermath or the day after as well as the actual operation itself - then obviously there was a reservation.”³⁵³

711. The shift in UK military focus from northern to southern Iraq, and changes in the attitude of the Chiefs of Staff to the desirability of a significant UK military contribution to Phase IV early in 2003 are addressed in Section 6.2.

Growing concern about post-conflict planning

712. Between October and December 2002, UK officials expressed growing concern about the slow progress of post-conflict planning.

DFID CONTACT WITH THE US AND UN

713. By early October, restrictions on contacts with the US and UN were constraining DFID’s ability to plan effectively.

714. After a visit to the US by Mr Chakrabarti in late September to discuss humanitarian planning, Ms Short stopped further contact between DFID and US officials, concerned about the potential political implications of DFID being seen to prepare for war.

715. DFID was also under instruction from the Cabinet Office not to discuss humanitarian issues with the UN system.

716. Those restrictions had been lifted by the beginning of November.

717. The DFID draft paper on humanitarian consequences of military action discussed by the AHGI on 11 October explained that planning was constrained by the shortage of

³⁵³ Public hearing, 3 December 2009, pages 42-43.

information on Iraq's capacity to respond to the disruption of basic services.³⁵⁴ Removal of "restrictions on initiating contact with relevant stakeholders" would allow DFID to fill the gap and develop a fuller picture of humanitarian agencies' contingency planning and regional capacity.

718. The Cabinet Office record of the meeting of the AHGI on 11 October observed that the DFID paper assumed there would be substantial UN involvement in post-conflict Iraq and added:

"We have asked DFID not to discuss post-conflict Iraq humanitarian issues with [the] UN system yet, but they will need to do so to develop planning further."³⁵⁵

719. On 18 October, Mr Drummond informed Sir David Manning that departments' contingency planning was mostly confined to Whitehall.³⁵⁶ Although there was no immediate pressure to extend existing external contacts, which included DTI contacts with the oil industry, the police with community leaders, and the FCO with the US, France and Germany, "some Departments such as DFID, who would like to link up with UN contingency planning, would find it helpful to be authorised to make contact soon, perhaps after the UNSCR is agreed".

720. On 30 September, Mr Chakrabarti had called on Mr Elliot Abrams, Head of the US inter-agency Humanitarian Working Group.³⁵⁷ Mr Abrams outlined US thinking and suggested the UK and US keep in touch.

721. On 9 October, Mr Chakrabarti asked Mr Fernie to visit Washington in early November "for discussions with all the parts of the US Admin[istration] and with the World Bank".³⁵⁸ He added that DFID needed to "thicken up our humanitarian/development approach to Iraq".

722. On 15 October, Ms Anna Bewes, Ms Short's Principal Private Secretary, informed Ms Carolyn Miller, DFID Director Middle East and North Africa, that Ms Short had seen the record of Mr Chakrabarti's visit and agreed DFID should be planning for all humanitarian contingencies, including those not involving military action, but was "very wary" of attracting any publicity:

"It could cause huge political difficulties if it emerged that ... DFID is planning for war. For this reason the Secretary of State has asked me to make it clear that she does not authorise any discussion or document sharing with the US on our preparations for humanitarian crises in Iraq."³⁵⁹

³⁵⁴ [Paper DFID, 11 October 2002, 'Iraq: Potential Humanitarian Implications'](#).

³⁵⁵ Minute Dodd to Manning, 14 October 2002, 'Ad Hoc Group on Iraq'.

³⁵⁶ Minute Drummond to Manning, 18 October 2002, 'Iraq: Contingency Plans'.

³⁵⁷ Minute [DFID junior official] to Chakrabarti, 9 October 2002, 'Call on Elliot Abrams, Special Assistant to the President & Senior Director for Democracy, Human Rights & International Operations, 30 September: Iraq'.

³⁵⁸ Email Chakrabarti to Brewer/Fernie/Miller, 9 October 2002, 'Note on Call on Elliot Abrams'.

³⁵⁹ Email Bewes to Miller, 15 October 2002, 'Iraq'.

723. Ms Short held a meeting on 21 October, attended by Mr Chakrabarti, to discuss contingency planning. At the meeting Ms Short agreed that DFID officials should “indicate an intention” to join the FCO-led delegation attending inter-agency talks in Washington on 6 November, with a final decision to follow later.³⁶⁰

724. Sir Suma Chakrabarti told the Inquiry that DFID received an email from the Cabinet Office on 23 October saying No.10 was happy for the department to talk discreetly to some NGOs if it was clear the aim was disarmament not war.³⁶¹

725. Sir Suma stated that, although the email made no reference to contacting the UN, he and Ms Short had decided in early November that “we just had to do so”.³⁶²

726. The Inquiry has not seen a copy of the Cabinet Office email.

727. Sir Suma Chakrabarti was asked by the Inquiry whether he had been instructed by his Secretary of State not to share information (with US officials).³⁶³ He replied: “At no stage”, and that he was “Absolutely sure” of that.

728. Sir Suma’s evidence does not match the instruction sent out by Ms Short’s office on 15 October.

729. Sir Jeremy Greenstock told the Inquiry that the first contact between UKMIS New York and the UN Secretariat to discuss post-conflict planning was in October 2002, “probably at their request”.³⁶⁴

730. Sir Jeremy reported from New York on 30 October that UN post-conflict planning was “embryonic”. There were indications of support for a “pillared” model for post-conflict administration somewhere between the approaches adopted for Kosovo and Afghanistan, but planning for a possible UN administration was happening at a very low level. That reflected an instruction from the Secretary-General that work on what was effectively planning for the UN to take over from the sovereign government of a member state should be very low key.³⁶⁵

731. On 31 October, the Cabinet Office reported to Sir David Manning that the wider instruction to departments not to engage external actors was, in practice, being overtaken.³⁶⁶ There was particular pressure for consultation from the UK oil industry: a delegation from BP would be visiting the FCO on 6 November.

732. On 4 November, Ms Short agreed that a revised version of the DFID paper on the potential humanitarian implications of conflict in Iraq should be shared with the US

³⁶⁰ Minute Bewes to Fernie, 22 October 2002, ‘Iraq’.

³⁶¹ Public hearing, 8 December 2009, page 12.

³⁶² Public hearing, 8 December 2009, page 14.

³⁶³ Public hearing, 8 December 2009, page 17.

³⁶⁴ Public hearing, 15 December 2009, pages 4-5.

³⁶⁵ Telegram 2073 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 30 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Day After Planning: Possible UN Administration’.

³⁶⁶ Minute Dodd to Manning, 31 October 2002, ‘Iraq: After the UNSCR’.

as a work in progress, subject to the inclusion of an explicit reference to DFID's lack of financial resources to cover the humanitarian contingencies considered in the paper.³⁶⁷

733. The substance of the paper was little changed from October, but a new introduction made explicit reference to the need to consider the humanitarian consequences not just of military action, but also of regime change without major military action and of Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions.³⁶⁸ The paper stated:

“Most humanitarian planning is currently focused on the after-effects of conflict ... But UK ministers are clear that humanitarian planning should also consider other contingencies and not assume conflict is the most likely, in line with current UK policy objectives for Iraq which focus on disarmament rather than conflict or regime change.”

734. The paper also stated that DFID had begun informal contacts with UN agencies and that wider contacts might follow the passage of a resolution, a UN decision to start more active planning, or further UK Ministerial guidance.

735. Ms Short told the Inquiry that she had spoken to Mr Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, and Ms Louise Fréchette, UN Deputy Secretary-General, a number of times, “sort of slightly breaching the No.10 ruling”.³⁶⁹ She believed that Mr Chakrabarti had also done so. It was “very fraught” for the UN because of divisions within the Security Council: “The UN prepared, but kept it quiet.”

736. **There is no indication that temporary restrictions on DFID's contacts with the UN and the US had a lasting impact on UK planning for post-conflict Iraq. The Inquiry does not accept, however, that the political sensitivity of the UK being seen to prepare for conflict while pursuing a negotiated solution to the Iraq crisis should have interfered with discreet contingency planning for the possible consequences of military action. It was necessary at all stages to consider and prepare for the worst.**

737. At Ms Short's meeting with officials on 21 October, Mr Fernie reported that the FCO was not considering the possible humanitarian consequences of the use of WMD. Ms Short identified that as an area of legitimate focus for DFID and commissioned a paper for Mr Blair, to be produced, if possible, before 30 October.³⁷⁰

738. On 29 October, OD Sec wrote to Mr Robert Lawson, DEFRA Director for Environmental Protection Strategy, about oil-related environmental contingency planning. The letter also asked whether there was “any official UK capacity, beyond that of the MOD, to assist with CBW clear-up or in providing clean water in these

³⁶⁷ [Manuscript comment Short, 4 November 2002, on Minute Fernie to Private Secretary/Secretary of State \[DFID\], 4 November 2002, 'Iraq: Contingency Planning: Humanitarian Paper'](#).

³⁶⁸ Paper UK Department for International Development, 5 November 2002, 'Iraq: Potential Humanitarian Implications'.

³⁶⁹ Public hearing, 2 February 2010, page 52.

³⁷⁰ Minute Bewes to Fernie, 22 October 2002, 'Iraq'.

circumstances”.³⁷¹ The letter was copied to No.10, the FCO and the Cabinet Office, but not to DFID or the MOD.

739. Ms Short wrote to Mr Blair on 30 October, warning that the international community was not adequately prepared to cope with the potentially enormous human and financial costs if Iraq used chemical and biological weapons during any military conflict.³⁷² She concluded:

“I accept of course that preparing for military options, among others, is necessary, but I am very concerned that in our work across Whitehall and with the USA, the examination of the humanitarian and possible political consequences of military action have not been properly explored. We should think through what it would mean to take responsibility for Iraq after a conflict involving WMD and also make contingency plans for other possible outcomes such as a fall of the regime without a war. I am concerned that Whitehall appears to be focusing on military action, not considering other scenarios, and not thinking through the consequences of the likely use of chemical weapons.”

740. Mr Drummond informed Sir David Manning on 8 November that work so far on the effects of CBW had focused on military and consular dimensions.³⁷³ Mr Drummond said that Ms Short was right that it should be extended to address wider humanitarian consequences. The DIS had been asked to follow this up, in consultation with DFID. Once the assessments were in, officials would need to consider how DFID would pursue them with humanitarian agencies. There were risks that information would be mishandled, but “there does need to be contingency planning”.

741. Mr Watkins set out Mr Hoon’s views to No.10 on 11 November.³⁷⁴ Mr Hoon shared Ms Short’s concerns about the potential use of WMD. The MOD was making sure UK military personnel were properly protected against the WMD threat, but it was:

“... simply not possible (nor is it the MOD’s role) to extend this protection to the civilian population of any country with whom we may be engaged in conflict. We can, however, offer the reassurance that we are working closely, through the Cabinet Office, with Departments across Whitehall, including DFID, on post-conflict strategy and are offering as much information as we can make available to assist planning.”

742. There is no indication of any response from Mr Blair.

³⁷¹ Letter Dodd to Lawson, 29 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Environmental Contingency Planning’.

³⁷² Letter Short to Blair, 30 October 2002, [untitled].

³⁷³ Minute Drummond to Manning, 8 November 2002, ‘Iraq: CBW’.

³⁷⁴ [Letter Watkins to Rycroft, 11 November 2002, ‘Possible Iraqi Use of WMD’](#).

JIC ASSESSMENT, 23 OCTOBER 2002: 'IRAQ: THE KURDS AND SHIA'

743. On 23 October, at the FCO's request, the JIC assessed the likely reaction of the Kurdish and Shia population of Iraq to any US-led attack.³⁷⁵ It evaluated how significant and unified the two groups were, their links to Iraq's neighbours and the external Iraqi opposition, and their aspirations and fears for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. The JIC assessed that "each population is a complex web of different groups and interests". UK knowledge of the Shia inside Iraq was "very limited". Senior religious leaders had "some influence over the Shia population", but the JIC could not gauge its extent.

744. The JIC assessed that Iraqi Shia contact with the outside world was "limited and ad hoc", and judged that:

"... currently neither Iran nor the external opposition has a significant influence over the Shia population as a whole. On the contrary, we believe many Iraqi Shia fear Iran winning influence over the future of Iraq because of Tehran's supposed insistence on the centrality of Sharia in political life."

745. The JIC's conclusions included the assessment that:

"... spontaneous uprisings, without any clear central leadership, are likely in both southern and northern Iraq ... should the regime's control collapse quickly. Army deserters (the Shia form the bulk of the Iraqi military's conscript force) could join these in large numbers. The pace of events in such a scenario **could overtake any planning by the KDP and PUK in the north, and in the south control could devolve by default to a patchwork collection of tribal leaders and religious figures** about whom we know little. In both areas there could be violent score settling ..."

746. The JIC assessment was not reflected in the Cabinet Office paper of 1 November on models for Iraq after Saddam Hussein.³⁷⁶

CABINET OFFICE PAPER: 'IRAQ: MODELS AND SOME QUESTIONS FOR POST-SADDAM GOVERNMENT'

747. At the beginning of November, the Cabinet Office sent No.10 a paper on models for Iraq after Saddam Hussein. It is not clear whether it was seen by Mr Blair.

748. The paper was to be the steering brief for the UK delegation to the first round of UK/US/Australia talks on post-conflict issues in Washington on 6 November.

³⁷⁵ [JIC Assessment, 23 October 2002, 'Iraq: The Kurds and Shia'](#).

³⁷⁶ [Minute Drummond to Manning, 1 November 2002, 'Iraq: Post-Saddam' attaching Paper 'Iraq: Models and some questions for post-Saddam government'](#).

749. It proposed that achieving the UK's preferred outcome of "a more representative and democratic Iraq" might involve three phases:

- a transitional Coalition military government lasting up to six months;
- a UN administration lasting about three years; and
- a sovereign Iraqi government.

750. The Cabinet Office sent a paper on models for Iraq after Saddam Hussein to Sir David Manning on 1 November.³⁷⁷

751. The Cabinet Office paper was the first attempted synthesis of some of the work undertaken by departments under the auspices of the AHGI. It was conceived as the steering brief for the FCO/MOD/DFID/Cabinet Office delegation to the forthcoming talks on post-conflict issues with the US in Washington and did not propose or allocate responsibility for next steps. Mr Drummond described it to Sir David Manning as a summary of latest thinking. The ideas in it would not be presented as UK policy.

752. The paper stated that there were many possible permutations of the "stable united and law abiding state ... providing effective and representative government" sought by the UK, but focused on just two:

- a. an Iraq under a new, more amenable strongman;
- b. a more representative and democratic Iraq."

753. In the event of Saddam Hussein being toppled by a new strongman from his inner circle before or during the early stages of a military campaign, the new regime could be recognised in return for agreement to certain conditions. But:

"Our leverage over the new regime would quickly dissipate as Coalition forces could not remain at invasion strength in the region for long. Any sanctions, once lifted, would be difficult to re-impose. This scenario for achieving our goal of Iraqi disarmament would be relatively simple and cheap, but there would be a high risk of the new strongman reverting to Saddam's policies ..."

754. Assuming that Saddam Hussein's regime fell and Coalition forces reached Baghdad, the UK's preferred model for the future government of Iraq might fall into three phases:

- transitional Coalition military government;
- UN administration; and
- a "sovereign, representative and democratic government of Iraq".

755. Scenario 'b' assumed UN authorisation for military action and that the international community and UN system would be willing to assist with reconstruction.

³⁷⁷ [Minute Drummond to Manning, 1 November 2002, 'Iraq: Post-Saddam' attaching Paper 'Iraq: Models and some questions for post-Saddam government'](#).

756. The Coalition would make clear that it would transfer authority from a transitional military government to UN administration as soon as possible, but in practice that could take up to six months. The UN would then “rule” Iraq for about three years, during which time a new Iraqi constitution would be agreed, paving the way for the formation of a sovereign Iraqi government. The US would continue to have “overall responsibility” for security.

757. The Cabinet Office did not define “representative and democratic”. The phrase contrasted with the more equivocal language in the FCO paper on scenarios for the future of Iraq, which proposed that the UK “should argue for political reform, but not necessarily full democracy in the short term”, and with the reference to “effective and representative government” in the agreed definition of the desired end state, which was quoted elsewhere in the Cabinet Office paper.

758. The paper listed five priorities facing the transitional military government to be established by the Coalition after the collapse of the Iraqi regime.

759. The first, “establishing security”, was to be achieved by disbanding the “inner rings” of Saddam Hussein’s security apparatus. There would need to be screening of officers in the security forces. Some would be demobilised, some imprisoned and some tried.

760. The four other priorities were:

- Dismantling WMD.
- Addressing humanitarian needs. A UN presence would need to be established as soon as possible, accompanied by “a version of OFF”. There would be a separate need for emergency work on infrastructure involving close co-ordination with civilian development agencies.
- Planning for a revival of the economy, which would require close co-operation with international financial institutions.
- Preparing for a UN administration. “A major task would be to decide as early as possible on the shape of a UN administration, and begin setting up as soon as the conflict ends. The Secretary-General, under guidance from the Security Council, would instruct the UN system to produce the necessary plan. Planning for SSR, economic recovery, and long-term reconstruction would also take place.”

761. The paper’s description of a possible UN administration drew heavily on the FCO paper on an international administration for Iraq described earlier in this Section. It went further than the FCO paper in proposing that a “UN Mission to Iraq (UNMI)” might be modelled on UNMIK, the UN Mission in Kosovo, where different roles had been sub-contracted by the UN to other multilateral bodies (the FCO paper listed the Kosovo model as one of a number of UN operations that could offer useful lessons). Organisations like the World Bank, OIC, UN and possibly the EU might lead on different strands. The paper proposed a parallel security structure under direct US military

command, replicating NATO's parallel role in relation to UNMIK, "with as wide an inclusion of effective Coalition military partners as possible".

762. The level of intervention in individual ministries "would vary from total in the security field to ... superficial in areas such as agriculture. The new senior cadres could be composed of UN staff, as far as possible from Muslim countries, émigré technocrats and non-tainted technocrats from within Iraq."

763. There would also need to be a political process managed by UNMI to prepare for a democratic government. The UN would:

"... engage in a process of political consultation which would lead to a convention of all Iraqi factions, both internal; and external ... Under the UN administration, work could take place on reconstructing government, encouraging new political parties, facilitating free media and an active civil society. A new/revised/and possibly federal constitution will be drafted by Iraqi experts with international guidance. Municipal elections will take place."

764. The paper stated that UNMI would require:

"... at least in excess of one thousand international staff and several thousand foreign police. The security force would require tens of thousands of soldiers, although this figure would reduce over time. There are question[s] of how much this international effort would cost and how it would be funded. This could be done by national contributions or through the UN assessment system. An alternative would be to use oil revenue to pay administrative and military costs. This would require UN authorisation, and UNMI and security expenses would need to take account of debt repayment ..."

765. There would also need to be a financial plan, involving detailed work by the IFIs, to reconcile payment of Iraq's "huge external debts" with reconstruction and development needs.

766. The SSR section of the Cabinet Office paper drew on an early draft of a longer FCO paper on the subject, the final version of which is described later in this Section. The Cabinet Office paper stated:

"Having dismantled Saddam's security apparatus, there will need to be a new one. This will need a comprehensive security sector plan agreed with and led by the US. The judiciary will need a total rebuild as well as the police. Decisions will need to be taken about the size and scope of the army and intelligence services."

767. The Cabinet Office paper concluded with a short section on establishing a “Sovereign Democratic Iraqi Government”:

“To mark the end of UNMI there will be a progressive return of bureaucratic and political power to Iraqis. A new constitution will be promulgated. National elections will be held. International military forces will withdraw ... The new Iraq would be welcomed back to the international community. Under international guidance, the new government could be encouraged to sign a collective non-aggression pact with all states bordering the Gulf.”

768. The paper did not address the UK’s responsibilities and obligations during military occupation or the UK’s wider post-conflict contribution.

769. Sir Peter Ricketts told the Inquiry:

“At the period we were developing our thinking about [the] UN lead in the summer of 2002, autumn of 2002, winter of 2002, it was not clear at all the timing on which military action might happen, indeed whether it would happen at all, and whether there would have been full UN authorisation in the second resolution for it.

“So at that period, we were talking in more general terms with the UN. By the time [in early 2003] it became clear, the timescale for military action, I think it was then also clear that the US would not be prepared to have UN administration. Therefore, by then we were on the track of working with ORHA [the DoD-led Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, see Section 6.5]. But I think it was a reasonable planning assumption in the autumn of 2002 that we could work for a UN transitional authority, and at that time the UN still had time to prepare for it.”³⁷⁸

770. On 4 November, the AHGI took stock of all contingency planning papers nearing completion. The record of the meeting stated: “With the new UNSCR nearing adoption, it is time for those departments, which have not already done so, to conclude their initial contingency planning.”³⁷⁹ It listed papers close to completion on a range of subjects:

- the impact of conflict on the international and UK economies (Treasury);
- community relations in the UK (Home Office);
- humanitarian implications, including extra material on CBW use (DFID);
- Iraqi human rights abuses (FCO);
- environmental impact (DEFRA);
- impact on UK airlines and shipping (DfT);³⁸⁰
- consular planning (FCO);
- CBW dimensions of consular planning (FCO);

³⁷⁸ Public hearing, 1 December 2009, page 81.

³⁷⁹ Minute Dodd to Manning, 4 November 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

³⁸⁰ [Paper, Department for Transport, 12 November 2002, ‘Possible Economic Impact on UK International Transport Operations of Action Against Iraq’.](#)

- the Iraqi economy after Saddam Hussein (FCO);
- overview of post-Saddam Hussein scenarios (Cabinet Office, in preparation for inter-agency talks in Washington).

FCO PAPER: 'ECONOMIC ISSUES IN IRAQ AFTER POST-SADDAM REGIME CHANGE'

771. The FCO's second paper on rebuilding Iraq's economy identified the immediate tasks facing any new administration. Those included investing in infrastructure to build public support and taking control of public finances.

772. The paper stated that detailed analysis and planning needed to begin immediately.

773. A draft of the FCO paper on economic issues in Iraq, written at some point before 19 October,³⁸¹ was circulated to AHGI members on 4 November.³⁸² The paper described Iraq's economy as "distorted and very badly damaged", and consisting of a number of largely separate elements: the oil sector, which was efficiently run; the formal economy; the food distribution system; the informal economy ("an unrecorded, unregulated sprawl of trading and services"); the economy of northern Iraq; and the "partly secret regime/elite economy". The challenge would be to strip out the undesirable elements, retain the desirable and essential elements (the central bank and economic ministries "probably" still had competent staff below political appointees) and bring those together as a single economy.

774. Ensuring that there was "a smooth economic transition in the early months after regime change" would be the immediate task. Particularly high priority would have to be given to preserving food supplies and effective control of public finances, both of which were tied to the future of OFF.

775. The FCO paper stated that, in order to help build popular and regional support for the new administration, it might well be necessary to be able to show early gains:

"... the most obvious quick way of doing this would be to provide ... a significantly improved food ration, no doubt bolstered with a message about diverting resources from Saddam's extravagances ... Beyond the first 6-12 months the focus should turn more to targeting of reconstruction expenditure to achieve political quick wins.

"... Even if a new conflict produces little additional damage, the combination of neglect and war damage means that large investments in many areas and spread over many years, are needed if infrastructure and services are to recover even to their pre-1990 condition. Getting this process under way will be essential to economic revival, to the alleviation of humanitarian problems and to popular support for a new administration.

³⁸¹ Paper FCO, [undated], 'Economic issues in Iraq after post-Saddam regime change: internal policy and external engagement'.

³⁸² Minute Dodd to Manning, 4 November 2002, 'Ad Hoc Group on Iraq'.

“The two big constraints will be finance and implementation capacity. On the former the key will be a workable agreement between external stakeholders which guarantees a reasonable flow of resources to Iraq ... On the latter there will be a need for detailed analysis and planning of the substance, some of which should be set in hand now ... and also for the establishment of a competent central body within Iraq able to act as the focal point for reconstruction.”

776. The FCO warned that Iraq’s actual or potential financial obligations, including debt servicing and compensation payments, threatened to “swamp” the income available from oil. There would need to be co-ordination between external players on a package including new bilateral grants or loans and multilateral assistance.

777. The FCO advised that advance planning for the period immediately after regime change “falls to the US”, but there was also a need for “good information and sound policy analysis” from the World Bank and IMF:

“... neither institution has done any substantive work for many years; if we leave it until regime change has happened to ask them to address the issues there is likely to be a considerable delay before they can produce anything useful. On economic grounds there is a good case for asking senior management in both institutions to put work in hand well in advance of military action ... [S]ome useful preparatory assessments ... would at least mean that an incoming regime, and its friends abroad, would not be flying completely blind on economic matters ...”

778. The only comments on the draft seen by the Inquiry were from a junior official in DFID, who observed a need “to dovetail humanitarian relief efforts with a transition phase, reconstruction and longer-term reform”.³⁸³ The official recommended that “a revised version of OFF should incorporate **development planning** (sector development, economic planning and strategy), provide a clear structure of roles and responsibilities ... and provide channels for supporting [Iraqi] government administrative and planning structures ...”

TREASURY PAPER: ‘ECONOMIC IMPACT OF A WAR IN IRAQ’

779. A Treasury paper on the impact of conflict on the global economy and the UK was circulated to the AHGI on 7 November.³⁸⁴ The Treasury’s assessment of the impact on the global economy remained unchanged from 6 September. The Treasury assessed that, in the UK, the conflict might lead to lower growth, higher unemployment and higher inflation, especially if it was protracted.

³⁸³ [Minute DFID \[junior official\] to Dodd, 31 October 2002, ‘Economic issues in Iraq after post-Saddam regime change: internal policy and external engagement’.](#)

³⁸⁴ Letter Dodd to Ad Hoc Group on Iraq, 7 November 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’ attaching Paper HMT, October 2002, ‘Economic Impact of a War in Iraq’.

GOVERNMENT CONTACT WITH UK ACADEMICS

780. There is no indication that the Cabinet Office paper of 1 November or the individual papers on post-conflict Iraq prepared for the AHGI by other departments were shown to Mr Blair in the weeks before Christmas 2002, or that Mr Blair asked to see advice from officials on post-conflict issues.

781. Mr Blair did invite the views of academics working outside government.

782. In November, he and Mr Straw discussed Iraq with a number of academics.

783. During November a number of academics contributed to government discussion of post-conflict Iraq.

784. On 5 November, Mr Simon Fraser, FCO Director for Strategy and Innovation, reported to No.10 and a large number of FCO officials, including Sir Michael Jay, Mr Ricketts and Mr McDonald, a discussion on Iraq with Dr Charles Tripp of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).³⁸⁵

785. Mr Fraser highlighted a number of points raised by Dr Tripp, including his view that:

“Ordinary Iraqis were fairly passive towards the regime ... Some among the Shia still considered Saddam to be the creature of America – ‘without the Americans he would not be there now’. They would be cautious in welcoming any incoming army until they were convinced that Saddam really was on the way out ...

“Analysts who tried to divide Iraq into three distinct ethnic/religious groups were being over simplistic ...

“Federalism was not an option for Iraq ... and could lead to polarisation between the north and south with a weak middle between ...

“Establishing a representative government based on democratic principles would be costly both in political investment, money and military effort. There was no evidence that the US had either the stamina or the knowledge to carry this through. Many of those ... who were talking about democracy in Iraq knew nothing about the country. A long-term international presence – whether US or UN-led – would be extremely vulnerable to Iraqi opposition movements, as well as to other elements such as Al Qaida who would want to see it fail ... If this scenario were too daunting, then the best thing might [be] to go for a short-term fix involving one or more military strong men ...

“Islamism was an underlying force in Iraq ... If it came to a post-Saddam Iraq we would need to have thought through in advance how to respond ...”

³⁸⁵ [Minute Fraser to Reynolds, 5 November 2002, ‘Iraq Futures’.](#)

786. Mr Fraser’s note was included in No.10’s briefing pack for Mr Blair before the No.10 seminar with six academics on 19 November.³⁸⁶

787. Mr Blair and Mr Straw held an off-the-record seminar on Iraq with six academics on 19 November. The participants were:

- Professor Lawrence Freedman, King’s College London;
- Professor Michael Clarke, King’s College London;
- Dr Toby Dodge, Chatham House;
- Professor George Joffe, Cambridge University;
- Mr Steven Simon (a former US diplomat), International Institute for Strategic Studies;
- Dr Tripp;
- Mr Jonathan Powell;
- Sir David Manning;
- Baroness Morgan;
- Mr Bowen;
- Mr Chaplin;
- Mr Rycroft.³⁸⁷

788. The seminar was proposed by Professor Freedman as a means to “raise some of the less obvious issues and perspectives that need to be discussed”.³⁸⁸

789. Mr Rycroft advised Mr Blair to issue a disclaimer at the start of the seminar, which explained that:

“... this session is not about Iraq policy directly, the fact that we are having it does not mean anything about our policy, and any discussion of post-Saddam Iraq does not mean that our policy is regime change”.³⁸⁹

790. No.10 issued a list of questions as an agenda for the seminar. Mr Rycroft explained to Mr Blair that the agenda was not designed to be adhered to religiously, but “to spark off an informal, free-flowing discussion”:

- “1. Can Iraq only be ruled by a strong authoritarian regime? Are other models possible? Why have they not worked in the past? Is regional devolution a starter?
2. Can the different communities work together? What are the aspirations of the Shia and the Kurds? What relations do the Iraqi Shia have with Iran?

³⁸⁶ Manuscript comments Manning and Rycroft on Minute Fraser to Reynolds, 5 November 2002, ‘Iraq Futures’.

³⁸⁷ [Letter Rycroft to Sinclair, 20 November 2002, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s seminar with academics, 19 November’.](#)

³⁸⁸ [Email Freedman to Powell, 23 September 2002, ‘Expert group’.](#)

³⁸⁹ [Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 18 November 2002, ‘Iraq: Seminar with Academics, Tuesday’.](#)

3. What role does Islam play in Iraqi political life? How strong is Iraqi secularism? Would it survive the fall of the Ba'ath?
4. What links does Iraq have to terrorism these days?
5. Post-Saddam, how quickly would the Iraqi economy revive? Who would control the oil etc?
6. What is the future of Iraqi relations with Iran? Can they co-operate or are they condemned to remain rivals for power at the north of the Gulf?
7. Is there a prospect that Iraq can co-operate with the other Gulf Arab states, or will Baghdad, as the historical centre of power and the most populous Arab state in the region, always try to dominate? What are the possible models for security and stability in the Gulf region in the future? Can Iraq ever work with the GCC [Gulf Co-operation Council]?
8. Would change in Iraq destabilise other states like Syria (further undermining the credibility of the Ba'ath there) or Jordan? Is there really a prospect that change in Iraq could unlock movement on the MEPP?"

791. At the seminar, Mr Blair made clear that the discussion was off the record and “any discussion of post-Saddam Iraq did not imply that regime change was our policy or was inevitable”.³⁹⁰

792. Not all the questions on the agenda were addressed at the seminar. The No.10 record stated that there were “no blinding insights”. Points put forward by the academics included:

- Some members of the Iraqi regime were arguing that any change of regime would be worse for the Iraqi people: “Iraqis feared disorder; Saddam guaranteed stability”.
- The most likely successor to Saddam Hussein was another General.
- Changing Iraq substantively would mean tackling:
 - the shadow state behind the publicly visible state;
 - the role of the armed forces; and
 - the political economy of oil, which led to a highly centralised bureaucracy and the power of patronage.
- There would be tricky decisions on the extent of co-operation with existing structures, including the Ba'ath Party, with differing views on whether it would survive Saddam Hussein's downfall.
- There was no existing process like the Afghan Loya Jirga that could be used to build future governance structures.

³⁹⁰ [Letter Rycroft to Sinclair, 20 November 2002, 'Iraq: Prime Minister's seminar with academics, 19 November'](#).

- Opposition groups outside Iraq had “zero credibility” in Iraq.
- The focus should be on building local councils (many Iraqis were localists at heart).
- A strong sense of Iraqi nationalism would hold the country together.
- There had been a shift of wealth from urban to rural and a rebirth of Iraqi agriculture.
- Reintegration into the global economy would throw up serious problems, including claims and debt.
- The Sunni majority [sic] would continue to dominate Iraq’s government. There was scope for greater co-operation between Sunni, Shia and Kurds. An Iraqi Islamist movement could emerge and should perhaps be encouraged.
- Many Iraqis were relatively well disposed to the UK.

793. Dr Dodge told *The Independent on Sunday* in 2015: “We were heavily briefed ... They said, ‘Don’t tell him [Mr Blair] not to do it. He has already made up his mind’.”³⁹¹

794. Professor Clarke, also speaking in 2015, explained that he was “agnostic” that day about what might happen after an invasion. He added: “Blair knew this was going to be serious ... He was not blasé about it at all.”

SPG PAPER, 6 NOVEMBER 2002: ‘UK MILITARY STRATEGIC THINKING ON IRAQ’

795. The last two editions of the SPG paper on UK military strategic thinking were emphatic about the strategic importance of the post-conflict phase of operations and the need for better co-ordination of planning and preparation across government.

796. On 6 November, the SPG advised:

- The post-conflict phase of operations had “the potential to prove the most protracted and costly phase of all”.
- Planning needed to be flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of possible outcomes.
- Poor handling of post-conflict Iraq had the potential to fuel international tension and arm the forces of extremism.
- Planning for the post-conflict phase “must be complete before the start of offensive operations”.

797. The paper highlighted the need for greater cross-Whitehall co-operation and deeper analysis of the nature of the Iraqi administration.

798. There is no indication of any response to the paper.

³⁹¹ *The Independent on Sunday*, 25 January 2015, *What the six wise men told Tony Blair*.

799. The 6 November edition of the SPG paper on UK military strategic thinking included a rewritten section on the “Aftermath-Resolution Phase” that highlighted the strategic significance of the post-conflict phase of operations:

“The lasting impression of Coalition legitimacy and success will not be set by military success in conflict – it will be determined by the nature of the Iraqi nation that emerges afterwards.

“This phase has the potential to prove the most protracted and costly phase of all.

“Planning must be flexible to accommodate a wide range of start states and possible outcomes ranging from fast and bloodless coup, a rapid and anarchic collapse, or a damaged and ungoverned state on the verge of disintegration.

“Operations in Iraq may have a negative impact on the UK’s policy objectives for international terrorism, as poor handling of a post-conflict Iraq has the potential to increase greatly anti-Western feeling in the region; fuelling the very international tensions we have sought to diffuse and arming the forces of extremism.”³⁹²

800. The SPG paper listed four policy “pillars” needed to bring about the desired end state, “each composed of a range of lines of operation for different ministries, agencies and NGOs”: judiciary and law; society and economy; governance; and security.

801. The SPG advised:

“The Pillars only serve a purpose if they form the basis for interaction and co-operation between OGDs. The MOD can define some lines of operation in isolation, but early consultation is necessary for coherence.

“Action is in hand by Cabinet Office to develop UK thinking.

“From an MOD perspective, ideally OGDs should be invited to agree the policy pillars and outline their lines of operation within them, noting where they may seek assistance from, or interaction with, the military.”

802. The SPG advised that, because of the US lead on military operations, much of the policy on post-conflict issues was likely to reflect US aims and principles. Early assessment of areas of potential difference was the key to avoiding UK principles being compromised. Governance and reform might be critical areas.

803. In the absence of an agreed US position on the post-conflict role of the UN, the SPG judged it “probable” the UK would accept: “an initial brief period of Coalition-run, largely military government; followed by an interim government run by either a UN international appointee or a UN approved Iraqi; leading to self-government”.

³⁹² [Paper \[SPG\], 6 November 2002, ‘UK Military Strategic Thinking on Iraq’.](#)

804. The SPG advised:

“A balance must be struck between the competing demands for reform and removal of Ba’athist influence and the need for effective administration. This dilemma shapes some clear information requirements ...

- A detailed structural analysis of the current regime, its instruments of state power and its administration.
- An informed UK-US judgement on the degree to which reform will be required immediately, for effective operation, and eventually, to secure the end state.
- A rolling assessment of the effectiveness of state institutions as a result of Coalition action, linked to a mechanism for moderating or accelerating operations to set conditions for successful post-conflict efforts. **Throughout, military offensive action must be balanced against the longer-term objectives – the opportunity for counter-productive destruction is high.”**

805. The paper included a diagram showing the military activities (“lines of operation”) supporting the four policy pillars and the expected duration of each activity across four phases:

- pre-conflict;
- immediate (six months);
- medium term (six months to two years);
- long term (2-10 years).

806. The military activities were focused on provision of security and SSR. Potential “supporting roles” included “administration, planning and co-ordination”, emergency reconstruction, urgent humanitarian assistance, support to international courts and “info ops”.

807. The SPG proposed a possible definition of the military end state:

“An accountable Iraqi security structure capable of assuming self-defence and internal security responsibilities in accordance with international law.”

808. No firm date was given for achieving the military end state. The paper indicated that the UK might choose to set its own end state at as little as two years “to meet [the] aspiration for shorter engagement”.

809. The diagram identified short-term military activities likely to last up to six months (emergency reconstruction; urgent humanitarian assistance; transitional law and order), medium-term activities of up to two years (“administration, planning and co-ordination”; WMD removal), and long-term activities lasting up to 10 years (force protection; control and reform of Iraqi armed forces and handover to those forces; maintenance of internal security and territorial integrity; infrastructure security).

810. In its summary of the implications of the post-conflict phase for military planning, the paper stated:

- “• The impact of any enduring commitment on other operations would be significant. A recommendation on the size of force the UK is prepared to commit must be prepared, at least for the key six months following any operation. In parallel diplomatic efforts must seek partners to share, and eventually take, the burden.

...

- Planning for Resolution Phase operations must be complete before the start of offensive operations. Any UK land force HQ must have the capacity to conduct offensive and Resolution Phase operations concurrently.
- War-fighting forces must be able to contribute to Resolution Phase objectives until formal transition to resolution phase can be declared. Therefore clarity on post-Resolution Phase and likely UK contribution will be needed before operations commence.”

811. The aftermath section of the SPG paper concluded with seven key judgements:

- “• **Views on policy pillars and extent of support expected of military forces will be sought from OGD using current Cabinet Office machinery.**
- **The development of a jointly acceptable approach to Iraqi governance and reform in the Resolution Phase should be pursued with the US. Agreement on the role of the UN is essential.**
- **A structural analysis of the Iraqi system and the need for reform is required. Current FCO and DFID papers reveal key gaps in our knowledge (eg structure and efficiency of Iraqi police).**
- **A detailed analysis of the CoA [courses of action] of key actors is required. Military and non-military pre-emption capabilities and contingency plans must be prepared.**
- **The UK’s intent to commit forces beyond offensive operations needs to be clarified to allow operational planning for the Resolution Phase, and to allow balancing of the wider commitments picture.**
- **Once principal Coalition partners have agreed on key issues, this will need to include agreement on Coalition management processes, early diplomatic activity to seek burden-sharing partners should be undertaken.**
- **Work to define force structure options must run concurrently with ongoing operational planning in order to ensure the UK is adequately prepared to conduct Resolution Phase operations.”**

812. The SPG explained that a “full and detailed strategic estimate” for the post-conflict phase of operations was being prepared and would be presented in the next draft of the paper, which issued on 13 December and is described later in this Section.

First round of inter-agency talks, Washington, 6 November 2002

813. US/UK differences on the potential role of the UN in post-conflict Iraq became increasingly apparent from November 2002.

814. In early November, the UK envisaged a six-month transitional Coalition military administration handing over to a UN administration for about three years. US planners foresaw a role for UN agencies (but not overall UN leadership) during a US-led transitional administration, with a gradual transfer of power to a representative Iraqi government.

815. During talks in London on 13 September with Sir David Manning, Mr Haass proposed UK/US work on the political, economic, humanitarian and refugee issues that would result from Saddam Hussein's departure.³⁹³ Sir David welcomed the proposal.

816. Before the talks took place, a "vigorous debate" about changes to US planning machinery led to a hiatus in US post-conflict planning lasting several weeks.³⁹⁴

817. In *War and Decision*, Mr Feith explained that, during October 2002, Secretary Rumsfeld reached the conclusion that one US official should be responsible for the political, economic and security aspects of reconstruction.³⁹⁵

818. Mr Feith explained the idea to the NSC on 15 October. He proposed that CENTCOM's post-invasion structure should consist of a military headquarters (the Combined Joint Task Force–Iraq (CJTF-I)) and a civil administration headed by a civilian "Iraq co-ordinator". Both would be under CENTCOM command. He also proposed that Secretary Rumsfeld should have overall responsibility for the post-war effort.

819. On 18 October, Secretary Rumsfeld told Mr Feith to set up a post-war planning office, only to reverse the decision soon afterwards. Mr Feith wrote that he only learned much later that this had been because President Bush was concerned that setting up such a unit would undercut his international diplomacy. As a result, each of the existing working groups for post-conflict issues carried on working independently. Planning for Phase IV of the military campaign, taking place at CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa, Florida, fell behind the other phases.

820. Mr Feith explained that the situation changed after Iraq's weapons declaration on 7 December. On 18 December President Bush had told the NSC that war was "inevitable". Mr Feith, who had never heard the President say that before, considered it a "momentous" comment. He also observed that the President's view was not shared by Secretary Powell.

³⁹³ Letter Rycroft to Sedwill, 13 September 2002, 'Meetings with Richard Haass, 13 September'.

³⁹⁴ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

³⁹⁵ Feith DJ. *War and Decision*. Harper, 2008.

821. Mr Feith wrote that it now became possible to create a central post-war planning office:

“The President knew that creating a new office ... would be seen around the world as ... a sign that war was likely and imminent. Now, however, the President was beyond that worry.”

822. In late December, Secretary Rumsfeld asked Mr Feith to start drafting the charter for the new “central post-war planning office”.³⁹⁶

823. Secretary Powell, quoted in *Hard Lessons*, explained:

“[The] State [Department] does not have the personnel, the capacity, or the size to deal with an immediate post-war situation in a foreign country that’s eight thousand miles away from here, so there was never a disagreement about this. It made sense.”³⁹⁷

824. President Bush formalised the creation of the new office in January 2003 (see Section 6.5).

825. On 6 November, Mr Chaplin led an FCO/MOD/DFID/Cabinet Office delegation equipped with the Cabinet Office steering brief of 1 November to the first round of talks with a US inter-agency team and an Australian delegation in Washington.³⁹⁸

826. US participants included the NSC, the Office of the Vice President, the State Department, DoD and the military Joint Staff. USAID was not present at the inter-agency meeting, but did have separate discussions with DFID during the visit.

827. The British Embassy reported the outcome the following day:

“Administration planning envisages a US-led international Coalition governing Iraq in the medium term, with a gradual transfer of power to a representative Iraqi government. Coalition control of WMD, and the preservation of internal and external security, are paramount objectives.

“The US favour a role for UN agencies in the transitional phase, but not overall UN civil administration ... We agree on the need to co-ordinate on humanitarian issues.”

828. Mr Drummond, a member of the UK delegation, reported to Sir David Manning on 8 November that there were significant differences between the US and UK positions on some issues.³⁹⁹ Where the UK assumed the Iraqi Government would need “radical

³⁹⁶ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

³⁹⁷ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

³⁹⁸ Telegram 1456 Washington to FCO London, 7 November 2002, ‘Iraq: UK/US Consultations on Day After Issues: 6 November 2002’.

³⁹⁹ Minute Drummond to Manning, 8 November 2002, ‘Iraq: Day After’.

reform”, including removal of “the pervasive influence of the Ba’ath Party”, the US believed “reasonably competent ministries” remained beneath permanent secretary level and that, because the Ba’ath Party operated as a parallel structure to government below that level, “less radical change is needed”. Mr Drummond suggested that both the UK and US governments would need to develop and test their thinking more thoroughly.

829. On SSR, Mr Drummond reported agreement on the need for rapid and comprehensive reform of Iraqi security structures. He expected the US to “maintain a tight grip on this”, but the UK had “urged them to think about the wider security sector including police and the need to arrive with a plan (ie not as in Afghanistan)”.

830. The US seemed to be “well ahead with thinking about the humanitarian consequences of military action”, though less so the impact of CBW use; was “focused on the need for urgent rehabilitation of infrastructure”; wanted to establish a trust fund for transparent administration of oil revenues; and agreed Iraqi debts would require rescheduling.

831. On war crimes, Mr Drummond said that the US was working to identify “the top 30 bad guys” with no future in a successor regime, but had not focused on how to deal with any who might survive the conflict: “Given the time and cost of international tribunals we offered to consider whether any Iraqi legal processes might be usable.” Mr Drummond reported an absence of “serious thinking about Truth and Reconciliation”, but suggested “that can be pursued later”.

832. Mr Drummond concluded:

“We expect a further meeting in London or Washington, before the end of the year. There is likely to be a separate session in December between DFID and NSC and USAID. But this was a useful start and revealed that the US had done some detailed work and inter-agency coordination is working.”

833. Some of the differences between the UK and US positions described by Mr Drummond were addressed in a paper on possible interim administrations in Iraq produced by the FCO and shared with the US in mid-December. The FCO paper is described later in this Section.

834. Ms Miller, the DFID member of the UK delegation, provided her own assessment for Ms Short, reporting that the US was “reluctant to concede a meaningful role to the UN at any stage of the process”, but that USAID took a slightly different position.⁴⁰⁰ At her meeting with officials from USAID’s Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), she had been told “we should assume a UN lead for planning purposes”. Nevertheless, she was concerned that “USAID still see themselves and DFID as the two main Coalition leads”.

⁴⁰⁰ Minute Miller to P/S Secretary of State [DFID], 7 November 2002, ‘Main Issues from Whitehall Visit to Washington: Iraq’.

835. Ms Miller added that, in the absence of USAID from the main inter-agency talks, Mr Abrams had led on humanitarian issues. He had said that the inter-agency Humanitarian Working Group was working closely with the US military, which he anticipated would take on most of the immediate post-conflict restoration of utilities.

836. At USAID, Ms Miller was told that OFDA was “preparing to take a major role in food delivery, health and water and sanitation”. She reported that USAID was “extremely keen to hold more detailed conversations in a few weeks, possibly at an overly detailed level”.

837. Mr Fernie visited Geneva on 7 November to discuss UN humanitarian contingency planning with UN agencies based there.⁴⁰¹ He reported that planning was being done discreetly and without political cover. He added that, although he had stressed throughout that the UK was thinking about a range of scenarios, including a deterioration of the humanitarian situation during further weapons inspections, no-one engaged on other options: “they are all planning for conflict”.

838. Mr Fernie listed a number of next steps:

“We need to decide if/when we could support agency preparedness (we gave no commitment on this, citing policy and financial constraints) ...

“... [W]e could consider promoting military-humanitarian co-operation on the implications of CBW use for civilian populations.

“We should consider with Whitehall colleagues how to co-ordinate our approaches with other donors – particularly the USA, in the light of what was learnt in Washington this week on US views of the UN’s potential role.”

839. UK officials drew encouragement from the adoption of resolution 1441 on 8 November.

840. At its meeting on 8 November, the AHGI was given an update on the imminent adoption of resolution 1441 and the outcome of the Washington and Geneva visits.⁴⁰² Sir David Manning was informed that, at the AHGI, departments had been:

“... encouraged, where necessary, to engage those outside government in prudent contingency planning as long as such contact is discreet. This extends to DTI planning on the UK role in a post-Saddam economy, particularly in the oil sector.”

841. The adoption of resolution 1441 on 8 November and Saddam Hussein’s decision to re-admit UN weapons inspectors are addressed in detail in Section 3.5.

842. Mr Chaplin told the Inquiry there was “a surge of hope”.⁴⁰³ It seemed “there might, after all be a route to resolving this problem through the inspection route and without military action”. He added:

⁴⁰¹ Minute Fernie to Miller, 8 November 2002, ‘UN Humanitarian Contingency Planning’.

⁴⁰² Minute Dodd to Manning, 11 November 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

⁴⁰³ Public hearing, 1 December 2009, page 26.

“... there was also a surge of hope, certainly on my part, that this would give us more time.

“Indeed, some exchanges I had with my opposite number in Washington suggested that, despite all the difficulties ... it was not impossible to think that one could delay things until the autumn of 2003, and that would have been a very good thing, not least because we would then have extra time for the planning that was necessary.”⁴⁰⁴

843. Mr Lee told the Inquiry that, by mid-November, there had been a lot of conceptual thinking and analytical work on day after planning in Whitehall and there was “a fairly clear idea of the sort of things that needed to be pursued”.⁴⁰⁵ His sense throughout the autumn was that, although the US “would agree with the propositions that we put to them”, it had not made much progress “translating that into some sort of plan”. During a visit to Washington on 11 and 12 November, he and Lt Gen Pigott had suggested post-conflict planning should be given the same level of attention and resource as conflict planning: “they recognised the point, and I think they had some sort of staff effort mobilised ... towards post-conflict planning, but ... nothing on the scale of the conflict planning”.

844. The record of the 15 November meeting of the AHGI stated that UN planning for conflict and post-Saddam Hussein Iraq was deepening.⁴⁰⁶ The UN was now in contact with the US. The US and UK agreed that the IMF and World Bank would have a leading role in helping economic recovery in Iraq. The AHGI agreed that the Treasury and DFID should instruct the UK Delegation to the IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) in Washington to find out what planning was in hand and encourage further work.

845. The record also stated that the Cabinet Office would consult departments on the best way to influence US thinking on whether the US or UN should lead an interim administration before the second round of US/UK discussions later in the year.

846. Two weeks later, at the 29 November meeting of the AHGI, it was reported that the FCO would start work on a further paper on the UN role in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq “to help bridge the gap with US thinking”.⁴⁰⁷ That paper and the FCO paper on SSR would need to be shared with the US before the next bilateral discussions.

847. Mr Fernie produced a separate summary of the main points discussed at the AHGI on 29 November, which recorded a difference of opinion between the Cabinet Office and the FCO on the timing of the next round of talks with the US, with the Cabinet Office preferring mid-December and the FCO early January.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁴ Public hearing, 1 December 2009, page 40.

⁴⁰⁵ Private hearing, 22 June 2010, pages 40-41.

⁴⁰⁶ Minute Dodd to Manning, 18 November 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

⁴⁰⁷ Minute Dodd to Manning, 3 December 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

⁴⁰⁸ [Minute Fernie to Brewer, 3 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Contingency planning’](#).

848. Mr Chaplin discussed post-conflict issues with Mr William Burns, State Department Assistant Secretary Near East, on 22 November.⁴⁰⁹ Mr Burns suggested that the US would want to follow the 6 November Washington talks with a visit to London in December or, if necessary, January. Mr Chaplin said the UK was working on a paper on the shape of a post-conflict administration of Iraq, the issue on which “the US and UK still seemed furthest apart”.

849. The FCO paper on post-conflict administration was shared with the US on 12 December.⁴¹⁰

Post-Saddam Hussein oil contracts

850. During October and November 2002, UK oil companies expressed concern to the Government about securing future oil contracts in Iraq.

851. Sir David Manning raised the issue with Dr Rice in early December.

852. An oil industry representative called on Mr Chaplin on 2 October, warning that “by sticking to the rules over Iraq and not going for post-sanctions contracts”, major UK oil companies would lose out.⁴¹¹ He was concerned that some other countries would sell their support for US policy for a guarantee that existing deals with the Iraqi regime would be honoured. Mr Chaplin explained that the FCO was “seized of the issue” and “determined to get a fair slice of the action for UK companies”.

853. On 25 October, Mr Brenton reported a conversation with Vice President Cheney’s office, in which he had been told that Mr Cheney was about to discuss Iraqi oil contracts with Mr Yevgeny Primakov, the former Russian Prime Minister. Mr Brenton was advised that Mr Primakov would be told the “bids of those countries which co-operated with the US over Iraq would be looked at more sympathetically than those which did not”.⁴¹²

854. UK companies’ concerns persisted. Representatives of BP, Shell and British Gas discussed the issue with Baroness Symons on 31 October.⁴¹³ Baroness Symons reported to Mr Straw that she had said:

“... we could not make any definitive undertakings, given our determination that any action in relation to Iraq is prompted by our concerns over WMD, and not a desire for commercial gains.

“However, I undertook to draw this issue to your attention as a matter of urgency. They were genuinely convinced that deals were being struck and that British interests are being left to one side.”⁴¹⁴

⁴⁰⁹ Telegram 622 FCO London to Washington, 25 November 2002, ‘Iraq: US Views, 22 November 2002’.

⁴¹⁰ Minute Dodd to Manning, 19 December 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

⁴¹¹ Email Chaplin to Gray, 2 October 2002, ‘Iraq – Views of UK Business’.

⁴¹² Letter Brenton to Chaplin, 25 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Oil’.

⁴¹³ Minute Segar to PS/Baroness Symons, 31 October 2002, ‘Iraq Oil’.

⁴¹⁴ Minute Symons to Straw, 1 November 2002, ‘Iraqi Oil and Gas’.

855. BP raised its concerns with Mr Brenton in Washington the same day.⁴¹⁵

856. On 6 November, the FCO hosted a presentation on Iraqi energy given by a team from BP.⁴¹⁶ The presentation spelt out Iraq's importance to oil companies: it had the second largest proven oil reserves in the world and "unique 'yet to find' potential", but the oil industry was "a mess" and had to run fast to stand still.

857. The record of the seminar was sent to Mr Powell and Sir David Manning as evidence of why Iraq was so important to BP.⁴¹⁷

858. Mr Powell sent it to Mr Blair, who asked: "but what do we do about it?"⁴¹⁸

859. BP called on Mr Brenton in Washington again on 11 November.⁴¹⁹ Sir Christopher Meyer told Sir David Manning that UK oil companies had been told by the Embassy that "US motivation as regards Iraq parallels our own: this is a matter of national security, not oil ... Nevertheless, the rumours persist."

860. Sir Christopher continued:

"We have seen a report from our team at CENTCOM which suggests that the Pentagon has already awarded a contract to Kellogg, Brown and Root, a subsidiary of Haliburton, to restore the Iraqi oil industry to production levels of 3m bpd [barrels per day]. (Haliburton is of course, the company of which Cheney was previously chairman). We have so far been unable to obtain collateral for this from the Administration, and it might well in any case amount to no more than prudent contingency planning to stabilise Iraqi oil facilities if Saddam attempts to damage them in a conflict.

"Either way, there is clearly an issue here which we need to tackle. Raising it in an effective way with the Administration is a delicate matter. My view remains that the only realistic way in to this is via a PM intervention with Bush ... The points to make would be:

- Once Saddam has been disarmed ... Iraq's oil industry will be central to ... economic recovery.
- We, as you, have energy majors who have skills and resources to help ...
- To give the lie to suggestions that this campaign is all about oil, it is vitally important that, once sanctions are lifted, there is seen to be a level playing field for all companies to work in Iraq."

⁴¹⁵ Telegram 1418 Washington to FCO London, 31 October 2002, 'BP & Iraqi Oil'.

⁴¹⁶ Minute Economic Policy Department [junior official] to Arthur, 13 November 2002, 'BP/Iraqi Energy'.

⁴¹⁷ Manuscript comment Rycroft, 18 November 2002, on Minute Economic Policy Department [junior official] to Arthur, 13 November 2002, 'BP/Iraqi Energy'.

⁴¹⁸ Manuscript comment Blair on Minute Economic Policy Department [junior official] to Arthur, 13 November 2002, 'BP/Iraqi Energy'.

⁴¹⁹ [Letter Meyer to Manning, 15 November 2002, 'Iraqi Oil'](#).

861. Sir Christopher advised that this was the least the UK should do. He had been advised by Mr James A Baker III, the former US Secretary of State, to put down a marker with the Administration fast.

862. Sir David Manning raised oil and gas contracts with Dr Rice in Washington on 9 December.⁴²⁰ He hoped UK energy companies “would be treated fairly and not overlooked if Saddam left the scene”. Dr Rice commented that it would be particularly unjust if companies that had observed sanctions since 1991, a category which included UK companies, were not among the beneficiaries of post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.

863. UK and US policies on Iraqi oil and efforts to secure contracts for UK companies hoping to do business in Iraq are described in Section 6.5.

UK military options

864. In November, the UK received a formal US request for UK military support in Iraq, including for post-conflict operations.

865. Lt Gen Reith submitted four proposals for the deployment of UK forces to the Chiefs of Staff, one for the North and three for the South.

866. The Inquiry has not seen any detailed analysis underpinning Lt Gen Reith’s conclusion that the South of Iraq would be more manageable in the post-conflict period than the North.

867. Adm Boyce directed that the North should remain the focus of UK planners at that time.

868. On 18 November, Mr Hoon’s office informed No.10, the Cabinet Office, the FCO and Sir Christopher Meyer that Mr Hoon had received a formal US request for UK assistance with a military campaign in Iraq (see Section 6.1), including provision of “financial/material resources for a military campaign and for post-conflict efforts” and “constabulary forces and humanitarian assistance as part of post-conflict stability efforts”.⁴²¹

869. Lt Gen Reith submitted a paper to the Chiefs of Staff on 18 November setting out northern and southern options for a UK land contribution in Iraq (see Section 6.1).⁴²² He advised the Chiefs to think about “where we wish to be at the end of Phase III [combat operations], as this could impact directly on any UK involvement in Phase IV”.

⁴²⁰ [Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 11 December 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

⁴²¹ Letter Williams to McDonald, 18 November 2002, ‘Iraq – US request for UK support’ attaching Paper [unattributed], 15 November 2002, ‘Request for UK Support’.

⁴²² Minute Reith to DCDS(C), 18 November 2002, ‘Options for the UK Land Contribution’ attaching Paper CJO, 18 November 2002, ‘Options for the UK Land Contribution’.

870. On the northern option, Lt Gen Reith advised:

“This could result in UK long-term leadership of the region during post-conflict operations: a position which the US would appear to favour. It would be a challenging area to control and develop, particularly in preserving regional stability between the Turks, Kurds and Sunnis. Whilst the UK has the necessary experience and capability, the challenges do need to be assessed in line with UK strategic guidance ...”

871. The post-conflict responsibilities in the South were presented as being more manageable:

“A post-conflict positioning of the UK division in the South could be attractive. The range of problems appears less complex and diverse, the long-term force structure requirements could be reduced and local conditions are likely to be more conducive to development and influence. The Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG) is also a traditional area of UK influence.”

872. The MOD advised No.10 that post-conflict considerations needed to “guide thinking” on the conflict phase of operations and that the post-conflict phase would be “a challenge in its own right”.

873. The MOD warned: “However successful the conflict phase, a badly-handled aftermath would make our intervention a net failure.”

874. Mr Watkins wrote to Sir David Manning on 19 November, reporting the formal US request for UK support.⁴²³ The letter was copied to Mr Straw’s Private Office, Mr Brown’s Private Office and Mr Bowen.

875. Mr Watkins highlighted the importance of the “aftermath”:

“Our own work has increasingly convinced us that the aftermath of any military action will be a challenge in its own right. This needs to guide thinking on the conflict phase for all sorts of reasons:

- However successful the conflict phase, a badly-handled aftermath would make our intervention a net failure.
- Day 1 of conflict will also be Day 1 of the aftermath for some parts of Iraq.
- The nature of the conflict will influence the type of aftermath we find ourselves managing: in particular, Iraqi behaviour will have a big impact on the scale of the humanitarian and reconstruction tasks that might emerge.
- The forces we commit to conflict will also have to deal with the initial phase of the aftermath, simply by virtue of being there. And of course their location in the conflict phase will largely determine their post-conflict role ...

⁴²³ [Letter Watkins to Manning, 19 November 2002, ‘Iraq: Military Planning after UNSCR 1441’.](#)

- We also need to bear in mind that the aftermath could arise with little or no prior conflict, in the event that the regime collapses under pressure. Although the US tend to believe that the regime would indeed collapse very quickly, their thinking on the aftermath is, paradoxically, focused almost entirely on managing a post-conflict scenario.”

876. Mr Watkins added that the US recognised the importance of aftermath planning, but their thinking remained:

“... somewhat immature, fitting the problem to their pre-conceived solution. In particular ... they continue to have difficulty understanding why anybody might think that some kind of UN umbrella will be important in the aftermath stage. We need to keep trying to inject realism into their thinking.”

877. Mr Watkins reported that Mr Hoon believed the UK should:

“Continue trying to influence US thinking on the aftermath, recognising that this is not something which can be neatly separated from any conflict phase (and indeed, might arise without conflict at all).”

878. Sir David Manning sent the letter to Mr Blair. He drew attention to separate advice on sensitivities associated with the call-out of UK military Reservists.⁴²⁴

879. The MOD was right to advise that a badly-handled aftermath would make intervention in Iraq “a net failure” and to conclude that thinking on the post-conflict phase should guide the UK’s approach to the conflict.

880. The evidence seen by the Inquiry indicates that the MOD did start to consider post-conflict operations as an integral part of the overall military campaign, but against an assumption that the UK should seek to minimise the size and duration of its post-conflict deployment.

Parliamentary debates on resolution 1441, 25 November 2002

881. Post-conflict issues were raised by a small number of participants in the Parliamentary debates on resolution 1441.

882. The concerns raised included:

- the need to start planning now;
- the importance of planning for the worst when preparing for the humanitarian consequences of conflict; and
- the need to consider unfinished business elsewhere in the world.

⁴²⁴ [Minute Manning to Prime Minister, \[undated and untitled\], attaching Letter Watkins to Manning, 19 November 2002, ‘Iraq: Military Planning after UNSCR 1441’.](#)

883. Concerns about post-conflict preparations were raised during the House of Commons debate on resolution 1441 on 25 November, described in more detail in Section 3.6.

884. Mr Donald Anderson (Labour), Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, noted “that we need to plan for the post-conflict position now, rather than imagining that it will solve itself”.⁴²⁵

885. Others focused on the importance of humanitarian contingency planning. The point was put most forcefully by Mr Peter Luff (Conservative):

“There is a strong view held with great sincerity by many UN Member States that to prepare for a humanitarian crisis is to acknowledge the inevitability of war. I do not accept that argument. To prepare for the worst is not to wish for the worst, and we should prepare for the worst. Indeed, that may have the incidental advantage of reinforcing in Saddam Hussein’s mind the seriousness of the international community’s purpose. Please let us do more to prepare for the humanitarian consequences of a war that none of us want.”⁴²⁶

886. Dr Jenny Tonge (Liberal Democrat) asked Mr Straw to consider “unfinished business” elsewhere in the world:

“Do we have the capacity to cope? In Afghanistan, only \$1bn has so far been committed out of the billions that were promised, and 70 percent of that has been spent on humanitarian aid. There is no security in Afghanistan outside Kabul, Afghanistan has asked for an extension of the international security assistance force, but where will the extra help come from? Will it come from the United States or from Britain? Where will it come from if we are facing war in Iraq and the Middle East? Very little progress has been made in Afghanistan despite the promises of the Prime Minister. It is unfinished business.

“Many members have rightly referred to the difficult situation in the Middle East ... more unfinished business.

“For many people, the Balkans are a distant memory, but it is still a very unstable region ... This year, only six percent of the aid promised in the famous Marshall Plan for the Balkans has been delivered. That is yet more unfinished business. We are very good at destroying, but not so good at rebuilding. I have not even mentioned Africa ...”⁴²⁷

887. Neither Mr Hoon nor Mr Straw addressed post-conflict issues during the debate.

⁴²⁵ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 25 November 2002, column 89.

⁴²⁶ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 25 November 2002, column 91.

⁴²⁷ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 25 November 2002, column 115.

888. Mr Tony Colman (Labour), Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the UN, informed the House of Commons that he had been reassured by what he had been told about UN humanitarian planning during a recent visit to New York.⁴²⁸

889. In the House of Lords, Lord Moynihan (Conservative) warned that “the use of force against Iraq opens up the possibility of an on-going military and political entanglement” and asked for assurances that the UK would not enter into a conflict without a “clear, effective and well-planned exit strategy”.⁴²⁹

890. Baroness Symons replied:

“The government of Iraq is a matter for the Iraqi people. We believe that the people of Iraq deserve a better government, one based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, economic freedom and prosperity. We welcome the external opposition’s role in discussing the future of Iraq and in debating issues such as democracy, that cannot be discussed in Iraq ... As at the end of the Gulf War, Britain would remain at the forefront of efforts to help the Iraqi people into the future.”⁴³⁰

Domestic contingency planning

891. The first edition of a paper by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) on the potential impact on the UK of operations against Iraq assessed that, the longer any dislocation lasted, the more likely it was that disruptive challenges would emerge. Those might include:

- oil price rises;
- general uncertainty affecting the stock market;
- protests and counter-demonstrations;
- exploitation of the situation by Al Qaida and other Islamic extremist groups;
- military resources unavailable to cover industrial action other than the firefighters’ dispute.

892. On 27 November, Mr Drummond sent No.10 and the Private Offices of departments represented in the AHGI a CCS assessment of the potential impact on the UK of operations against Iraq.⁴³¹ The CCS assessed that:

“The most important factor within the UK will be public confidence and its extension, market and commercial confidence. The extent to which there is a public perception that everyday life and services have been altered and the terrorist threat increased will be a major factor. A short, successful campaign would have the minimum impact.

⁴²⁸ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 25 November 2002, column 116.

⁴²⁹ House of Lords, *Official Report*, 25 November 2002, columns 557-558.

⁴³⁰ House of Lords, *Official Report*, 25 November 2002, column 558.

⁴³¹ [Minute Drummond to Manning, 27 November 2002, ‘Potential Impact on the UK of Operations Against Iraq’ attaching Paper Civil Contingencies Secretariat, 21 November 2002, ‘Potential Impact on UK of Operations Against Iraq’.](#)

The longer dislocation lasts, particularly if there are major terrorist incidents, the greater the likelihood of real disruptive challenges emerging. The extent to which military operations have public support is also important. A strong patriotic factor will restrain disruption and increase tolerance of minor inconveniences.”

893. The CCS formed a number of other “key judgements”:

- Oil price rises would be the main economic factor. “General uncertainty” would affect the stock market and, possibly, domestic consumer spending. Tourism and air travel would be affected by dislocation of routes.
- The potential for further protests by anti-war groups and ethnic groups and counter-demonstrations would increase. There was “opportunity for violent confrontations between protest groups, ethnic groups, or targeted against ethnic groups, particularly in the aftermath of a major terrorist incident”.
- The firefighters’ dispute would probably go ahead.
- Heightened anxiety about terrorist attacks was likely to cause increased disruption from hoaxes and false alarms. The JIC assessed that the threat from Al Qaida and Islamic extremist groups remained “high”. “Al Qaida and other Islamic extremists will seek to exploit the circumstances of a war situation”.
- Military resources would be unavailable to cover industrial action contingencies other than the firefighters’ dispute. A call up of medical Reservists would probably affect NHS provision.

894. The CCS stated that contingency planning by departments was in hand. In many cases, existing contingency plans were “adaptable to the circumstances arising from operations against Iraq”.

895. The CCS paper continued to be updated until January 2003, when the AHGI established a Domestic Impact Sub-Group overseen by Mr Jonathan Stephens, Treasury Director Public Services, supported by the CCS (see Section 6.5).⁴³²

DFID engagement with Whitehall

896. In late November and early December 2002, DFID officials lobbied for a cross-government exercise to cost each of the military options being considered by the UK, and to include humanitarian costs.

897. During December, DFID officials also sought, with some success, to improve official-level co-ordination with the MOD and the rest of Whitehall on humanitarian issues.

898. In a meeting with DFID officials on 18 November, Ms Short expressed concern that not only was no money set aside for humanitarian actions, but that the issue was not

⁴³² [Letter Stephens to Phillips, 20 January 2003, ‘Iraq: Domestic Implications of Military Action’ attaching Paper \[draft\] Civil Contingencies Secretariat, 17 January 2003, ‘Potential Impact on UK of Operations Against Iraq’.](#)

even being considered.⁴³³ The meeting agreed that it would be important to cost each military option, including both military and “realistic humanitarian” costs.

899. Mr Fernie set out his understanding of Ms Short’s position in an internal email the following week:

“... HMT have been talking to MOD only about the military costs without taking into account the costs to the international community of any humanitarian response, post-Saddam transitional administration and/or reconstruction ...”⁴³⁴

900. Ms Short was reported to be “particularly keen” to make clear that DFID could not find substantial funds for such work from its existing budgets. Mr Fernie explained that DFID was trying to “cobble together some figures of possible costs – all a bit speculative ... but the point at this stage is to get others in Whitehall thinking about it.”

901. On 3 December, Mr Fernie reported to Dr Nicola Brewer, DFID Director General Regional Programmes, that there had been no progress in interesting the Cabinet Office or the Treasury in costing “various scenarios”.⁴³⁵ Mr Drummond and the AHGI had both given a “clear negative response”. The Cabinet Office position was that if DFID thought it would incur unaffordable extra costs, it should bid to the Treasury. DFID’s Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department (CHAD) was working up preliminary costings, “but we currently have no consumer for the product”. Mr Fernie asked how and when to report back to Ms Short.

902. Dr Brewer replied that she had spoken to Mr Ricketts who had been:

“... slightly more willing to acknowledge that the likely costs ... should be factored into the decision-making process. But I got no sense at all that the FCO would either push for this or support us in doing so. Their sense is that the Prime Minister’s mind will be made up by other factors.”⁴³⁶

903. Dr Brewer suggested that the issue be raised with Sir David Manning or other Permanent Secretaries by Mr Chakrabarti, or at Cabinet by Ms Short.

904. DFID officials reported the lack of progress to Ms Short on 10 December.⁴³⁷ Ms Short agreed that officials should raise US and DFID cost estimates at the next Cabinet Office meeting, and directed that DFID officials should increase discussions with the Treasury. It was also important to ensure that all costings included military and humanitarian factors.

905. At the same meeting, officials raised the need to consider training for DFID-funded personnel who might be deployed alongside the UK military. Ms Short pointed out that

⁴³³ Minute Bewes to Miller, 19 November 2002, ‘Iraq’.

⁴³⁴ Email Fernie to Sparkhall, 26 November 2002, ‘Iraq – expenditure implications across Whitehall’.

⁴³⁵ [Minute Fernie to Brewer, 3 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Contingency planning’](#).

⁴³⁶ Minute Brewer to Fernie, 5 December 2002, ‘Iraq: contingency planning’.

⁴³⁷ [Minute Bewes to Fernie, 13 December 2002, ‘Iraq’](#).

DFID would not usually deploy its own people, but would work through the UN or NGOs. She asked officials to revert to her before putting anyone through training.

906. On 3 December, Dr Brewer met Major General Tim Cross, Logistic Component Commander of the Joint Force being prepared for possible operations against Iraq, to discuss the potential for better MOD/DFID engagement in Iraq and elsewhere with.⁴³⁸ Dr Brewer and Maj Gen Cross were joined later in the meeting by Mr Chakrabarti.

907. The record stated that Maj Gen Cross emphasised the non-official nature of his visit and requested that the meeting be conducted under Chatham House rules.⁴³⁹ He was concerned that “the MOD was failing to engage at an early stage with other government departments particularly DFID and hence not paying sufficient heed in its planning to wider security and humanitarian issues”. A number of action points were agreed to promote “immediate and sustainable” links between DFID and MOD, none specifically linked to Iraq.

908. Dr Brewer wrote to Mr Fernie on 5 December to express her concern about DFID’s engagement with the rest of Whitehall:

“I’m surprised that all of the Cabinet Office meetings so far seem to be at [relatively junior] Head of Department level: Peter Ricketts tells me that he is spending 50 percent of his time on Iraq ... are there Whitehall senior officials’ meetings to which we are not being invited? We should be proactive about this ...”⁴⁴⁰

909. Sir Suma Chakrabarti explained to the Inquiry that Maj Gen Cross left the meeting on 3 December:

“... agreeing a number of ways to try and resolve this. In fact, he even asked for Clare Short to write to the Defence Secretary, which I thought was interesting, to try and open up the military planning side.

“On 12 December, Clare [Short] decided ... in the margins of Cabinet, to talk to the Prime Minister about this [military planning] and the Prime Minister suggested that she have a direct conversation with the Chief of Defence Staff, Lord Boyce, as he now is. And she did so, and Lord Boyce suggested that she or DFID officials talked to some other people in his office about this. She didn’t seem to be making much progress. I took it up with the Cabinet Secretary. David Manning very kindly also rang the Chief of Defence Staff about it, and on 18 December MOD officials came across and we agreed a way forward whereby we could link up better the humanitarian assistance and the operational planning on the military side.”⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ Minute DFID [junior official] to Brewer, 3 December 2002, ‘Meeting with Major General Tim Cross – 3 December 2002’.

⁴³⁹ The Chatham House Rule states that participants at a meeting in which it is invoked are “free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s) nor that of any other participant, may be revealed”.

⁴⁴⁰ Minute Brewer to Fernie, 5 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Contingency Planning’.

⁴⁴¹ Public hearing, 8 December 2009, page 19.

910. Lord Turnbull told the Inquiry:

“There was one point in which – this is a sort of classic way in which the Cabinet Secretary intervenes, we get to December, I think, and the DFID come to me for – I think invoking my help, saying ‘We are not satisfied that we are learning enough on what is going on in the military planning’, and at the same time Clare Short raised it with Lord Boyce and the Prime Minister and it was very quickly sorted out.”⁴⁴²

911. Although co-operation between DFID and the MOD improved, No.10 continued to block DFID participation in detailed discussions of military planning.

912. Ms Short was not briefed on UK military planning until 12 February.

913. At her request, Dr Brewer met Mr Stephen Pollard, Head of MOD Overseas Secretariat (Sec(O)), on 18 December, and Mr Lee and Mr Webb on 20 December.⁴⁴³

914. The DFID record of the meetings stated that the MOD appreciated the importance of DFID-MOD dialogue, especially on humanitarian issues, but that “the issue of Operational Security (Op Sec) is a hurdle to early and more consistent consultation”. The issue was less the level of security clearance required than the “need to know”, which was much more difficult to define.

915. Mr Webb was reported to be “clearly focused on aftermath planning”. Dr Brewer set out Ms Short’s interest in “post-conflict stabilisation strategies” and agreed that she (Dr Brewer) and he should discuss the issue on 10 January.

916. The record also stated that the meetings had confirmed that little thought was being given to humanitarian operations. Dr Brewer raised the issue of a stabilisation force and stated that: “Making a demonstrable (and rapid) difference to the civil population’s lives was vital to the success of any political-military plan and to wider regional stability.” Mr Lee “saw the advantage of HMG [Her Majesty’s Government]-wide discussion”.

917. Mr Lee commented afterwards to Lt Gen Pigott: “From a machinery of government and successful Iraq policy perspective all the arguments are surely in favour of including ... DFID individuals in our discussions.”⁴⁴⁴ He explained that No.10 would not, however, accept this:

“At David Manning’s meeting today ... when asked by Peter Ricketts whether DFID could attend the COBR(R), David had immediately said ‘no’. This was on the grounds that DFID officials would feel bound to report what they had heard to Clare Short ... it was not acceptable to incorporate Ms Short herself into this level of debate.”

⁴⁴² Public hearing, 13 January 2010, page 8.

⁴⁴³ [Minute \[DFID junior official\] to Brewer, 20 December 2002, ‘Meetings with MOD officials’.](#)

⁴⁴⁴ Minute Lee to Policy Director, 20 December 2002, ‘DFID Involvement in Iraq Planning and Preparations’.

918. Mr Lee also recorded that he had agreed with Dr Brewer that development of military campaign objectives needed to take account of humanitarian concerns.

919. **The Inquiry considers that Ms Short’s exclusion reflected No.10’s position on her participation in the making of policy on Iraq. Ministerial decision-making is addressed in more detail in Section 2.**

920. The discussion of DFID (and DTI) involvement in military planning by the Chiefs of Staff on 8 January 2003 is described later in this Section.

921. Dr Brewer told the Inquiry that the proportion of her time spent on Iraq changed significantly over that period:

“By about mid-December 2002 and then until early April 2003 it was taking up most of my time, displacing most of my other responsibilities as DG Regional Programmes. I handed over direct supervision of DFID’s Iraq operations to Suma Chakrabarti a few weeks before Clare Short resigned in May 2003.”⁴⁴⁵

922. Dr Brewer explained:

“From autumn 2002, Suma Chakrabarti and I kept under constant review staffing levels and responsibilities on Iraq, how work on Iraq was going, and the impact that our workload on Iraq was having on other DFID work in my areas of responsibility. In early April 2003, he and I agreed that he should take over from me direct supervision of DFID work on Iraq for the following reasons:

- co-ordination between DFID and OGDs, in particular MOD but also No.10, FCO and Cabinet Office, had significantly improved (which had been one of my key immediate tasks);
- the issue was reputationally critical for DFID, and therefore one on which the Permanent Secretary naturally needed to be engaged; and
- for me, as the relevant DG, as well as the Permanent Secretary also to continue to spend a considerable proportion of time on Iraq, risked both duplication of senior level supervision and significant neglect of the rest of my responsibilities.”⁴⁴⁶

FCO preparation for handling an “all-out crisis”

923. In December 2002, the FCO introduced new machinery to manage its work on Iraq.

⁴⁴⁵ Statement, 12 September 2010, page 1.

⁴⁴⁶ Statement, 12 September 2010, page 14.

924. On 29 November, the FCO Board discussed priorities for the coming months, including reviewing Iraq policy and planning:

“The Board agreed that the possibility of war in Iraq would remain the prime focus of attention over the next months. It discussed contingency plans being put in place. Work was in hand on staffing and establishing emergency units. Procedures were due to be tested in January ... Board members stressed the need to keep the level of threat under review; and to keep examining and testing out the contingency plans.”⁴⁴⁷

925. The Board also discussed whether further costs were likely to arise in the context of Iraq contingency planning. The MOD had already placed a claim on the Reserve and there was a strong case for an FCO claim “which would be strengthened if we could point to clear decisions being taken now to prioritise our spending”.

926. FCO claims on the Reserve are addressed in Section 13.1.

927. A paper on FCO prioritisation was prepared for the Board in March 2003 and is described in Section 6.5.

928. On 2 December, Mr Ricketts sent Sir Michael Jay advice on “preparations for handling an all-out Iraq crisis”.⁴⁴⁸ In a brief description of how the FCO was “already geared up to deal with the increased intensity of work on Iraq”, he included references to the procurement of items for the future Baghdad Embassy, contingency planning for CBW protection in the region, and consular contingency planning. Most of the advice addressed the role of the FCO Emergency Unit and choreography of departmental meetings.

929. Mr Ricketts explained that he held daily meetings at 9.00am to co-ordinate FCO activity, chaired in his absence by another FCO Board member or Mr Chaplin. He also described the Iraq-related responsibilities of FCO senior officials:

“William Ehrman [Director General Defence and Intelligence] deals with JIC and MOD, Graham Fry [Director General Wider World] supervises work on consular planning ...; Edward Chaplin and Charles Gray take the lead on policy advice, working with DSI for longer range thinking, with the UN and CFSP [Common Foreign and Security Policy] teams, with the Legal Advisers and others. I have deliberately involved a wide spread of senior managers, because we may well have to sustain an intense crisis for a significant period ...

“You will of course want to be closely involved in all the policy-making. One of the key tasks of the Emergency Unit is to prepare the Foreign Secretary and you for the [anticipated] No.10 meetings, to ensure the FCO is pro-active and thinking ahead. I propose to take responsibility under you as overall co-ordinator ...

⁴⁴⁷ Minutes, 29 November 2002, FCO Board.

⁴⁴⁸ [Minute Ricketts to PUS \[FCO\], 2 December 2002, 'Iraq: Handling the Crisis'](#).

“MED and Personnel Command discussed again this week the staff numbers required to produce this structure, and other essential augmentation (for example, for the Press Office and Consular Division) ... But it will be vital that the Board meets early and decides which tasks can fall away ...

“This all looks unwieldy, but I am confident that it will work ... In managing this, the trick will be to have a clear co-ordinating and tasking arrangement, without vast meetings ... We will need to keep [overseas] posts well briefed and targeted, while encouraging them to exercise maximum restraint in reporting ...”

930. The Inquiry has seen no response to Mr Ricketts from Sir Michael Jay.

931. The first Iraq morning meeting for which the Inquiry has seen a record was on 24 December.⁴⁴⁹ From 11 February 2003, Mr Ricketts chaired a second policy meeting most evenings.⁴⁵⁰ The records of each morning and evening meeting were sent to Sir Michael Jay’s office and copied widely in the FCO, to Dr Brewer in DFID, and, from 3 February 2003, to Dr Simon Cholerton, an official in Sec(O) in the MOD.

932. The records show that most meetings focused on negotiations at the UN. Post-conflict issues, including the preparation of briefing for No.10, key meetings with the US, and DFID’s humanitarian preparations, were also discussed, but were often reported in less detail.

933. Mr Ricketts was right in December 2002 to try to ensure that the FCO was “thinking ahead” and to involve a wide range of senior managers responsible for areas of business affected by Iraq in the department’s preparations for an “all-out Iraq crisis”. But the new arrangements represented a missed opportunity to give greater prominence and coherence to the FCO’s work on post-conflict issues.

FCO REPORT ON SADDAM HUSSEIN’S CRIMES AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

934. The FCO published a report on Saddam Hussein’s crimes and human rights abuses in early December.

935. FCO officials advised Mr Straw that there continued to be differences between UK and US views on how to approach the prosecution of Saddam Hussein and his inner circle.

936. On 2 December the FCO published a report on Saddam Hussein’s crimes and human rights abuses.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ Minute Middle East Department [junior official] to PS/PUS, 24 December 2002, ‘Iraq Morning Meeting: Key Points’.

⁴⁵⁰ Minute Middle East Department [junior official] to PS/PUS, 11 February 2003, ‘Iraq Evening Meeting: Key Points’.

⁴⁵¹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office London, *Saddam Hussein: crimes and human rights abuses*, November 2002.

937. The first draft of the FCO report had been produced in March 2002, in response to a request from Mr Blair for information on Saddam Hussein’s record of human rights abuses, for publication alongside a paper on WMD.⁴⁵²

938. The development of a communications strategy on Iraq and the preparation of the Iraq dossier, which incorporated some material on human rights abuses, are addressed in Section 4.2.

939. The FCO report published on 2 December was “based on the testimony of Iraqi exiles, evidence gathered by UN rapporteurs and human rights organisations, and intelligence material”.⁴⁵³ It examined “Iraq’s record on torture, the treatment of women, prison conditions, arbitrary and summary killings, the persecution of the Kurds and the Shia, the harassment of opposition figures outside Iraq and the occupation of Kuwait”.

940. Mr Straw explained to the *BBC* that the report was being published “because it is important that people understand the comprehensive evil that is Saddam Hussein”.⁴⁵⁴

941. The report was criticised by some as an attempt to influence public opinion in favour of war.⁴⁵⁵

942. On 11 December, in response to a request in October for more work on the criminal prosecution of Saddam Hussein and his inner circle, the FCO sent No.10 a paper on a possible international criminal tribunal for Iraq.⁴⁵⁶

943. The covering letter explained that, as requested, the question of a tribunal was being factored into Whitehall work on the future of Iraq. Officials had discussed the issue at the Washington talks on 6 November and consulted the State Department’s War Crimes Office. The US did not appear to favour an international tribunal for Iraq along the lines of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and was giving close consideration to the Sierra Leone Special Court model.⁴⁵⁷

944. On the question of whether to circulate information about potential indictees in order to encourage them to break with Saddam Hussein, the FCO advised that there were various lists of possible targets in existence, including a list of 27 published by the Iraqi National Congress and a secret list produced by the US containing about 40 names, but that it would be inappropriate for a government to issue a list as it would pre-empt the role of the eventual prosecutor. It might also encourage those on the list to

⁴⁵² [Minute McKane to Rycroft, 27 March 2002, ‘Saddam’s record of human rights abuses’ attaching Paper. ‘Iraqi Human Rights Abuses’.](#)

⁴⁵³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office London, *Saddam Hussein: crimes and human rights abuses*, November 2002.

⁴⁵⁴ *BBC News*, 2 December 2002, *UK unveils ‘torture’ dossier*.

⁴⁵⁵ *The Guardian*, 3 December 2002, *Anger over Straw’s dossier on Iraqi human rights*.

⁴⁵⁶ [Letter McDonald to Rycroft, 11 December 2002, ‘ICTY-Type Tribunal for Iraq’ attaching Paper \[unattributed and undated\], ‘Tribunal for Iraq’.](#)

⁴⁵⁷ The Sierra Leone Special Court (SLSC) is a special tribunal of domestic and international judges which exists outside the Sierra Leone criminal justice system. The SLSC prosecutes only those responsible for the most serious crimes.

resist to the end or to abscond. For those reasons, the US was cautious about the idea. The FCO intended to stay in touch with the State Department as thinking on transitional justice developed.

945. The FCO advised that prosecution of the range of allegations against Saddam Hussein's regime might require a combination of different judicial institutions. Issues to consider included:

- the capacity of the domestic criminal justice system, which was likely to need “substantial re-building and re-training to restore it as an independent and effective body”;
- the difficulty of finding a legal basis for a number of the options if the UN was not involved in the administration of Iraq;
- the UK's wish not to be associated with the death penalty, which remained extant in Iraqi law; and
- categorisation of offenders, which might include:
 - political and military leaders;
 - others contributing to the commission of international crimes;
 - perpetrators of serious domestic crimes such as murder; and
 - those responsible for lesser offences.

946. Those issues were considered further by officials after the second round of inter-agency talks in Washington on 22 January 2003 (see Section 6.5).

947. In a series of papers on post-conflict Iraq prepared in mid-December and shared with the US, the FCO identified:

- possible middle ground between UK and US positions on the post-conflict role of the UN;
- the need for more information on the capabilities of Iraq's civil service;
- the need to put SSR at the centre of post-conflict work;
- the risk of underplaying the importance of “Islamic forces in Iraq”;
- the need to improve economic conditions as quickly as possible; and
- the importance of maintaining firm control of the internal security situation.

948. The British Embassy Amman also highlighted the tainted image of the UN in Iraq. It stated that a UN-led interim administration would be preferable to a US-led one, but would come in for much the same criticism from Iraqis.

949. On 12 December, the FCO handed four papers to Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, US Ambassador at large for Free Iraqis, who was visiting London for the conference of the Iraqi Opposition from 14 to 17 December:

- ‘Interim Administrations in Iraq: Why a UN-led Interim Administration would be in the US interest’;
- ‘Iraq: Security Sector Reform’;
- ‘Islamism in Iraq’; and
- a paper on war crimes.⁴⁵⁸

950. It is not clear from the documents seen by the Inquiry which paper on war crimes was handed to Ambassador Khalilzad. It seems most likely to have been the FCO paper published on 2 December, but could have been the paper on a tribunal for Iraq, which had been sent to No.10 on 11 December after a series of discussions on the subject between the FCO and the US Government.

951. The first three papers were tabled at the AHGI on 13 December.

952. The Cabinet Office undertook to circulate the paper on war crimes later.

FCO PAPER: ‘INTERIM ADMINISTRATIONS IN IRAQ’

953. The FCO paper on interim administrations shared with US on 12 December was a response to the differences between the US and UK positions at the Washington talks on 6 November and was described as “work in progress”.⁴⁵⁹ The paper was tabled at the AHGI on 13 December. It is not clear who contributed to the draft.

954. The FCO paper set out the likely short- and medium-term functions of an interim administration, ranging from destruction of WMD stockpiles to reintegration of refugees. It cautioned:

“We cannot be sure of the scale of the problem before we encounter it (although we believe the US has done a lot of work in this area, particularly with the Iraqi exile community). Iraq has a reputation for being one of the better-run Arab countries with a well-educated civil service. But we have little first hand evidence of how things work nowadays. We need more information, and we are working with academics, the Iraqi exile community and our posts on this in order to tackle the following questions:

- To what extent are ministries infiltrated by Ba’athist elements? How central are the Ba’athists to the functioning of the ministries? Can the ministries work without them?
- How far do the Ba’athists have to be removed to ensure loyalty to an interim administration?

⁴⁵⁸ Minute Dodd to Manning, 19 December 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

⁴⁵⁹ [Paper Middle East Department, 12 December 2002, ‘Interim Administrations in Iraq: Why a UN-led Interim Administration would be in the US interest’.](#)

- What has been the effect on good government of coping with sanctions? How much activity has moved to the 'black market'? How do we move black market activity back into the legitimate sector?
- To what extent have government practices become corrupted by non-transparent control over oil revenues?"

955. The FCO recognised that there were benefits and drawbacks with the US and UN models, and suggested a "third way":

"... a potential middle ground in which security requirements could be provided by Coalition Forces, answerable only to US leadership, and all other functions of administration provided through the UN. Or the tasks of an IA could be divided up so that US-led Coalition Forces retained the lead on some – eg defence, WMD, security sector reform – working alongside a UN-led civil interim administration.

"To achieve this sort of structure would require some innovative work in the UN Security Council ..."

956. The FCO concluded that international legitimacy was crucial to many aspects of the interim administration's mission and would be very difficult to achieve under US leadership. In the short term, the US-led model looked more likely to succeed, especially in the areas of SSR and WMD. Wider political and economic reforms were more likely to endure in the long term if the interim authority worked under UN auspices and maximised the contribution of Iraqis.

957. Comments on the paper from the British Embassy Amman were included in an annex:

"The crucial issue here is timing. If the US or UN were to control the initial period of post-conflict transition, their presence is likely to be accepted (if it brings peace and not a worse situation). This stage should not be long enough for the US or the UN to start expanding their duties beyond simply keeping the peace and avoiding major humanitarian problems."

958. The Embassy warned that the "fervour that could be whipped up" by any US attempt to run major Iraqi government departments "could be enough to endanger the international community's ability to affect the process of change at all". Equally:

"Whilst a UN-led authority would be undoubtedly better than a US-led one, the UN now has such a tainted image in Iraq that a UN-led IA would come in for much the same criticism. (The UN is felt to be under the control of the US anyway.)"

959. The Embassy concluded:

"There is a small group of Iraqis inside Iraq who could be trusted/used to bring about change in a transitional phase. They would need to be bolstered by Iraqi professionals willing to return from abroad.

“An interim authority would be best run by the Iraqis themselves with long-term technical and financial support from the international community. (The UK is in a particularly strong position to do this – we still maintain the image of being professional and knowledgeable!)”

FCO PAPER: ‘IRAQ: SECURITY SECTOR REFORM’

960. During October and November, the FCO produced a number of drafts of a paper on SSR, one of which informed the 1 November Cabinet Office paper on models for post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.⁴⁶⁰

961. The last version seen by the Inquiry, dated 10 December, described SSR as a key task which, if carried out successfully, “should lead to Iraq giving up its attachment to WMD, dismantling its oppressive network of spies, informers and secret police, scaling down its huge armed forces and reforming its criminal justice system”.⁴⁶¹ If SSR went well, Iraq would be “much less likely to pose the same threat to the region and its own people”. The process would be shaped to a degree by post-conflict stabilisation and should be seen within the overall policy framework of promoting good government. There was a particularly clear overlap between SSR and those wider issues in areas of police and judicial reform, about which the UK knew little.

962. The paper listed the questions that any SSR plan for Iraq must answer:

- What security structures would be appropriate? That required an assessment of the internal and external threats to Iraq and knowledge of its future constitutional shape.
- Who should be in charge? SSR in Afghanistan had been hampered by the lack of international institutional architecture: “In Iraq’s case, we should give a higher priority to organising SSR much earlier, ie ideally before military action ... Good articulation between the body charged with overseeing SSR and the post S[addam] H[ussein] interim administration will be critical.”
- Methodology. How far should the exclusion of members of the Tikriti clan be taken? The inner circle of security agencies around Saddam Hussein were ripe for abolition, but what about the civilian police and the judiciary?
- DDR. What mechanisms were need to bring perpetrators of crimes against humanity to justice?
- Qualitative and quantitative change. How to reform the security sector to operate on the basis of humanitarian values in support of a legitimate government?
- Accountability. How to establish the principle of civilian oversight?

⁴⁶⁰ [Letter Gray to Drummond, 18 October 2002, ‘Papers for the AHGI’ attaching Paper \[unattributed\], 17 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Security Sector Reform’.](#)

⁴⁶¹ [Paper Middle East Department, 10 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Security Sector Reform’.](#)

963. The FCO described the paper as a “living document” and highlighted some emerging themes, including the need:

- to put SSR at the centre of post-conflict work, unlike in Afghanistan;
- to establish a UK working group to start the detailed assessment of “a number of complicated issues” that would allow the UK to engage with the US and UK academics on the issue;
- to involve the new Iraqi administration in the process as early as possible;
- to find out more about the judiciary and the civilian police; and
- for Ministers to decide the level of engagement “given our limited and stretched resources”.

964. The record of the AHGI on 13 December stated that a Whitehall working group on SSR had been established and could undertake further work.⁴⁶²

965. The Government has been unable to supply evidence of activity by the SSR working group.

FCO PAPER: ‘ISLAMISM IN IRAQ’

966. The FCO paper on Islamism in Iraq, written by DSI, described Iraq as “a relatively secular state”, but warned:

“Many of the models for possible future governments, whether representative or even democratic, proposed by commentators, are broadly secular too. This may be the preferred outcome, but there is a risk we underplay the importance of Islamic forces in Iraq.

“In any period of post-Saddam political instability, it is likely groups will be looking for identities and ideologies on which to base movements. Ba’athism will have been largely discredited. Communism is no longer the force it once was in Iraq. Islamism, ethnicity and nationalism are obvious alternatives. This paper considers the possibility that Islamism emerges as one of the main organising principles for Iraqis.”⁴⁶³

967. The paper stated that it was “almost certain that political Islam would become more prominent in post-Saddam Iraq” and drew four “tentative conclusions”:

- Many popular groupings emerging after Saddam Hussein were likely to have religious agendas, some overtly anti-Western.
- The emergence of such groups was not inconsistent with moves towards more representative or democratic government.

⁴⁶² Minute Dodd to Manning, 19 December 2002, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

⁴⁶³ Paper DSI, [undated], ‘Islamism in Iraq’.

- “We do not expect a massive surge in extremist sentiment”. The Shia were unlikely to repeat the 1991 mistake of calling for a Khomeinist regime, a move which had alienated many Iraqis who might have joined them.
- A number of extremist groups were likely to use violence to pursue their political ends.

968. The FCO proposed a number of “practical steps” to provide stability.

969. In the short term, support for more extreme groups could be limited by:

- avoiding Shia shrines and important religious buildings during military action;
- improving economic conditions as quickly as possible;
- winning hearts and minds through public information and media campaigns;
- discouraging meddling by Iran and other regional players;
- maintaining Israel’s neutrality during military action and making progress on Israel/Palestine; and
- “Maintaining firm control on the internal security situation and moving quickly to suppress any international terrorist groups in the country.”

970. The FCO suggested that, in order to ensure longer-term stability and development, there would be an overriding interest in the rapid emergence of “a political class with whom we can do business”. Focusing on pro-Western groups would be short-sighted. It could create:

“... a further breeding ground for resentment, extremism and ultimately terrorism directed both against any new regime and Western targets. It would be seen as another example of Western hostility to Islam and double standards. It would be a recipe for longer-term instability.”

Instead, Islamist groups and religious leaders should be involved in the creation of the new Iraqi political system.

971. The FCO concluded:

- We should plan on the basis that political Islam will be a significant force in many of the post-Saddam scenarios ...
- We should work to limit the support the extremist elements receive ...
- We should look to engage those moderate groups which are willing to work with us, even if they disagree strongly with some of our values. This means being prepared to accept the emergence of a religiously conservative and anti-Western regime if that is what Iraqis want.
- The approach the Americans adopt will be crucial. We should engage them on this issue.”

972. On 30 December, Sir Michael Jay asked Mr Gray a number of questions about post-conflict issues, including how far FCO papers on post-conflict issues had been shared with the US and major EU partners.⁴⁶⁴

973. Dr Amanda Tanfield, Head of Iraq Section in MED, reported:

“Almost all the UK papers have been shared with the US. We have only withheld from them papers which have been overtaken by others that we have passed to them.

“We have been more selective with EU partners. Foreign ministry officials in France and Germany received the early planners [DSI] papers on ‘Scenarios for the Future of Iraq after Saddam’ and ‘Consequences of Conflict for the Region’. We have given the French planners ... the paper on ‘Islamism in Iraq’.

“The difficulty with sharing a lot of thinking on day after with EU partners is that day after assumes regime change, which is difficult territory for many of them, particularly Germany. And some of the more recent papers have been drafted in the context of the ongoing UK-US official level day after talks, with the US readership very much in mind.”⁴⁶⁵

974. In January 2003, Mr Chilcott commented that the UK had received little in return from the US (see Section 6.5).

975. Other issues raised by Sir Michael Jay on 30 December included:

- whether DFID’s concerns about involvement in Iraq policy had been resolved; and
- whether the FCO had financial and other contingency plans if more close protection teams were needed for Embassy staff.⁴⁶⁶

976. Dr Tanfield confirmed that DFID was now “fully in the loop” and was represented at Mr Ricketts’ daily Iraq meeting; and that contingency plans were in place for deploying close protection teams to Baghdad and five other Embassies in the region.⁴⁶⁷

Iraqi opposition conference, London

977. No senior UK official attended the conference of Iraqi opposition groups held in London from 14 to 17 December.

978. The conference cast further doubt on the credibility of many of those groups.

⁴⁶⁴ [Minute Jay to Gray, 30 December 2002, ‘Iraq: The Day After Issues’.](#)

⁴⁶⁵ [Minute Tanfield to PUS \[FCO\], 9 January 2003, ‘Iraq: The Day After Issues’.](#)

⁴⁶⁶ [Minute Jay to Gray, 30 December 2002, ‘Iraq: The Day After Issues’.](#)

⁴⁶⁷ [Minute Tanfield to PUS \[FCO\], 9 January 2003, ‘Iraq: The Day After Issues’.](#)

979. In late November, representatives of six Iraqi exile groups called on Mr Gray to seek “permission” to hold a conference of opposition groups in London after plans to hold it in Brussels had fallen through.⁴⁶⁸

980. Mr Gray informed Mr Straw’s Private Office that he had made it clear to the group that he had no authority to authorise or prevent such a meeting and that they must make their own arrangements and abide by the law. He had also made it clear that attendance by Mr Blair or Mr Straw was “out of the question”. Mr Gray recommended against attendance by a Minister or senior official, but advised that “it would be right to send a relatively junior observer perhaps from Research Analysts”.

981. Mr Gray held to that view after the US informed the FCO that it would send “a large and senior delegation, probably led by Zalmay Khalilzad, Senior Director ... at the National Security Council and Ambassador at large to the Iraqi Opposition”.⁴⁶⁹ Mr Gray advised Mr Straw’s Private Office that the US had not urged the UK to raise the level of its attendance and there was no reason to do so. The event was “unlikely to be an edifying one, and I think we should be wary of association with it, even to please the Americans”.

Iraqi opposition meetings in the UK

During 2002, representatives of the Iraqi opposition met in the UK a number of times, including under the auspices of the State Department’s Future of Iraq Project. In each case, UK engagement was at junior official level, led by FCO Research Analysts.

Significant events attended by FCO officials included:

- the US-hosted Democratic Principles Working Group of the Future of Iraq Project at Cobham, Surrey, on 4 and 5 September;⁴⁷⁰
- a follow-up meeting at Wilton Park on 10 and 11 October;⁴⁷¹
- the first conference of the Iraqi National Movement at Kensington and Chelsea Town Hall on 28 and 29 September;⁴⁷² and
- the Iraqi opposition conference in London from 14 to 17 December.⁴⁷³

⁴⁶⁸ Minute Gray to Private Secretary [FCO], 22 November 2002, ‘Proposed Meeting of Iraqi Oppositionists, London, 10-15 December’.

⁴⁶⁹ Minute Gray to Private Secretary [FCO], 5 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Proposed Oppositionists’ Conference. London, 13-15 December’.

⁴⁷⁰ Teleletter Hetherington to Washington [junior official], 6 September 2002, ‘Iraq: US-hosted ‘Democratic Principles Working Group’.

⁴⁷¹ Telegram 104 FCO London to Amman, 20 November 2002, ‘Iraqi Opposition Sitrep’; Report Democratic Principles Working Group, November 2002, ‘Final Report on the Transition to Democracy in Iraq’.

⁴⁷² Teleletter Wilson to Amman [junior official], 30 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Iraqi National Movement, First Conference, 28-29 Sept 2002’.

⁴⁷³ Telegram 111 FCO London to Amman, 17 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Opposition Conference 14-17 December’.

982. Early in December, the British Embassy Amman issued its November update on Iraq.⁴⁷⁴ Unlike previous updates, which had only been sent to FCO addressees, the November report was copied to DFID and DIS.

983. The Embassy reported the recent release of all prisoners from Iraqi jails, noting that the policy had been criticised within and outside Iraq for causing a rise in crime. It also provided a general assessment of Iraqi public opinion:

“Iraqis do not want a war because they do not know what is next. (But they fully expect that a war will come) ...

“Iraqis do not want a ‘US occupation’ ...

“The biggest common denominator to emerge is that the Iraqi people do not know who to trust. They do not trust the US because they ‘abandoned’ them in 1991. They do not trust the regime or its religious men. They do not trust the opposition (who are corrupt or in the pockets of foreign governments). And they do not trust each other ... Any serious discussions tend to take place only within the very inner core of a family. All this makes an organised revolt seem improbable.”

984. Over 300 representatives of a wide range of Iraqi opposition groups attended the conference in London from 14 to 17 December, which agreed a “Policy Statement of the Iraqi Opposition”, a paper on the post-Saddam Hussein transition to democracy and appointed a 65 member co-ordinating committee.⁴⁷⁵

985. The FCO Research Analyst who attended the event reported “a palpable sense of relief” at those achievements, but predicted that:

“... given the intense differences displayed over the weekend and the chequered history of opposition conferences any show of unity is unlikely to last and there are enough people excluded who ... will already be briefing the press ... [T]he US will be unhappy at having such an unwieldy 65 to deal with.”⁴⁷⁶

986. Those conclusions were echoed in the FCO Annual Review for Iraq, written in January 2003 by Research Analysts in the absence of an embassy in Baghdad.⁴⁷⁷ The Review commented extensively on US involvement with Iraqi exiles. The US had encouraged the Iraqi opposition to convene and fund a conference to overcome emerging rivalries. After several postponements and changes of venue, the conference had been held in London and funded by the US. Competition between groups “cast doubt on whether a credible new front can emerge” and press reports suggested those groups had been “written out of the US’s Iraq script”. The Review also suggested that

⁴⁷⁴ Teleletter Amman [junior official] to MED [junior official], 4 December 2002, ‘Iraq: November sitrep’.

⁴⁷⁵ *BBC News*, 16 December 2002, *Disputes mar Iraqi opposition talks*; Telegram 111 FCO London to Amman, 17 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Opposition Conference 14-17 December’.

⁴⁷⁶ Telegram 111 FCO London to Amman, 17 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Opposition Conference 14-17 December’.

⁴⁷⁷ [Teleletter Wilson to Abu Dhabi, 16 January 2003, ‘Iraq: Annual Review, 2002’.](#)

the Future of Iraq Working Groups, originally to have been composed of technocrats, appeared to have been “hijacked” by opposition politicians.

987. On 19 December, Mr Masoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and Mr Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), called on Mr Powell and Sir David Manning at No.10.⁴⁷⁸ Mr Blair joined the meeting unannounced.

988. The briefing prepared for Mr Blair explained that the two party leaders did not know that he might drop in and that it was not essential that he did so.⁴⁷⁹ If he did, he could ask about the opposition conference and the situation in “Kurdistan”, and should state that the UK was committed to Iraq’s territorial integrity.

989. The record of the meeting stated that Mr Blair agreed with the two leaders that all groups in Iraq should be involved in helping to reunite post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.⁴⁸⁰

990. Mr Blair wrote to Mr Barzani and Mr Talabani twice during March 2003 (see Section 6.5).

Military preparations gather pace

991. By December 2002, US military preparations were gathering pace.

992. The MOD informed No.10, the Cabinet Office, the FCO and the Treasury, but not DFID, that the US military was “gearing up” to be as ready as possible by 15 February.

993. Sir David Manning wrote to Mr Watkins on 27 November, requesting a note for Mr Blair on the progress of US planning (see Section 6.1).⁴⁸¹

994. Mr Watkins advised Sir David Manning that it was “misleading to talk of firm plans”, not just because of unresolved practical issues such as Turkish co-operation, but also because the US political strategy remained “unclear”.⁴⁸² There had been “a significant shift in US military planning” as CENTCOM sought to “reduce the lead times between a political decision and military action”. Secretary Rumsfeld had signed a number of deployment orders to take effect in early January, and the US was “increasingly moving beyond pure planning into at least some actual forward deployments”.

995. Mr Webb visited Washington from 2 to 4 December for a US/European conference on post-conflict Iraq and two days of bilateral talks with US officials at the NSC, State Department and DoD.⁴⁸³ In his report, copied to Mr Ehrman and Mr Chaplin in the FCO, Mr Webb observed that there was a good deal of activity on civil reconstruction under

⁴⁷⁸ Letter Rycroft to Sinclair, 19 December 2002, ‘Iraqi Kurds: Meeting with Prime Minister, 19 December’.

⁴⁷⁹ Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 19 December 2002, ‘Iraqi Opposition Leaders’.

⁴⁸⁰ Letter Rycroft to Sinclair, 19 December 2002, ‘Iraqi Kurds: Meeting with Prime Minister, 19 December’.

⁴⁸¹ Letter Manning to Watkins, 27 November 2002, ‘Iraq: Military Planning’.

⁴⁸² Letter Watkins to Manning, 29 November 2002, ‘Iraq: Military Planning’.

⁴⁸³ Minute Webb to ACDS(Ops), 9 December 2002, ‘Iraq Aftermath’.

way in the State Department involving expatriate Iraqis, but “no real connection to the military planning”. He had explained to US officials, “somewhat repetitively”, the need for an early start to post-conflict planning. Kosovo had shown that civil planning took longer and was more difficult than military planning. He reported that references to the UN’s role had caused “an adverse reaction in many circles”, and he had found it more productive to make the case for the UN as a source of legitimisation and co-ordination rather than as an executive instrument.

996. Mr Webb also reported a “big pitch by the Republican right for making democracy an objective” on the grounds that blood should not be spilt to replace Saddam Hussein with another strongman. “Weary Europeans said this was hopelessly unrealistic: modest ambitions for greater representation were more sensible.”

997. In his next update on US military planning for No.10 on 5 December, Mr Watkins warned that it was increasingly difficult for the UK to plan without knowing where the UK land package would be based. In order to keep options open for significant UK military participation from mid-February onwards, the Armed Forces needed to “press ahead with further preparations”.⁴⁸⁴

998. The US had “no formal position on the date by which they must be ready to act”. It had a wide range of options, but assuming a political decision to take military action on 15 February (known as “P Day”), the MOD expected the air campaign and amphibious operations to start in early March.

999. Mr Watkins made no reference to post-conflict implications.

1000. In the US, CENTCOM’s Phase IV planners held a post-conflict planning session with a 40-person inter-agency team on 11 December.⁴⁸⁵ The event anticipated “rough going ahead”. On the assumption that, initially, there would be no government in place, participants were “anticipating chaos”.

1001. After a post-event briefing, Lieutenant General George Casey, Director of the Joint Staff, recognised the need to augment the Phase IV effort. A new Joint Task Force (JTF-4) was created in CENTCOM with an extra 58 staff.

SPG PAPER, 13 DECEMBER 2002: ‘UK MILITARY STRATEGIC THINKING ON IRAQ’

1002. On 13 December, the SPG described the post-conflict phase of operations as “strategically decisive” and called for it to be “adequately addressed” in any winning concept.

1003. If the UK was not prepared to make a meaningful contribution to Iraq’s physical and political rehabilitation, it should not be drawn into war-fighting.

⁴⁸⁴ [Letter Watkins to Manning, 5 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Military Planning’.](#)

⁴⁸⁵ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

1004. The UK's strategy had to be flexible enough to respond to the situation on the ground, but there was a need for an urgent cross-government view on the area of Iraq for which the UK might want to accept responsibility "in order to make the task of scoping different scenarios possible".

1005. The Inquiry has seen no indication that the urgent, cross-government work recommended by the SPG took place.

1006. Development of the Government's thinking on the location and extent of the UK military Area of Responsibility (AOR) in Iraq is addressed in Sections 6.1 and 6.2.

1007. The introduction to the "aftermath" section of the final, 13 December, edition of the SPG paper on UK military strategic thinking pulled no punches:

"The aftermath (AM) phase of operations is likely to be the strategically decisive phase of our engagement in Iraq. Only in this phase can our strategic objectives be met. It will also form the lasting impression of Coalition legitimacy and success.

"The obvious deduction from this is that if we are not prepared to make a meaningful contribution to the physical and political rehabilitation of Iraq in the AM phase we should not be drawn into war-fighting. There is currently a risk that we view our engagement in reverse, considering post-conflict activity as a necessary but inconvenient adjunct to our war-fighting plans. The Winning Concept must address AM."⁴⁸⁶

1008. The material in the aftermath section was described as "key deductions distilled from a strategic estimate of the AM phase". The stated aim was to:

- a. Set out a framework for the co-ordination of strategic planning between the MOD, OGDs, other nations and, where feasible, NGOs.
- b. Provide guidance for PJHQ on the development of operational plans."

1009. The paper listed nine "key judgements":

"The AM phase will be the strategically decisive phase. We must be sure it is adequately addressed in our consideration of the Winning Concept.

"No overarching concept for the future of Iraq currently seems to exist. A framework for the development of a new Iraqi state must be agreed by any Coalition seeking to conduct military action that would result in the removal of the current regime.

⁴⁸⁶ Paper [SPG], 13 December 2002, 'UK Military Strategic Thinking on Iraq'.

“The development of a jointly acceptable approach to Iraqi governance and reform in the Resolution Phase should be pursued with the US. Agreement on the role of the UN is essential.

“A cross-government view on the area in Iraq for which the UK might want to accept responsibility is required urgently in order to shape or validate operational planning.

“Failure to ensure political agreement on the territorial integrity of Iraq could presage a break-up that would fix Coalition Forces in long-term stabilisation operations.

“We should encourage the US to begin work now on the future shape of the Iraqi armed forces in order to develop a sound SSR plan in advance of the start of operations. We should also undertake a review of the options for rapidly generating an Iraqi policing capability.

“Early engagement with OGDs and NGOs is required to scope the AM humanitarian situation and the degree to which it may fall to the military to ameliorate it. We should be prepared in advance for the real possibility that we may initially face a task beyond our means to rectify with little external support.

“An assessment of the options for rapidly meeting a surge requirement for additional forces at the start of the AM phase should be undertaken by PJHQ.

“The UK should be prepared to commit forces to Iraq at ‘medium scale’ for at least six months following the commencement of the AM phase, and possibly out to two years.”

1010. The paper stated that a relatively small number of factors drove UK engagement. They were:

- a. Governance and reform – What is the UK vision for the future of Iraq? How realistic is the aim of retaining Iraqi territorial integrity? What replaces the Iraqi regime and what role will the UN play? How do we resolve UK/US differences on UN involvement?
- b. Situation – Where will the UK operate and what situation will we face in that region? What is the intent of the various population groups and how badly damaged will the infrastructure be?
- c. Iraqi armed forces – How do we manage the Iraqi armed forces in the short term and reform them in the long term?
- d. Humanitarian situation – What humanitarian situation will be faced?

- e. UK commitment – For how long, and to what extent, will the UK be a significant contributor to AM operations?”

1011. On governance and reform, the paper stated:

- Detailed military planning was proceeding with no clear view on the future of the Iraqi state. The UK had a valuable contribution to make to development of an overarching concept, “but the lead must rest firmly with the US as the only nation with sufficient resources to underwrite the task”.
- There was considerable temptation for regional powers to develop bilateral relations with different ethnic groups, potentially leading to the “Balkanisation” of Iraq and a protracted role for Coalition forces.
- UK and US positions on the role of the UN were getting closer, but remained divided. For political and military reasons the UK must continue to stress the need to maximise UN and international involvement.

1012. The most significant factor in determining the scale and complexity of the post-conflict task, the situation in Iraq, was also the least predictable. It was not possible “to truly assess the state of Iraq and the intent of its principal actors in the AM phase until we are presented with them”. The UK’s strategy therefore needed to be flexible enough to respond to the situation on the ground. In order to make the task of scoping different scenarios possible, the UK needed to form an early view on where it wished to operate. The initial location might be driven by the UK’s role in Phase III, “but we can shape this”. To do that, three factors needed to be considered:

a. Political – FCO:

What areas offer the UK an advantageous or influential role in the AM phase? Are oil fields a factor? Are there groups ... whom we would rather not assume responsibility for? A reasoned policy view is required.

b. Military – MOD:

Where will our Phase III role place us and do we wish to shape it according to AM factors in any way? Are there areas where we judge there is a high risk of failure? Are there areas where UK strengths will be most effective, such as population centres? What size and nature of area can the UK force deployed realistically assume responsibility for?

c. Humanitarian – DFID:

What are the most significant areas of humanitarian risk? How will DFID engage and how can we effectively co-ordinate our efforts? How can we apply our limited military capacity to respond to best effect?

“This thought process must be undertaken urgently if we are to shape our Phase III role accordingly. Currently our involvement in the North or South is being driven

by purely operational concerns. At the very least we must validate the current operational considerations strategically.”

1013. The paper also set out the factors likely to determine the size of the UK military’s post-conflict commitment:

“The scale of the UK commitment to AM will be determined by the size of force deployed for war-fighting in the first instance. Very rapidly, however, the demands of the AM phase are likely to drive the requirement for a different force structure. While the desire will evidently be to effect as rapid a drawdown as feasible, an initial increase in deployed strength may be required in order to stabilise the situation. A mass PW [prisoner of war] problem and/or a humanitarian crisis could both prompt this, requiring an increase in light forces and logistic effort. The options for meeting such a surge demand must be considered in advance in order to ensure a quick response.

“A final view on the extent of any long-term (post-12 months) UK commitment may not be required at this stage. It is necessary, however, to provide a baseline assumption for the level of commitment for the crucial ‘first roulement’ post-conflict in order to allow commitments to be balanced. It is suggested the assumption should be up to a medium-scale (Air and Land) commitment for up to six months of the AM phase. A requirement to commit at or around this level for up to two years might well be necessary to ensure any lasting progress towards the UK end state.”

1014. The SPG paper was included in the Christmas reading pack prepared for Mr Blair by the MOD.⁴⁸⁷

1015. On 16 December Maj Gen Fry produced a paper on deployment of a UK stabilisation force in the event of the early collapse of the Iraqi regime or military leading to a “loss of control”.⁴⁸⁸

1016. “Early collapse” was defined as the collapse of the Iraqi regime less than 60 days after “P Day”; “loss of control” as “the period between the collapse of the Iraqi regime and the establishment of an effective alternative providing law and order and security”.

1017. Maj Gen Fry explained that:

“Rapid intervention by the Coalition may be required to stabilise the situation, including support to an interim government. Current Package 3 deployment timelines would limit the arrival of sufficient and appropriate UK military capability in time. Consequently there is a need to develop a contingency plan that would enable the UK to gain an early footprint on the ground, providing influence in theatre and achieving strategic impact.”

⁴⁸⁷ [Letter Watkins to Manning, 20 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Christmas Reading’.](#)

⁴⁸⁸ Paper DCJO(Ops), 16 December 2002, ‘Provision of a UK Stabilisation Force’.

1018. Should the collapse occur after 60 days, the UK land component would be at full operating capability and would deal with the situation.

1019. In order to provide a quick response, the stabilisation force was “likely to be light” and its role limited to “wider peacekeeping and ‘stabilisation’ tasks”, including controlling and denying access to WMD, security at key locations, disarmament and demobilisation. The proposal set out a number of options for different scenarios.

1020. The Chiefs of Staff discussed the paper on 18 December.⁴⁸⁹ At the meeting, Lt Gen Reith commented that any stabilisation force would depend on timing and availability of resources, and that there was a synergy between the southern option and a stabilisation force.

1021. On 19 December, Mr Hoon’s Private Office informed Sir David Manning and the FCO, Treasury and Cabinet Office that the US military was “gearing up” to be as ready as possible by 15 February, and advised: “we may well have to advance aspects of our own preparations if we are to remain in step”.⁴⁹⁰ The US now recognised that stabilisation and reconstruction of up to two thirds of Iraq would need to begin before the military campaign had concluded. This was “bringing home to the US military the need for more planning effort to be devoted to ‘aftermath’ issues now”.

1022. The letter was not sent to DFID.

1023. The information on US planning in the letter from Mr Hoon’s Private Office was repeated in a paper on US military thinking included in the Christmas reading pack sent to Mr Blair on 20 December.⁴⁹¹

1024. Mr Watkins’ covering letter to Sir David Manning highlighted “an increasingly pressing need to satisfy ourselves that the US has an overarching political strategy with which the Government is content” and “to address soon our campaign objectives”, but made no reference to post-conflict planning.

Invasion plans take shape

UK objectives for post-conflict Iraq

1025. In January 2003, Mr Blair decided to publish the UK’s strategic policy objectives for Iraq. They were closely based on those he had agreed in October 2002.

1026. Mr Straw issued a Written Ministerial Statement setting out the UK’s objectives in Parliament on 7 January.

1027. Publication of the objectives is addressed in more detail in Section 3.6.

⁴⁸⁹ Minutes, 18 December 2002, Chiefs of Staff meeting.

⁴⁹⁰ Letter Williams to Manning, 19 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Evolving US Military Thinking’.

⁴⁹¹ [Letter Watkins to Manning, 20 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Christmas Reading’.](#)

1028. Mr Blair had been given clear warnings about the strategic significance of the post-conflict phase and the need to address inadequacies in US planning throughout the second half of 2002, including by:

- Mr Hoon on 2 July;
- Mr Straw on 8 July;
- Mr Powell on 19 July;
- participants in Mr Blair’s meeting of 23 July;
- Sir Christopher Meyer on 6 September;
- parliamentarians on 24 September and 25 November; and
- the MOD in Mr Watkins’ letter of 19 November and in the SPG paper of 13 December.

1029. Despite those warnings, there is no evidence that officials or Ministers addressed whether it was realistic to expect that the objectives could be achieved.

1030. Mr Campbell wrote to Mr Blair on 19 December, setting out the need to explain the UK’s strategy.⁴⁹² He observed that: “Iraq is moving up a gear as an issue and as we enter the New Year we need to step up our communications efforts.”

1031. Mr Campbell recommended that the objectives approved by Mr Blair in October should be published as soon as Parliament returned on 7 January, with a statement in the House of Commons from Mr Blair alongside publicity generated by the FCO Heads of Mission Conference. The statement would set out the strategic framework for the Government’s overall approach and draw together the diplomatic, political and humanitarian strands of the strategy on Iraq as well as addressing issues of proliferation and terrorism.

1032. Mr Campbell argued that the communications strategy “should be rooted in where we think we will end up which currently looks like a military conflict that ends in Saddam falling”. The major steps and key messages envisaged by Mr Campbell included: “Post-conflict: We’re there to help for the long term.”

1033. On 4 January, Mr Blair sent a long note to officials in No.10 (see Section 3.6).⁴⁹³ On Iraq, he stated that there was “a big job of persuasion” to be done. That included showing “sensitivity to any humanitarian fall-out from war. Britain should take the lead on this, working with the UN.”

1034. On 6 January, the Cabinet Office informed the FCO that Mr Blair had decided the policy objectives for Iraq should be placed in the public domain.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹² [Minute Campbell to Prime Minister, 19 December 2002, ‘Re: Iraq Communications’.](#)

⁴⁹³ [Note Blair \[to No.10 officials\], 4 January 2003, \[extract ‘Iraq’\].](#)

⁴⁹⁴ Letter Bowen to McDonald, 6 January 2003, ‘Iraq’ attaching Paper [unattributed], January 2003, ‘Iraq: Policy Objectives’.

1035. In his diaries, Mr Campbell recorded the importance of publishing the objectives and his view that: “These strategy papers were as much about internal understanding as publicity.”⁴⁹⁵

1036. Mr Straw issued a Written Ministerial Statement setting out the UK’s objectives for post-conflict Iraq on 7 January.⁴⁹⁶ The objectives were closely based on those approved by Mr Blair in October 2002.

1037. The UK’s “prime objective” was “to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their associated programmes and means of delivery”.

1038. Six “immediate priorities” were to:

- support the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors in Iraq;
- enable UNMOVIC and the IAEA to ensure long-term Iraqi compliance;
- maintain international solidarity behind the UN Security Council;
- preserve regional stability;
- continue to make military plans and preparations in case military action was needed; and
- continue to support humanitarian efforts to relieve suffering in Iraq.

1039. The undertaking to continue to support humanitarian efforts had been added since the first draft in October. Other changes included the addition of:

- a statement that the objectives were consistent with wider UK policy on the Middle East, WMD and terrorism; and
- an undertaking to act in conformity with international law to achieve the objectives.

1040. The definition of the post-conflict end state was unchanged, but with the aspiration to achieve it “as rapidly as possible” removed:

“We would like Iraq to become a stable, united and law abiding state, within its present borders, co-operating with the international community, no longer posing a threat to its neighbours or to international security, abiding by all its international obligations and providing effective and representative government to its own people.”

1041. Questions about post-conflict planning continued to be raised in Parliament during January.

⁴⁹⁵ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

⁴⁹⁶ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 7 January 2003, column 4WS.

1042. In the House of Commons on 7 January, Mr Hoon announced the first call out of Reservists for possible operations in Iraq and the deployment of the UK's Amphibious Task Group (ATG) to the Mediterranean.⁴⁹⁷

1043. In the debate that followed, Mr Tam Dalyell (Labour) asked what would happen when Coalition forces reached Baghdad.⁴⁹⁸ Mr Hoon explained that Afghanistan provided “very recent experience on which to draw”. He invited Mr Dalyell to “look carefully at the efforts that have been made by the United Kingdom, as part of the international community, to stabilise Afghanistan and provide it with very significant support as it grapples with the difficulties of rebuilding itself, its economy and ultimately, we hope, a democracy”.

1044. During January, Written Parliamentary Questions on different aspects of post-conflict planning were addressed to Mr Straw, Ms Short and Mr Hoon:

- Dr Jenny Tonge (Liberal Democrat) asked Mr Straw what representations the UK had made to the US on post-war food, sanitation and water supplies. Mr Mike O'Brien, FCO Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, replied that no decision had been taken on military action and that the UK regularly discussed all aspects of Iraq policy with US colleagues.⁴⁹⁹
- Mr Hugo Swire (Conservative) asked Ms Short what assessment had been made of the potential humanitarian consequences of war. Ms Short replied that DFID was considering a wide range of contingencies which took into account the current humanitarian situation in Iraq.⁵⁰⁰
- Mr John Lyons (Labour) asked Mr Hoon what role British troops would play in post-war Iraq. Mr Adam Ingram, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, replied:

“There is no inevitability about military action against Iraq; this question is therefore hypothetical at this stage. What I can say is that we take very seriously our current and potential responsibilities towards the Iraqi people. In the aftermath of any conflict, Britain would remain at the forefront of efforts to help the Iraqi people.”⁵⁰¹

UK military focus shifts to southern Iraq

1045. At the end of December 2002, the focus of the Chiefs of Staff and military planners switched from northern to southern Iraq, creating a contingent liability that the UK would be responsible for the post-conflict occupation and administration of a UK AOR in the region around Basra.

⁴⁹⁷ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 7 January 2003, column 24.

⁴⁹⁸ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 7 January 2003, column 30.

⁴⁹⁹ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 20 January 2003, column 80W.

⁵⁰⁰ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 22 January 2003, column 307W.

⁵⁰¹ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 27 January 2003, column 630W.

1046. PJHQ was given responsibility for Phase IV planning. PJHQ officials advised that:

- **If the UK were to take on the first Phase IV AOR in southern Iraq, it would effectively be “setting the standard” for the rest of Phase IV.**
- **PJHQ would need more support from other government departments if there was to be a joined-up approach to UK post-conflict planning.**

1047. Section 6.2 describes how, from the end of December 2002, the focus of UK military planning shifted from northern to southern Iraq.

1048. On 30 December 2002, Adm Boyce issued the ‘CDS Planning and Preparation Directive for Operation TELIC’,⁵⁰² authorising the military preparations needed for Coalition operations in Iraq.⁵⁰³

1049. The Directive, which included little material linked explicitly to the post-conflict phase of operations (Phase IV), stated:

“Delivering HMG’s declared end state is likely to require UK engagement in follow-on operations but the possible scale and duration of ‘aftermath operations’ are uncertain and are in urgent need of clarification from US planners at all levels.”

1050. Instructions to Lt Gen Reith included:

- to seek to influence US planning, as directed by MOD; and
- to prepare plans for humanitarian assistance in theatre, should it become necessary.

1051. Air Chief Marshal Sir Malcolm Pledger, Chief of Defence Logistics, was instructed to: “Be prepared to sustain follow-on forces at up to the medium scale of effort on land and air, and at small scale in the maritime environment for, initially, up to six months.”

1052. The Planning and Preparation Directive was superseded by a first version of the Execute Directive on 4 March 2003 (see Section 6.5).

1053. On 5 January, Brigadier Albert Whitley, who had been deployed as Senior British Land Adviser (SBLA) to US Lieutenant General David McKiernan’s Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) HQ in Kuwait in early November 2002,⁵⁰⁴ prepared a paper for PJHQ on “the imperatives for timely decision making for the commitment of UK Land Forces” to the US Operational Plan.⁵⁰⁵ The paper is described in more detail in Section 6.2.

⁵⁰² Operation TELIC was the codename for the involvement of UK Armed Forces in the military campaign to remove the threat from Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction.

⁵⁰³ Paper CDS, 30 December 2002, ‘CDS Planning and Preparation Directive for Operation TELIC’.

⁵⁰⁴ Statement Whitley, 25 January 2011, page 3.

⁵⁰⁵ [Paper SBLA, 5 January 2003, ‘Decision Imperatives’](#).

1054. Brigadier Whitley explained that, on 28 December, uncertainties about whether Turkey would allow transit of ground forces had led US and UK planners urgently to concentrate on developing robust operations from the south. Lt Gen McKiernan “would welcome the commitment of a UK division in the South from the start of the operation”. The UK mission would be to “seize, secure and control” the rear area and right flank of the operation and provide a coherent transition to Phase IV operations in captured territory without loss of US combat forces. That would include securing infrastructure such as Umm Qasr and the Rumaylah oilfields, and fixing Iraqi forces in the Basra area. The Area of Operations (AO) was likely to be bounded by the Iraq/Kuwait border, the US V Corps/1 MEF (Marine Expeditionary Force) boundary, Jalibah airfield and the Euphrates, a similar land area to Kuwait.

1055. Brigadier Whitley strongly recommended acceptance, in principle, of “a UK Area of Operations and mission in an area of southern Iraq bounded in the north by the Euphrates”.

1056. The Chiefs of Staff discussed the southern option on 6 January.⁵⁰⁶ Lt Gen Reith described his latest paper on the land options, which was “based on a US offer for the UK to operate at division strength ... in a discrete AOR in the South”. That plan “appeared to offer strategic influence to the UK, especially in the move to Phase IV”.

1057. Mr Paul Johnston, Head of FCO Security Policy Department, reported to Mr Straw’s Private Office that, at the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Sir Kevin Tebbit and General Sir Michael Walker, Chief of the General Staff (CGS), both noted that the southern option for the UK was “part of an overall concept significantly different to that on which Ministers had so far been consulted”.⁵⁰⁷

1058. In a paper on the southern option, dated 6 January and submitted after the discussion, Lt Gen Reith advised that the risks to a UK division were “minimal”.⁵⁰⁸ The “geographical area proposed would allow the UK to set the standard in the aftermath” and meant that it would be “strategically placed to exert maximum influence during Phase IV”. Lt Gen Reith described the US plan as based on four assumptions, including: “The UK experience in wider peacekeeping, and subsequent ability to conduct early Phase IV – post conflict – operations.”

1059. Lt Gen Reith recommended the deployment of a divisional headquarters and three brigades to the South; and that the armoured brigade should comprise four battlegroups.

⁵⁰⁶ Minutes, 6 January 2003, Chiefs of Staff meeting.

⁵⁰⁷ Minute Johnston to Private Secretary [FCO], 6 January 2003, ‘Iraq: Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 6 January’.

⁵⁰⁸ Minute Reith to COSSEC, 6 January 2003, ‘Op TELIC – Southern Option’ attaching Paper ‘Op TELIC Southern Option – Revised’.

Definition and use of “Area of Operations (AO)” and “Area of Responsibility (AOR)”

“**Area of Operations (AO)**” refers to the UK military’s area of combat operations during the invasion of Iraq (Phase III of operations). It is the term applied during conflict and is the area in which lethal force can be applied for a designated period of time.

“**Area of Responsibility (AOR)**” is a term usually applied during peace support operations. In Iraq, it refers to the area of southern Iraq for which the UK military was responsible during the post-conflict Occupation (Phase IV of operations).

The two terms were not used consistently and were sometimes applied interchangeably in the same document.

1060. On 7 January, Mr Paul Flaherty, MOD Civil Secretary at PJHQ, set out PJHQ’s thoughts on preparations for Phase IV in a minute to Mr Lee.⁵⁰⁹ In the absence of an agreed US inter-agency position on Phase IV planning, the CENTCOM commanders’ conference in Tampa, Florida on 15 and 16 January was likely to have a significant impact on US policy-making. Phase IV planning was likely to be particularly important:

“... if, as now appears likely, the UK were to take on the first Phase IV AOR in southern Iraq. We would, in effect be setting the standard for the rest of Phase IV work. (And, of course, CJO [Lt Gen Reith] is, in any case charged in CDS’ Directive with planning humanitarian assistance in theatre should it become necessary.)

“From our point of view ... we have to begin thinking very soon about the practical consequences on the ground of taking on the AOR. These include issues such as: food, water, displaced persons, oil (including accounting for its use), potential Iranian incursions, pollution as well as, in the slightly longer term, Security Sector Reform and reconstruction. Some, if not all of this will of course either determine, or more properly ought to be determined by, strategic considerations of post-conflict Iraqi structures.”

1061. Mr Flaherty explained that PJHQ intended to establish a team charged with “developing planning for Phase IV implementation” as soon as possible, which would aim to take into account the lessons of the Balkans and Afghanistan. PJHQ was “in a reasonably good position to link up with US military thinking”, but would need more support from other government departments to help produce “a fully joined up approach”.

⁵⁰⁹ [Minute Flaherty to DG Op Pol, 7 January 2003, ‘Op TELIC: Preparing for Phase IV’.](#)

1062. Sir Kevin Tebbit told the Inquiry that during the shift from a northern to a southern option, he “felt that it was important to reappraise, to pause, to take stock as to what was going on”.⁵¹⁰ He added:

“The planning for post-conflict didn’t seem to me to be very robust. As we could read it in the United States, a lot had been done, but it didn’t seem to have bite and direction.”⁵¹¹

1063. On 7 January, the SPG produced a paper analysing the advantages and disadvantages of a southern option.⁵¹²

1064. The SPG advised the Chiefs of Staff that US combat power would deliver military success, but strategic victory would be “successful delivery of aftermath and limiting unintended consequences”. The paper stated that adopting a southern option had the potential to:

“Provide UK with leading role in key areas of Iraq (free of Kurdish political risks) in aftermath, and thus provide leverage in aftermath planning efforts, especially related to:

- Humanitarian effort.
- Reconstruction of key infrastructure.
- Future control and distribution of Iraqi oil.”

1065. The SPG concluded that adoption of the southern option would mean that the UK was likely to have a discrete AOR established early, with less demanding command and control than in the North. In addition:

“UK will have made an early commitment to aftermath that will probably demand a commitment for a number of years. This would be hard to avoid in any event, and engagement in South offers significant advantages over possibly being fixed in North with Kurds.”

1066. The SPG recommended that the Chiefs of Staff should agree Lt Gen Reith’s recommendation for a force package to be deployed to the South.

1067. **The analysis underpinning the SPG’s conclusions did not appear to include any assessment of the conditions likely to be encountered or the tasks to be performed in either northern or southern Iraq during Phase IV.**

1068. Lt Gen Reith introduced his 6 January paper on the southern option at the Chiefs of Staff meeting on 8 January.⁵¹³ He explained that:

⁵¹⁰ Public hearing, 3 February 2010, pages 24-25.

⁵¹¹ Public hearing, 3 February 2010, pages 35-36.

⁵¹² [Paper SPG, 7 January 2003, ‘Operation TELIC – Military Strategic Analysis of Pros/Cons of adopting a Southern Land Force Option’.](#)

⁵¹³ Minutes, 8 January 2003, Chiefs of Staff meeting.

“Phase IV would need to begin at the same time as any offensive operations. There was a need for PJHQ to take ownership of Phase IV planning, which should include OGD input. The US were standing up JTF-4, which would be responsible for US Phase IV planning; UK staff were to be embedded.”

1069. The Chiefs of Staff noted that there was still a need for the US formally to request any UK ground forces be switched to the South.

1070. Adm Boyce commented that:

“... it was inconceivable that the UK would not play a part in Phase IV operations, which could be enduring ... There remained a need to test the plan as a winning concept, but against that caveat ... the plan recommended in the paper represented a sensible military option with a valuable task, and ... the option should be taken forward.”

1071. Mr Bowen reported the discussion to Sir David Manning, emphasising the need for urgent preparatory work if the UK was to take on an AOR.⁵¹⁴

1072. The military planning assumed a “decision date of 15 February and the start of hostilities in very early March”. The UK was being offered an amphibious role at the start of hostilities. Thereafter, US forces would move north while the UK “took on stabilisation of a southern sector which would eventually include Basra”.

1073. Mr Bowen concluded:

“While we are now getting more clarity about the shape of US military intentions in an attack on Iraq, and the potential UK role, precious little thought has gone into aftermath planning ... [I]f the UK is to take on an Area of Responsibility for stabilisation operations, a lot of preparatory work is needed urgently. MOD have in mind to engage with FCO, DFID & DTI on this.”

1074. By 14 January, PJHQ had established a team to examine post-conflict issues.⁵¹⁵

1075. The PJHQ proposals for improved inter-departmental co-ordination began to take shape later in the month.⁵¹⁶

1076. A letter from Mr Hoon’s Private Office to Sir David Manning on 8 January reported the US offer of “an alternative role for a UK ground force in the South” and described potential roles for UK forces (see Section 6.2).⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁴ Minute Bowen to Manning, 8 January 2003, ‘Iraq: Chiefs of Staff meeting on [8] January’.

⁵¹⁵ Minute Dodd to Manning, 15 January 2003, ‘Iraq’.

⁵¹⁶ [Minute PJHQ/Hd of J9 Pol/Ops to MA/DCJO\(Ops\), 20 January 2003, ‘Op TELIC: Taking Forward Aftermath Planning’.](#)

⁵¹⁷ [Letter Williams to Manning, 8 January 2003, ‘Iraq: UK land Contribution’.](#)

1077. The letter proposed that the “final UK Divisional Area of Responsibility, including for aftermath operations, would be an area bounded by the Iraq/Kuwait border in the south, Jalibah airfield in the west, the Euphrates in the north, and the Shatt al Arab waterway in the east – a largely Shia area of some 1,600 sq km⁵¹⁸ [see Map 5 in Annex 4]”.

1078. The letter suggested that the proposed UK role in the South “should enable US forces to reach further, faster, whilst providing a coherent transition to aftermath operations – an area of acknowledged UK expertise – in territory captured early in the campaign”. Because the proposed UK role would be “crucial to the US plan in the South”, it “would place us in a very awkward position if the US seemed likely to want to proceed in circumstances with which we were not content”. Further MOD advice would follow “next week”.

Cabinet, 9 January 2003

1079. Mr Blair told the Cabinet on 9 January that “the build up of military forces was necessary to sustain the pressure on Iraq”.⁵¹⁹

1080. Commenting on the preparations for the deployment of military forces to the Gulf, Mr Hoon told his colleagues that no decisions had been taken to launch military action. Nor had the US finalised its military planning.

1081. Mr Blair said that Cabinet the following week would “provide the opportunity for an in-depth discussion of Iraq”.

1082. Discussion in Cabinet on 9 January is addressed in more detail in Section 3.6.

1083. Lord Turnbull, Cabinet Secretary from 2002 to 2005, told the Inquiry that, when Cabinet met on 9 January, Ministers were told:

“... nothing was inevitable. We are pressing the UN option. No decisions on military action, whereas you can see that, at another level, the decisions on military action were hardening up quite substantially.”⁵²⁰

1084. Lord Turnbull added:

“I could see he [Mr Blair] did not want key discussions of ... who was going to bring what forces to bear where, and there is some sense in that. But the strategic choices that they implied ... didn’t get discussed either. For example, the fact that if you have ground forces you become an occupying power.”

⁵¹⁸ The figure of 1,600 sq km was used repeatedly in policy and briefing papers during January and February 2003. This was mistaken. It should have been approximately 16,000 sq km.

⁵¹⁹ Cabinet Conclusions, 9 January 2003.

⁵²⁰ Public hearing, 25 January 2011, pages 15-16.

1085. The record of the AHGI on 10 January stated:

“MOD is to begin work on the practicalities of a possible UK military role in administering immediate post-Saddam Iraq. It was agreed that this work needed to take place in the context of existing contingency planning and with the involvement of other interested departments. As a first step, the CO [Cabinet Office] would copy a complete set of post-Saddam Iraq papers to the MOD.”⁵²¹

DFID involvement in UK military planning

1086. One item not recorded in the minutes of the 8 January Chiefs of Staff meeting, but reported separately by Mr Ehrman, was a decision that DFID and DTI would be brought into MOD humanitarian and reconstruction planning, but “without being told US timelines”.⁵²²

1087. Exactly how to engage DFID in military planning remained unresolved. On 8 January, Mr Webb wrote to Mr Lee:

“The question is now before us of exactly who is going to organise CIMIC and the Civil Transition in any areas occupied by UK forces (let alone the wider problem with the US). It was agreed ... today that we need to get DFID in on humanitarian and, with DTI, aftermath aspects of Iraq planning.”⁵²³

Mr Webb added:

“... I wonder whether we could use a ‘wider group’ approach in Whitehall that avoids military detail and dates (and I heard an interesting SPG idea for a proper planning conference to kick it off thoroughly) ...

“We might be able to go further subsequently with staff properly posted to PJHQ and the JFHQ [Joint Force Headquarters]. Experience has been generally good of DFID people deploying with JFHQs (especially to ‘herd’ NGOs) ...”

1088. On 13 January Dr Brewer reported to Ms Short “some limited progress with MOD and FCO but not with No.10” in pursuing Ms Short’s request “to persuade others in Whitehall that any UK military role in Iraq should focus on providing security for the Iraqi people (a ‘stabilisation force’)”.⁵²⁴

1089. Dr Brewer asked Ms Short:

“Are you content for us to work with MOD on a strategy for a later phase of stabilisation? I know your conception is of a UK military role limited to stabilisation.

⁵²¹ Minute Dodd to Manning, 13 January 2003, ‘Ad Hoc Group on Iraq’.

⁵²² Minute Ehrman to Private Secretary [FCO], 8 January 2003, ‘Iraq: military aspects’.

⁵²³ Minute Webb to DG Op Pol, 8 January 2003, ‘DFID Involvement in Iraq Planning and Preparations’.

⁵²⁴ [Minute Brewer to Secretary of State \[DFID\], 13 January 2003, ‘Iraq: A Stabilisation Force’](#).

We can try to persuade David Manning ... that this should be our exclusive military focus. But it is the Prime Minister himself whose mind needs to be changed.

“You have talked to Suma [Chakrabarti] about the fact that we are still not getting access to all the military planning or intelligence on Iraq. We need to be in on David Manning’s regular COBR meetings; I tried before Christmas and failed.”

The decision to deploy UK forces

1090. The Chiefs of Staff discussed Phase IV on 15 January. Adm Boyce stated that the challenge would be to match the “top-down” work led by the FCO and the Cabinet Office with the “bottom-up” work in PJHQ.

1091. In view of the need for an urgent decision on military deployment, the Chiefs of Staff updated Mr Blair on the military plan on 15 January (see Section 6.2).⁵²⁵ Mr Hoon, Mr Powell, Sir David Manning, Sir Kevin Tebbit and others were present. The FCO and DFID were not represented.

1092. The Chiefs of Staff discussed Iraq before meeting Mr Blair. The record of the discussion stated:

“CDS [Adm Boyce] underscored the potential dangers associated with ‘catastrophic success’ and the implicit need to develop thinking for aftermath management. In planning for Phase IV, the UK was adopting a twin track approach: the FCO and Cabinet Office were leading the top-down strand, and PJHQ was leading the bottom-up effort. The challenge which lay ahead was matching the two pieces of work ... The UK concept at the strategic level was to develop a model that could be offered to the US. It was assessed that the US was still working to an unrealistic assumption that their forces would be ‘welcomed with open arms’ by the Iraqi people during Phase IV operations, and there was an opportunity for the UK to lead the aftermath debate.”⁵²⁶

1093. Lord Boyce told the Inquiry that:

“... in talking to senior people within the Pentagon ... there was this expectation that ... the Coalition would be seen as liberating the country and that they would be hugely welcomed ... It was impossible to persuade the people I spoke to, and this was so further down, to some of my subordinates as well, impossible to dissuade the Americans that this would not be the case.”⁵²⁷

1094. Mr Johnson sent advice and a draft letter for No.10 to Mr Hoon’s Private Office on 15 January.⁵²⁸ He informed Mr Hoon that the Chiefs of Staff endorsed the proposed UK role in southern Iraq. Mr Hoon was advised that a number of issues needed to be resolved before it could be concluded that the US plan represented a winning concept,

⁵²⁵ [Minute MA/DCJO to MA/CJO, 15 January 2003, ‘Briefing to Prime Minister’.](#)

⁵²⁶ Minutes, 15 January 2003, Chiefs of Staff meeting.

⁵²⁷ Public hearing 27 January 2011, pages 76-77.

⁵²⁸ Minute Johnson to PS/Secretary of State [MOD], 15 January 2003, ‘Iraq: UK land contribution’.

including credibility of plans for the aftermath. Mr Johnson described the proposed UK AOR in the South as “a coherent one”.

1095. Mr Hoon’s letter to No.10 was sent on 16 January.

1096. The Inquiry has not seen any indication of the detailed analysis supporting the conclusion that the proposed AOR in the South was “a coherent one”.

1097. Before the meeting with the Chiefs of Staff, Mr Rycroft provided Mr Blair with “some difficult questions” to raise, as suggested by Mr Powell, including on post-conflict issues:

- “– What military involvement do you foresee in the aftermath?
- Will we be running Basra?
- Will the targeting in the campaign take account of the need to run (parts of) Iraq in the aftermath?”⁵²⁹

1098. Definitive answers to those questions required cross-departmental advice and collective consideration. There is no indication that other departments were consulted formally before or immediately after the meeting on 15 January.

1099. On 15 January, Mr Blair told the Chiefs of Staff “the ‘Issue’ was aftermath – the Coalition must prevent anarchy and internecine fighting breaking out”.

1100. Mr Blair agreed that much greater clarity was needed on US intentions and asked the MOD to think through the unexpected, including on oil, use of WMD and internecine fighting.

1101. Several accounts of the 15 January meeting were produced by MOD participants, in addition to a No.10 record of the discussion (see Section 6.2).

1102. The “unofficial” PJHQ account of Mr Blair’s meeting produced for Lt Gen Reith, who was in the Middle East at the CENTCOM Commanders’ Conference, provided the fullest account of the discussion of post-conflict issues. Issues raised by Mr Blair included:

“Worst Case. The PM wanted to know what CDS [Adm Boyce] thought was the worst case scenario. After much discussion about destroying the oil infrastructure, use of WMD and hunkering down in Baghdad and fighting it out, it was felt that the worst case was internecine fighting between Sunni and Shia, as well as the Kurds/Turks/Iraqis.

“Aftermath. This led on to a general discussion on aftermath, with the PM asking what the Iraqi view on it was. CDS stated that the thinking on this issue was ‘woolly’ at this stage, with work only just beginning. The PM stated that the ‘Issue’ was

⁵²⁹ Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 14 January 2003, Iraq: Military Planning: Meeting with Chiefs of Staff’.

aftermath - the Coalition must prevent anarchy and internecine fighting breaking out.”⁵³⁰

1103. Mr Blair asked the MOD to look at three issues:

- We need to be clear on what we are offering the Iraqi people and senior members of the regime (those below the top 100 on the list⁵³¹) – removal of the senior hierarchy or minimising resistance or what?
- Aftermath. We have to develop a feasible plan.
- Look at the unexpected – think through the big ‘what ifs’; oil, WMD, internecine fighting – and develop a strategy.”

1104. The author of the record added some “personal observations”, including:

“The PM came across as someone with strong convictions that this should, and will, go ahead. He accepted the military advice being given to him, although he still sought reassurance that all aspects had been looked into and that plans are drawn up to deal with the unexpected or perceived worse cases. It is clear from the three areas that he asked further work to be done on that the Phase IV part of the plan is critical.

...

“Interestingly it was SofS [Secretary of State, Mr Hoon] who urged the PM to exercise a degree of restraint on POTUS [the President of the United States], whom he described as ‘going for it’. SofS expressed concern about some of the US ideas and wanted to ensure that no irreversible damage was done to Iraq.”

1105. After the briefing by the Chiefs of Staff, Mr Rycroft informed Mr Watkins that Mr Blair agreed that “much greater clarity about US intentions” on post-conflict issues was needed.⁵³² Mr Blair “would be keen to see the outcome of the Whitehall visit to Washington next week”.⁵³³

1106. Mr Watkins instructed Mr Lee:

“... we will clearly need to use all our regular contacts with the US, in both CENTCOM and the Pentagon. If appropriate, this [aftermath] is an issue that Mr Hoon could himself raise with Rumsfeld in their next regular phone call next week.”⁵³⁴

⁵³⁰ [Minute MA/DCJO to MA/CJO, 15 January 2003, ‘Briefing to Prime Minister’.](#)

⁵³¹ The Inquiry has not seen any indication of what was meant by “the top 100 on the list”. It is likely that it was a precursor to the list of 55 Iraqis featured on the “deck of cards” issued by the US military in April 2003.

⁵³² [Letter Rycroft to Watkins, 15 January 2003, ‘Iraq: Military Planning’.](#)

⁵³³ A reference to the second round of US/UK/Australia talks on post-conflict issues in Washington on 22 January.

⁵³⁴ [Minute Watkins to DG Op Pol, 16 January 2003, ‘Iraq: Military Planning’.](#)

1107. The first record seen by the Inquiry of a discussion of post-conflict issues between Mr Hoon and Secretary Rumsfeld was in Washington on 12 February (see Section 6.5).

1108. Lord Boyce told the Inquiry that his expression of concern to the Prime Minister at the briefing “was more about the immediate aftermath, immediately after the fighting phase, what would we need to do to provide security in the first instance, but also to provide what we saw as being the most immediate problem would be a humanitarian problem”.⁵³⁵

1109. Lt Gen Reith attended the CENTCOM commanders’ conference in Tampa, Florida on 15 and 16 January. The conference was described by Gen Franks as “likely to be the last chance for such a gathering to take place. It therefore had to be conclusive.”⁵³⁶

1110. Maj Gen Wilson reported that “Phase IV responsibilities became a little clearer” at the commanders’ conference: Gen Franks had demanded that JTF-4 deploy as soon as possible to Kuwait and had welcomed Lt Gen Reith’s offer to embed four UK personnel in it. Gen Franks had also directed that “key Phase IV players should visit the Pentagon to ensure that planning was joined up”.⁵³⁷

1111. In his record of the meeting with Gen Franks, Lt Gen Reith explained that UK staff embedded in JTF-4 would have “reach-back” to the Phase IV planning team in PJHQ, giving the UK “considerable influence over US planning”.⁵³⁸ He reported that Gen Franks had “agreed that we could plan on [the] UK having responsibility for the Basra region in Phase IV and would welcome our setting the standard for other nations. Clearly this will need Ministerial approval in due course.” Lt Gen Reith also reported that the US had “a zillion dollar project to modernise and properly exploit the southern oilfields”.

1112. Gen Reith told the Inquiry that, on 16 January, he told Gen Franks he was unhappy with the way planning was going:

“... they were going into shock and awe, and we ... the British ... had been very much the custodians of ‘Let’s worry about Phase IV’. So we got on to Phase IV in our discussion and I made the point ... that the oilfields were absolutely essential for Phase IV, to provide revenue for Iraq for its reconstruction and therefore, we needed to secure the oilfields rather than have them destroyed. I also made the point to him that the more china that we broke, the more we would have to replace afterwards.”⁵³⁹

⁵³⁵ Public hearing, 27 January 2011, page 83.

⁵³⁶ Minute Wilson to MA/CJO, 17 January 2003, ‘CENTCOM Component Commanders’ Conference: 15-16 Jan 03’.

⁵³⁷ Minute Wilson to MA/CJO, 17 January 2003, ‘CENTCOM Component Commanders’ Conference: 15-16 Jan 03’.

⁵³⁸ Minute Reith to PSO/CDS, 17 January 2003, ‘Discussion with General Franks – 16 Jan 03’.

⁵³⁹ Private hearing, 15 January 2010, pages 42-43.

1113. Maj Gen Wilson told the Inquiry:

“General Franks was very clear about the criticality of ... Phase IV [and] understood the need to have the resources available and the need for security and the relationship between reconstruction, humanitarian assistance, disposable funds and ... civil action.”⁵⁴⁰

1114. In Cabinet on 16 January, Mr Blair listed priorities for the immediate future:

- “preparatory work” on post-conflict planning and the role of the UN;
- the need to communicate to the Iraqi people a vision of a better life; and
- contingency work on the unexpected consequences of conflict.

1115. The Cabinet discussed Iraq on 16 January. The discussion is also addressed in Sections 3.6 and 6.2.⁵⁴¹

1116. Ms Short said that work on post-conflict issues needed to be taken forward urgently. She emphasised the need for extra resources, the potential effect of CBW on civilians and the importance of involving the UN.

1117. Summarising the discussion, Mr Blair said that the “priorities for the immediate future were:

- improved communications, which would set out the Government’s strategy and be promoted by the whole Cabinet;
- preparatory work on planning the aftermath of any military action and the role of the United Nations in that, which should in turn be conveyed to the Iraqi people so that they had a vision of a better life in prospect; and
- contingency work on the unintended consequences which could arise from the Iraqi use of weapons of mass destruction, environmental catastrophe or internecine strife within Iraq.”

1118. Despite Mr Blair’s promise that military options would be discussed and the imminence of the formal decision to offer a significant land contribution, Cabinet was not briefed on the substance of the military options or the circumstances in which force would be used. It did not discuss the strategic implications of making a military contribution.

1119. On 17 January, Mr Blair approved the deployment of UK forces to support US military preparation in the region.

1120. He did so without clear advice on the wider strategic implications and contingent liabilities, including the potential UK responsibility for post-conflict administration and reconstruction in the event of military action.

⁵⁴⁰ Public hearing, 4 December 2009, pages 39-40.

⁵⁴¹ [Cabinet Conclusions, 16 January 2003.](#)

1121. Mr Straw advised Mr Blair that much greater clarity was needed on US thinking on post-conflict issues.

1122. Mr Blair concluded that Mr Straw’s concerns should not affect his decision to deploy forces.

1123. Mr Hoon wrote to Mr Blair on 16 January seeking agreement to the “key role in southern Iraq” proposed by the US for the UK.⁵⁴² The letter, described in more detail in Section 6.2, was copied to Mr Straw, Mr Brown and Sir Andrew Turnbull.

1124. Mr Hoon advised:

“Important questions remain to be resolved ... But the role proposed for the UK is a sensible and significant one, and I recommend that with certain qualifications, we accept it. We need to decide quickly.”

1125. Mr Hoon added that equipment and personnel would need to be moved early the following week and that, if Mr Blair agreed, he proposed:

“... to announce the composition and deployment of the force in an oral statement on Monday 20 January.”

1126. Mr Hoon wrote that the proposed role for the UK was “essentially as described in my Office’s letter of 8 January”:

“The final UK Divisional Area of Responsibility, including for aftermath operations, would be an area bounded by the Iraq/Kuwait border in the south, Jalibah airfield in the west, the Euphrates in the north, and the Shatt al Arab waterway in the east – a largely Shia area of some 1,600 sq km [see Map 5 in Annex 4].”

1127. Mr Hoon advised that:

“... a number of issues still need finally to be resolved, before we can conclude that the overall US plan represents a winning concept. These include the legal basis for any operation as well as the credibility of plans for the aftermath, which the US accept will begin concurrently with combat operations.

...

“Assuming that outstanding issues can be resolved, I and the Chiefs of Staff are content that the role proposed for a UK ground force is both sensible and attractive. The plan will need further development to address a number of specific challenges (oilfields, displaced persons, handling Iran, etc) ...

“The proposed final [UK] Area of Responsibility is a coherent one with largely natural geographical boundaries ... and includes economic infrastructure critical to

⁵⁴² [Letter Hoon to Blair, 16 January 2003, ‘Iraq: UK Land Contribution’.](#)

Iraq's future, including much of its oil reserves, critical communications nodes, a city (Basra) of 1.3m people and a port (Umm Qasr) about the size of Southampton. Although the establishment of UK control over this area will require careful presentation to rebut any allegations of selfish motives, we will be playing a vital role in shaping a better future for Iraq and its people."

1128. Mr Hoon stated that he had put work in hand to address the "three big issues" identified by Mr Blair at the meeting with the Chiefs of Staff:

- The "nature of the proposition" that was being put "to the Iraqi people including those in the governing apparatus who are not considered beyond the pale, and the way in which that would be conveyed to them without damaging operational security and losing the element of surprise".
- The need "Now that we have a proposed Area of Responsibility" to work on that "with greater clarity". The forthcoming visit of a Whitehall team to Washington was identified as "an opportunity to mould US thinking".
- Making sure the UK had the "best possible contingency plans for worst-case scenarios".

1129. On timing, Mr Hoon stated:

"CENTCOM assume that, unless Saddam changes his behaviour, a political decision to take military action may be made in mid-February. Air and ground operations could begin in early March, with the main effort by ground forces beginning in mid-March (although they still aspire to bring the main effort forward)."

1130. Mr Hoon recommended that the UK:

"... should inform the US that we agree that planning should assume the contribution of the proposed UK land force package to carry out the role the US has requested, subject to:

- i the overall caveat that a further political decision would be required to commit UK forces to any specific operation;
- ii US assistance in facilitating the bed-down of UK forces, and provision of logistic support;
- iii further work to develop a satisfactory plan for the aftermath."

1131. Mr Hoon highlighted the significance of the post-conflict phase of operations in his advice to Mr Blair, but he did not:

- **identify the risks associated with deploying UK forces before decisions had been made on the scope or duration of their post-conflict role, or on the UK's wider post-conflict responsibilities;**

- offer advice on what might constitute “a satisfactory plan for the aftermath” or the consequences of failure to reach agreement with the US on such a plan; or
- adequately consult the FCO or DFID before submitting his recommendation.

1132. Mr Hoon should have questioned those omissions before advising Mr Blair on an issue of such significance.

1133. Sir Kevin Tebbit, as PUS, should have ensured that those issues were covered in more detail in the advice put to Mr Hoon.

1134. On Mr Ehrman’s recommendation, Mr Straw sent a letter to Mr Blair on 17 January flagging up “three major issues” in Mr Hoon’s proposal: targeting, Iraqi use of WMD and the “aftermath”.⁵⁴³ Mr Straw advised that:

“... much greater clarity is required about US thinking and plans for the aftermath. How long would UK forces be expected to stay in the area of responsibility proposed for them? What would be their role in what form of administration, not least in Basra ...? We need in particular far greater clarity on US thinking on management of the oilfields. As you know, we have sizeable differences of view from many in the US Administration who envisage Iraq being a US military governorate for an extended period of time. A UK team will be discussing this issue with the US next week. It will be putting hard questions, and highlighting our own view that there needs to be a move to UN administration, with Coalition forces remaining responsible for security, as soon as possible.”

1135. Mr Straw’s minute was not sent to Ms Short.

1136. Like Mr Hoon, Mr Straw did not give due consideration to what might constitute a satisfactory plan for the UK and whether UK participation in military action should be conditional on such a plan.

1137. Sir David Manning commented to Mr Blair: “Good questions. But I don’t think they affect your decision in principle [to deploy forces].”⁵⁴⁴

1138. Mr Blair replied: “agreed”.⁵⁴⁵

1139. Mr Hoon’s recommendations were endorsed by Mr Blair on 17 January.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ Minute Ehrman to Private Secretary [FCO], 16 January 2003, ‘Iraq: UK Land Contribution’; [Minute Straw to Prime Minister, 17 January 2003, ‘Iraq: UK Land Contribution’](#).

⁵⁴⁴ [Manuscript comment Manning on Minute Straw to Prime Minister, 17 January 2003, ‘Iraq: UK Land Contribution’](#).

⁵⁴⁵ [Manuscript comment Blair on Minute Straw to Prime Minister, 17 January 2003, ‘Iraq: UK Land Contribution’](#).

⁵⁴⁶ [Letter Manning to Watkins, 17 January 2003, ‘Iraq: UK Land Contribution’](#).

1140. The deployment of a UK land package was announced to Parliament on 20 January.⁵⁴⁷

1141. During the Parliamentary debate that followed, Mr Hoon responded to a question about post-conflict planning from Mr Bernard Jenkin (Conservative), by stating:

“Certainly consideration is being given to aftermath issues and the question of humanitarian relief. Obviously, we will design force packages to ensure that we have soldiers in place who can deal with those issues as and when they arise.”⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁷ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 20 January 2003, column 34.

⁵⁴⁸ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 20 January 2003, column 37.