Britain and the 1991 Gulf War Witness Seminar

16 March 2011

Cormorant Hall, JSCSC, Shrivenham, Wiltshire

Session 3:
16:00-17:30: Discussion of the Aftermath of the Conflict

Dr Robert Johnson: We shall now march on with the *tour de force* of this particular campaign. Let us go straight to the action and, first, look at British policy at the point of conflict termination as it was being contemplated. Lord Powell, will you start us off by giving a picture of the political view of how and when to stop the war?

Lord Powell of Bayswater: I shall help you try to do that. The ending of the war came as a very great surprise to the Prime Minister and No 10. I was telephoned in the evening by General Scowcroft from the White House saying, 'You're not going to believe this. They want to stop'. I asked him what he meant, to which he replied, 'The military want to stop the war now. That is the way it is going. You had better intervene if you don't agree'. Obviously, we discussed it within government and with the Prime Minister and he, too, was very surprised that the decision had been taken so rapidly and decided to put a case for going on for another day or two in the hope that more of the Republican Guard could be destroyed, even if *[they]*[1] crossed the border in Iraq. By chance, Douglas Hurd was in Washington at the time and we asked him to go into the White House and argue that case. He did so, but there was nothing for it. It was quite clear that minds had been made up. One of the reasons has obviously been mentioned – gallantry. Soldiers do not like killing people who have their backs to them or are running away. That is understandable, but very polite. Perhaps politicians are just more bloodthirsty than soldiers in the end.

There was a lot of pressure from the PR people. A 100-hour war, and that sort of stuff sounded awfully good. It probably helped the President with Congress, too. At the political level, however, it caused a lot of concern in London. It came as a big surprise. It was not just that we did not know it would happen in that way and we were caught by surprise, but that the actual ceasefire was extremely ill-prepared. There had been very little discussion of the terms and the shape of a ceasefire, and what would happen. People were just about beginning to get round it. You do not normally start discussing the ceasefire after three days of war. You expect it to be going on for a week or two at the least. There was really no detailed planning about what should be the elements of a ceasefire.

As a result, it must be said that a lot of catches were dropped in the process. That is the fault of politicians not of the military in the sense that Saddam Hussein should certainly have been more publicly humiliated. Being allowed to send a mere Major General to sign a ceasefire was not nearly enough. Various conditions that could have been imposed at that crucial moment, such as not allowing him to fly helicopters, could have been imposed then, but were not and could not have been later. In that sense, we had a failure after a very successful war in the terms of the ceasefire. Your papers asked, 'Were British war aims met'? Of course, the broad war aims were certainly met. We have ejected Saddam Hussein from Kuwait and did a lot of damage to his military machine and, as everyone has said, those were our main aims. As I said earlier, it was never part of our aim to go to Baghdad both because it was not part of the agreed strategy of the coalition and in military terms, I imagine, the very extended supply lines that would have been required would have made it technically difficult to do.

You also asked, 'Was the survival of Saddam Hussein anticipated'? No. At the political level, the general assumption was that, even within an inadequate ceasefire, he would have suffered such a defeat that he would have been forced out of office, assassinated by a fellow General fairly rapidly or something like that. It was a nasty surprise when he managed to survive for another 15 years. Your last question was, 'Did the conflict allow Britain to punch above its weight militarily and diplomatically'? The answer to that is unreservedly yes. Militarily, undoubtedly so. The performance of our forces was absolutely outstanding. It was widely recognised throughout the world as such, and by the Americans judging from anything that President Bush, Baker and Colin Powell[2] and others used to tell us. Politically, we got a lot of credit, too, for having been there from the beginning. At the first meeting between Margaret Thatcher and George Bush, we were in the lead in knowing what needed to be done, and that was greatly to our advantage in international reputation.

Lastly, I suspect that it was probably the first war at least since the East India Company was fighting wars in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that we actually made a profit! As you know, the Kuwaitis, the Saudis, the Germans, Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Dubai all chipped in, and at the end of the day our costs were met.

Dr Robert Johnson: I shall ask almost the same question about the understanding of British policy or the contemplation of conflict termination of Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine at Joint Command Level.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine: I was equally surprised when Norman Schwarzkopf rang me some time on 27 February to say that the US President had decided that the war should come to an end. In other words, he would suspend all offensive operations with effect at a certain time. I think that it was 0400 on the 28th. I said that it seemed he had stopped the war a little bit too quickly because, within 24 to 36 hours with any luck, we would have completed the encirclement of Iraqi forces in the Kuwait theatre of operation and been able, in accordance

with one of our objectives, to destroy his tanks, artillery pieces, armoured fighting vehicles and so on, and then let the humiliated army personnel go home.

Colin Powell was very influential in the decision taken by the President. He was much disturbed by what he saw being reported as a turkey shoot, when American Air Forces in particular were destroying a large convoy of both military and civilian vehicles fleeing from Kuwait City in the direction of Basra. Powell's view was that, having won the war spectacularly, we were in danger of losing the peace because we were killing thousands upon thousands of Iraqi Arabs unnecessarily. That was Powell's position. I said to Schwarzkopf, 'Why didn't you say? We would stop that kind of air operation and the defensive air operations would only be used if coalition forces came under direct air attack or direct attack'. He said, 'It's too late for that. Powell has convinced those at Washington that we should bring the thing to an end'. That was unfortunate. We did lose an opportunity of completing the encirclement and totally humiliating Saddam Hussein.

I am not sure that there was a thought in Schwarzkopf's mind that it had all gone extremely well so far. After three days, the objective was secured. The coalition and, in his case, particularly the Americans, had sustained very light casualties. There may at the back of his mind been the thought, 'Well, if we keep on with this and try to encircle them, the Republican Guards will fight a lot harder and we will lose more people, perhaps unnecessarily'. I had a hunch that Schwarzkopf was quite happy with what Powell was proposing in Washington.

Was the survival of Saddam Hussein anticipated? Most of us at the time felt that he had suffered such a humiliating defeat that the more moderate people within the army would rise up and overthrow him and, hopefully, a more moderate general would become the new leader and begin to lead Iraq back into the international fold. That might have happened in the first two or three months because he was quite vulnerable in the immediate aftermath of the war, but then the Shias rose up in the south, the Kurds rose up in the north. There was a danger of Iraq totally disintegrating into chaos and, for those reasons, the Armed Forces got in behind Saddam and did put down – in the case of the Shias – those uprisings.

There was no question of our going on to Baghdad to depose Saddam Hussein, as Charles Powell has made very clear. I had been involved in discussions with the FCO, Cabinet Office and MOD with our opposite numbers in Washington on two or three occasions in the run-up to the war, when the Americans had agreed entirely with us that it was not a question of regime change. They entered one caveat to those discussions: if he used chemical or biological weapons against American forces and inflicted heavy casualties on them, they would have to get him by the scruff of the neck and do something about it – but only in those circumstances and, as you know, they did not arise. I agree entirely with what Lord Powell said about punching above our weight, militarily and diplomatically. We did. One of the secrets of that was the integration that we had at all levels of command with the American forces and leadership. Yes, we came out of it very well.

General Sir Peter de la Billière: I was approached by Norman Schwarzkopf one afternoon and told that the war was coming to an end the next morning with a ceasefire in Safwan. He then offered me a lift in his aeroplane and we flew in probably the second aeroplane into Kuwait Airport with the oil fires blazing. There was masses of smoke, no airport control with a lot of it in disarray and destruction. We went to Safwan together with General Prince Khalid, who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Saudi Armed Forces. The thing was thrown together hastily in a series of small tents. I was not at the top table. I was put back on a chair just behind Norman, so I could not join in with the actual negotiations. Norman did not give me the impression that he particularly wanted to pack up, but I might have got the wrong end of the stick. The talks were with an Iraqi general on the one side and a couple of sidekicks and effectively Khalid and Norman Schwarzkopf on the other.

We need to be clear that it was a ceasefire, not peace talks – and that was all: lines were drawn on the map, stop where you are and no more shooting. The matter of helicopters was perhaps featured large in the debate because the coalition forces had destroyed pretty well all the bridges in Iraq at that stage, so there was no means of controlling the country. The Iraqis made several other requests, all of which were turned down by Norman [Schwarzkopf], but he did agree that they should have limited access to helicopters in order to maintain control over the country until the bridges were reconstituted. The only missing element was that no requirement was built into that to stop them being armed and that was really where we started to go down the slippery slope.

The talks lasted about an hour to two hours at the moment, broke up and we all went back. When I reflect on it, I feel – picking up the point that Paddy brought up just now – that we ought to have humiliated Saddam Hussein and insisted that he went to the ceasefire talks. I believe that might have made all the difference to his position in his own country. Anyway, he did not. The plans for Baghdad were non-existent. It is an important post-war issue that there were no plans to my knowledge – perhaps Charles Powell might put me right – for governing Iraq. That was because there was no requirement to go to Baghdad. It was a United Nations-sponsored operation. We were to liberate Kuwait and call it a day. Had we gone on, I think that we would have had similar sort of chaos to that we experienced some 12 years later. It was therefore the right decision.

Furthermore, the American armour – Rupert can put me right on this – had much more limited range than ours, and for them to get to Baghdad would have been a major operation in that they had to get their logistics to provide sufficient fuel whereas our tanks could have done it in one. Is that right?

General Sir Rupert Smith: It is not quite as easy. Their tank has a turbine engine that uses much fuel, whether it is stationary or running, and the mark at the time did not have an auxiliary power unit. You had to turn the main engine on even if you were static and just wanted to power up the radios. The result was that it used an enormous amount of fuel in

comparison with a Challenger. It was not that its range per tank was that different, but the problem was of resupplying that sheer quantity of fuel. It had stretched them to supply those two huge armoured divisions in 7th Corps, the 1st and the 3rd US Armoured Divisions, as well as their other three major formations. It had been a major exercise and one of those divisions – the 3rd, I think – was running out of fuel just at the time the ceasefire had been called.

Dr Robert Johnson: I will move you back from the desert for a moment because I do not want to lose sight of the issue about when conflict termination was decided. Lord Hannay, was a UN, international perspective being fed into the UK Government and the US Government at that point?

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Let me just step back a few paces because one or two speakers have touched on the diplomacy of the war. It is worth saying that President Bush's decision to offer the Iraqis a last chance and a meeting – Tariq Aziz and Baker – in January was in UN terms an absolute blinder. It first enabled the President to say that he was going the last mile for peace and so on, which was good talk, and, secondly and far more important, it prevented anyone else from getting into the mediation game.

Five weeks were taken out of a six-week period in which the Americans remained in complete control of the agenda and that was hugely valuable. The last week was the one when the luckless UN Secretary General was sent off to Baghdad very unwillingly, but we perhaps exaggerated the risk from the French. They tried in New York to get him a mandate to mediate, and that was blocked by the other permanent members – we and the Americans – so the matter never even went to the full Security Council. So the idea that there was a French Plan B, well, I think that there was a French pirouette, which was designed to show their own public opinion that they had tried. But it was not a serious effort.

During the hostilities, the job of diplomats was to hold the ring, not to try to be clever. We had to stop anyone who wanted to dash to the Security Council and call for a ceasefire from doing so. That was what we succeeded in doing reasonably well, with a lot of help from the Saudis and the Egyptians. Various Maghreb countries and others tried, but they never actually got to the Security Council until close to the end of the bombing period. They wanted to call for a cessation of the bombing.

When the war ended, it was still completely unclear at the UN what would happen afterwards. There was no indication of thinking from London, Paris or Washington as to what should happen afterwards. The first sign, which came with the ceasefire agreement in Safwan, looked as if it meant what everyone expected, which was that the post-war terms would be dictated by the three countries that had operated together with their Arab allies and would not come close to the United Nations because the Safwan terms were simply served up at the United Nations and rubber-stamped in a resolution with it being made clear that no one could change a comma in it.

In fact, the stopping of the war at that stage was in UN terms of benefit to us tactically because it looked – as was in fact the case – that we were reasonable and that we were sticking to the terms of Resolution 678, which had authorised the use of force. On the 678 point, I want to pick up something from the recent discussion. It is not the case that the UN objective was simply to get Saddam out of Kuwait. There was a two-pronged objective under 678. It was to get Saddam out of Kuwait *and* to restore peace and security to the region. Since the second of those prongs was the basis of British and American policy for the following 12 years, it was quite an important prong.

Once the Safwan terms had been rubber-stamped by the Security Council, again we were all in the dark in New York as to what would happen next until about two days later when a telephone call came through simultaneously from Washington and from London saying that the Prime Minister and the President had decided that the whole thing would be done by the United Nations, and that we would be playing the role that we had as a permanent member and would be working out the terms of the peace settlement. Out of that came a month of extremely hectic negotiation that led to the famous mother-of-all resolutions, Resolution 687, which laid down the post-war terms for Iraq. There are not many UN resolutions, which produce three international organisations and a few other things, too, all in one go. But that one did, and if we analyse it, it was remarkably successful.

The Resolution [687] laid down a process for determining for the first time and getting Iraq's formal agreement to it, the Iraqi-Kuwait frontier, both the land frontier and the sea frontier. It laid down a process for dealing with the costs of the war and having them borne from Iraqi oil exports. That meant that massive compensation payments have been made to a large number of countries, which were damaged by the war including India, Sri Lanka and others, which had to repatriate hundreds of thousands of their nationals. Above all, it set up a process of coercive disarmament that led to the United Nations Special Commission – UNSCOM – for removing or certifying that all Saddam's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) were useless.

Well, we now know that that process also was successful. We did not think that it was, and I am not casting any aspersions on the reality in 2003 of our belief that Saddam still had some WMD but we now know that he did not. The reason that he did not was that we had destroyed a lot of them in the war and the ones that were not destroyed then were dealt with by UNSCOM. That was a fairly remarkable achievement. It was a completely unprecedented approach.

My last point about the diplomacy of the immediate post-war period concerns the issue of Saddam's attack on the Kurds and the Shia. It broke on a startled Security Council, like everyone else, at about the end of March just when the big resolution on post-war Iraq was about to go through. The British Government took a courageous view, in my opinion, and the correct view that they could not simply just sit by and allow such appalling events to unroll and do nothing about them. Moreover, such events were destabilising a NATO ally, Turkey, because hundreds of thousands of Kurds were fleeing across the mountains in appalling

conditions. Out of them came Resolution 688, which demanded that Saddam ceased oppressing the Kurds and the Shia.

However, because of the remarkably interventionist nature of the resolution, it was not under Chapter 7 and did not therefore contain any authorisation for the use of force. It worked for the Kurds, but it did not work for the Shia, which was more to do with geography and the propinquity of a NATO ally's border, as opposed to the Shia who, of course, were up against the Iranian border, than it was to anything else. In spite of that, it enabled the coalition – the British, French and the Americans – to institute the two no-fly zones in the north and the south of Iraq, which were sustained for 12 years until 2003 without any explicit authorisation from the Security Council. They were sustained on the basis of the terms of Resolution 678, which authorised the use of force in the war and by Resolution 688 on the Kurds and the Shias, which did not have the power to provide a legal basis in proper terms for the use of force. It is interesting in today's terms to think of that.

Dr Robert Johnson: Before we leave the diplomatic and political sphere, it is interesting to reflect on the consequences of the war, the war termination and the UK relations with the Arab world. Sir Alan Munro, is there something to be said about UK relations with Saudi Arabia? We have not mentioned the critics' view of the war, which was that it was a 'war for oil', but was that a consideration for you?

Sir Alan Munro: Yes, it certainly was. It was said in an earlier debate in the House of Commons that, if Kuwait had grown carrots, we would not have turned a hair. No doubt, the oil factor featured in such discussions. Out of the war came a closer and more mutually beneficial, profitable relationship between the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia than has probably ever pertained since the creation of the Kingdom. That very good relationship was sustained, as it was indeed with a grateful Kuwait. We reaped a considerable peace dividend out of our performance and a successful outcome.

I want to say something about the critical recovery by Saddam Hussein of authority and how the emergence of the Shia revolt helped to drive some of his highly disaffected by then remnants of an army back into his arms. There was an Iranian ingredient, which matters. The Iranians had been harbouring a vengeful Iraqi-Shia irregular corps for a number of years known as 'the Brother Brigade'. Those exiles from Saddam Hussein had been pressing in the wake of the defeat to go back and put paid to the whole affair. The Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud said, 'We have been presuming that Saddam Hussein will one way or another be ousted by his disenchanted people' – what I call the Galteiri[3] factor, going back to the Falklands. We placed considerable hopes on that.

Saud made the point that, if those vengeful and bloodthirsty Shia exiles were let back in, they would reap a degree of havoc, which might turn around those Sunnis and military elements who at that point had sympathy with ousting their leader, and that Saddam would take

advantage of it. He asked if there was anything we could do to deter the Iranians from releasing those dogs of war. We agreed, and Douglas Hurd who was in New York at the time spoke to Larijani, the Iranian Foreign Minister,[4] who was there also and said that he should keep on a leash such folk while the Iraqis in the country dealt with their leader.

The assurance came back, duplicitous, from the Iranians that we could be sure that no Iranians would cross the frontier. That was not the answer needed. Indeed, the 'brother brigade' was unleashed, went in, got out their knives and Kalashnikovs and started to create great bloodshed. That had a partial effect in scaring elements that were already deeply disenchanted with Saddam back into his arms and enabled him to restore his authority.

Dr Robert Johnson: I have been remiss not to ask Air Marshal Ian Macfadyn to talk about the chief staff commander headquarters, British Forces Middle East. Perhaps this is an opportunity not only to talk about termination of the conflict, but about logistical arrangements and the difficulties he faced.

Air Marshal Ian MacFadyen: I wish to make some observations about what has been said earlier, particularly about battle damage assessment. As you heard from Air Marshal Wratten, the requirement was to attrit the Iraqi Republican Guard Divisions to 50 per cent before the ground war would start. That became a key part of daily planning. General Schwarzkopf, in particular, always wanted to know how many tanks and armoured vehicles had been knocked out a day. They started off by getting piles of reports on it, and the Americans set up a system that they graphically called 'Kill Boxes'. They used to send the same pilots into the same 'Kill Box' to attack repeatedly whatever they could find by way of targets of opportunity into well dug-in Iraqi armoured vehicles.

Initial pilot reports said that more than 100 tanks were knocked out within in a particular 'Kill Box'. Some aerial photography was started to confirm that, and the reports that said more than 100 were knocked out actually boiled down to 15, when it came down to the photographic interpretation. That meant immediately that there was a real problem in assessing how we were doing. That task then fell to the Joint Intelligence Photographic Interpretation Cell [JPIC], a command set up in Riyadh with the American Air Force, Army, Navy and Marines with a largely British Royal Air Force element within it. The Air Force was a targeting cell and it was tasked with assessing how the damage was being done. One young RAF officer set about sorting the whole thing out – because four different arms, using four different methods were working within the JPIC. He drew it all together and remarkably towards the end of the war, 85 per cent of the work of the JPIC – originally designated as a targeting cell – was in Battle Damage Assessment. The lesson is that you must ask the right questions to get the right answer, otherwise you could be badly advised.

As for the air war and the Iraqi morale, it is not generally understood just how much of a propaganda war took place. United States F-16s dropped more than six million leaflets on Iraqi

ground forces. The Air Force also conducted aerial broadcasts from C-130 aircraft. We had British interpreters in a cell that was planning broadcasts in Arabic both for the C-130s and through an elaborate system of loudspeakers on the ground. These speakers could be heard up to 25 kilometres inside Iraq or Kuwait. They were broadcasting 24 hours a day producing propaganda, telling people to surrender and come across the border. Indeed, I am sure that General Rupert and others will agree that quite a lot of Iraqis surrendered across the border before even the ground war started.

I recall a story that reflects on the style and brilliant leadership of General Chuck Horner, the commander of all air forces in theatre. It concerns the day that Margaret Thatcher resigned as Prime Minister. He announced at the end of morning prayers one morning, 'I've got some bad news and some good news. The bad news is that Margaret Thatcher has resigned as the British Prime Minister. The good news is that she has signed up to join the British 7th Armoured Brigade'. I sometimes think that, if she had done, Saddam would have gone home straight away.

Dr Robert Johnson: Thank you. I apologise for not bringing you in earlier. Admiral Wilcocks, will you give us the Royal Navy dimension? I imagine that the war ending was just a change of status or more continuity for you.

Rear Admiral Philip Wilcocks: I think that Chris would be able to answer better. At that stage, I was being withdrawn, having been under threat for six months.

Captain Chris Craig: Thank you, Philip. We were penetrating the Kuwaiti minefields two weeks before the land assault commenced. It was substantial. The intelligence was flawed. We did not have the positions. That cost the Americans dear. They lost two major ships out of the line as a result of mine depths. They had, in fact, laid 1,280 sea mines. Intelligence told us 300, which made a frisson of entertainment for all the MCM forces. That continued. We cut a route through to the coast. The battleships, MISSOURI and WISCONSIN, entered them, carried out the bombardments and supported the land advance. We continued clearing the minefields. I will not roll out beyond the time frame the Chair wants, but perhaps I will.

We went on clearing the approaches, the sea lanes and the main ports for a further four and a half months before they were all declared clear. Most of the ports had been savagely booby trapped. IEDs were in profusion. There were a lot of beach mines as well as the moored and the ground mines, and the Royal Navy was much involved with those up until the end. You have heard about the neutralisation of the Iraqi missile patrol craft by the Lynx and the Skua and about the fact that we were continuing to provide replenishment primarily to our American cousins, as we did that work. That summarises the final stages of the war from the Navy's point of view. We felt that we had perhaps punched a little above our weight.

Dr Robert Johnson: We now have the opportunity to reflect briefly on the impact the war had on the Armed Services themselves. We hear a lot about 'Options for Change' and the

consequences of the war, so can I ask first Admiral Sir Julian Oswald to talk about the Royal Navy's position after the war, and Air Marshal Sir Peter Harding, and talk about the change in the character of war, which is a subject close to my heart.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Julian Oswald: Thank you for the opportunity, but to be absolutely frank, I do not have much to add to what has been said today. We learnt a lot of lessons. We were relatively pleased with the performance. We were very pleased about some of it, but there were weaknesses, which I hope are being addressed.

Air Marshal Sir Peter Harding: One of the best moments of my career in the Service was that, after the Gulf War, we invited all the commanders, flight commanders, squadron commanders, station commanders and senior commanders as well as senior staff officers to Cranwell to have a day's wash up. Various presentations were given by squadron commanders et al. It was one of the best days for me because the spirit that the Service showed on that day was extraordinary. 'Options for Change' was not figured largely in people's minds at the time. It was a job well done. People had flown extremely well on all their missions. It underscored yet again that if air power is used sensibly by a joint command – in this case, it certainly was – it is a war winning capability in itself.

It is fair to say that the Pentagon issued some figures about a week after the air campaign started to say that one third of all the Iraqi tanks, one third of their armoured vehicles and one third of their artillery had been destroyed by air alone. But, of course, all that is backed up by a large naval contingent out in the Gulf by a huge ground force. One of our wags did say, 'We all know that you can't win a war in the air alone'; then he said, 'But we very nearly did'! I thought that was rather fun; it lifted everyone's spirit. 'Options for Change' came later and people began to wonder if we would have to do even more than a Gulf War to show that what we had was worth having and should not be cut about. The one thing that worried all of us, especially John, my colleague in the Army, was that he was – as I was – disbanding squadrons and units that were actually fighting in the war because we had to have a system to ensure that the ones that were disbanded were the fairest ones to go, such as the last we set up, and that was difficult. It is the biggest high point that I have ever seen the RAF in and we were very pleased to take part.

Field Marshal Sir John Chapple: I have three or four things to say about the after effects for the Army. In 'Options for Change', there had been great debate about whether we should retain a high intensity warfare capability – the Cold War having finished – and the campaign settled the fact that we needed to keep in low and medium and high intensity capability. Secondly, we needed to retain an operational level of command. In effect, that means a Command at Corps level. That was done during the subsequent 'Options for Change' deliberations only a couple of months after the end of the ceasefire by setting up (with a little sleight of hand) the Rapid Reaction Corps. We sowed the seeds of that as being a good idea; and when the Ministers asked us what we thought of it, we said how we thought it was a smashing idea and that we

would provide the commander. We have done so ever since. We have kept that level of Corps Command in the Army, which has been professionally of great benefit.

The campaign emphasised the role of reservists and Army volunteers. We were grappling with that under 'Options for Change', and we are still doing so today. But their role was absolutely critical and we could not have provided the support for Rupert, Patrick and Peter in the Gulf without a lot of reservists.

Captain Chris Craig: I want to add a postscript, albeit not a glamorous one at this stage in the debate. It would be a travesty if we did not put some numbers on the logistical achievement of the UK sea train: 146 ships; 6,500 miles. They carted 360,000 tonnes as against the air figure of 53,000 tonnes and, by any standards, that was another remarkable achievement not to be overlooked. For some intra-Navy propaganda, similar attention should be paid to the unglamorous process of enforcing the embargo operations: 7,000 ships were challenged; 800 were boarded and checked; 36 were diverted and 1 million tonnes of suspect cargos were all impounded. That, again, fitted very well with the gradual wind down of diplomatic pressures on the Iraqis at a key stage.

Dr Robert Johnson: We must not lose sight of the important elements that always get missed out in studies of conflict, such as logistics. However, what kind of armed forces are needed for the next war? Given that we have experienced a couple of 'next wars', can I call on General Sir Rupert Smith, the author of '*The Utility of Force*'[5] to say something about what our adversaries learnt about the nature of the conflict? Just before General Sir Rupert makes a comment, I wish to thank the panellists who have other engagements and must leave early. Thank you, gentlemen, so much for your contributions today.

[Applause]

General Sir Rupert Smith: You might find that this answer will take us away from the war that we are studying into Whitehall and later decisions in the decade, but it is connected.

As Sir John said, we came away from an understanding that we needed to maintain such a competence. But then we eroded the ability to do what we had just done in 'Options for Change'. We took away most of those things that had made it possible and reduced the quantity of artillery, reduced petroleum units and so on. We learnt half the lesson as an Army and as the MOD. We did not take the whole thing on board. Then later in the decade, while I was in Bosnia, a paper appeared called, 'Two Views of War'. It was a discussion document in its origins produced by the doctrine world. It said that we had two extremes before us: something like the Gulf – armoured, manoeuvre, high intensity, although I personally dislike that phrase because I do not know what intensity is being measured – and the low intensity, peacekeeping and Bosnia. In our straightened circumstances of around 1996, that was taken as an argument for organising our forces and available resources.

We deliberately split the Army into two – a half that could do the one, and a half that could do the other view of war. I said at the time that I thought it was a failure in general-ship because, if we only have 1,000-man army, we had bloody well better organise ourselves so that we could use the whole of them, but to deliberately divide the Army so that it could only be used in two halves was to fail to use all the force. In Northern Ireland at the time I was saying this, I was representing the other end of the spectrum from the Gulf. The argument was lost. The Army was organised that way, and that is the reason why the chicken came home to roost in 2003. We started to organise the Army and to argue its use on the base of a half-learnt lesson from the conflict 12 years previously.

Dr Robert Johnson: I shall now be slightly radical and get some audience participation. We have covered quite a lot of the chronology of the war and the issues, but there are many more things to discuss. It is only right that members of the audience should have the opportunity to participate. If you wish to ask a question, will you raise your hand and then stand up? We do not want to identify you and show you up, but it is merely so that the gentlemen at the back who are keeping all this on the record can make sure that the microphone is switched on close to you. Will you please say who you are and what you represent? Are there any questions?

Wg Cdr Jeff Jefford: I am with the RAF Historical Society. My question was really for Lord Powell, who has just left. He said that we threatened Saddam Hussein before it all started with something desperately awful if he went CW[6]. Did we actually think that through? What were we going to do?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine: I can pick up a bit of that. There was a meeting between Jim Baker, the US Secretary of State, and Tariq Aziz, his Iraqi counterpart in Geneva quite early on in January 1991, during which Baker made it abundantly clear that, if Saddam were to use chemical weapons and/or biological weapons against the coalition forces, there would be a massive response in kind from the Americans. He never had to spell it out because Saddam and Tariq Aziz realised that the American carriers, for example, were carrying nuclear weapons and, ultimately, Iraq might receive one or two of them in response to the use of chemical weapons. That message was taken on board, and it was probably one of the main reasons why chemical weapons were not used against the coalition forces. It was a pretty specific warning.

Air Chief Marshal Sir William Wratten: Can I add something at my level, as the Air Commander? Not being privy to the information that Paddy has just divulged, I raised the matter with General Horner during one of our countless discussions before it started. I asked that precise question. He said, 'Baghdad will cease to exist'.

Farzin Nadimi (University of Manchester): One puzzling aspect of the war was the flight of the Iraqi Air Force to Iran. How was that move interpreted and analysed by the coalition? Were contingency plans in place in case the planes showed any sign of movement?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine: I can start off the answer and Bill Wratten will amplify as necessary. Within four days of the air campaign beginning, we had air supremacy. The Iraqi Air Force had hardly shown at all, in terms of taking off with air defence aircraft. Those that were airborne were quickly despatched by coalition fighter aircraft. Because the Iraqis were not showing in the air after the first three or four days, we assumed that Saddam was husbanding his air force until such time as the coalition ground operations began, which they did much later than Saddam assumed. We carried on with Smart weapons, in particular, bombing the Iraqi airfields, taking out hardened aircraft shelters one by one. That went on for about two weeks and, all of a sudden, we heard that up to 110 of his best surviving fast jet aircraft had taken off and headed into Iran. Our own interpretation of that was that they were very unlikely indeed ever to come back, but had the Iranians released them and they had come back at any stage, we would have the resources to deal with them. But, effectively, it proved to be the case that they were out of the war from then on.

Air Chief Marshal Sir William Wratten: I have nothing to add.

Captain Chris Craig: There was a different dimension at sea. Admiral Dan March, the carrier battle force commander already had a very healthy preoccupation with the Iranian access of keeping an eye on that potential threat, as he, his carriers and the rest of us moved up the Gulf. The moment those aircraft fled to Iranian bases, there was a distinct change in the access of air defence to allow for fast low-level. We were in a vulnerable position by then, picking our way up the Gulf just off Iranian forces, and a low, low attack coming off the coast with very little notice launching air to surface missiles into the carrier battle group was a huge preoccupation for the Americans and for us.

Rear Admiral Philip Wilcocks: It was not only the Iraqi Air Force that went into Iran. After the battle of Quarah Island[7], when the Royal Navy Lynx helicopters from HMS *Cardiff* lost their London brave, had effectively taken out most of the Iraqi-captured Kuwait ships, those that were left just popped across the Arab waterway and entered Iranian territorial waters. That was the last we saw of them.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: The Iranian Ambassador to the UN made it clear as soon as that rather odd manoeuvre occurred that extremely complex matters were arising from the arrival of the planes and that it could be assumed it would take rather longer than the duration of the hostilities to work them out. That seemed to be the understatement of the century since the planes have never gone back. Presumably, they are still in Iran, although the Iranians must have had some difficulty handling them at first because at the time the whole of the Iranian Air Force at the time was American-built and most of the Iraqis were not. They were Soviet or French. We always assumed at the UN that the main reason why they did not go to the only country that might have been helpful to Saddam, which was Jordan, was because they would have crossed a red line to get to Jordan, which would have led to their being shot down by the Israeli Air Force.

Commander Gavin Coyle: I am a student here at the Staff College. Much has been said about military planning focusing on evicting the Iraqi forces from Kuwait, but the UNSCR, as has been discussed, talked much about restoring peace and security within the region. How much planning went into that aspect of the campaign?

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: The answer comes back to WMD. The main thrust of the post-war settlement was to remove Saddam's WMD capacity, to which he attached enormous importance and which he had used not only against both the Iranians and his Kurdish compatriots, but in his diplomacy. It was one of the reasons why, very unwisely, he continued to pretend that he still had them, even when he did not, because he did not want to lose that card in his hand. The basic centre of our effort from Safwan onwards to work out what a defanged Iraq ought to be equipped with was the UNSCOM effort to get rid of his weapons of mass destruction.

A second part was to find an international route to define the Kuwait-Iraq border so that it did not again become a *casus belli*, and that was successfully achieved. It was extremely complex because a large number of countries had the greatest objection to their mutual frontier with their next-door neighbour being determined by anyone but themselves. For example, on the big resolution at the UN, the Ecuadorians on the Council abstained because they were so upset at the thought of some UN process determining the nature of their frontier between Ecuador and Peru. It was pretty tricky, but it was worked out that the UN did not define the frontier, but merely demonstrated on the basis of a lot of technical material where it always had been. That was accepted by the Iraqis, Saddam Hussein and the Revolutionary Command Council, and it is, of course, now the frontier. Those were the main points of the post-war settlement and were fleshed out under Resolution 687.

Dr Robert Johnson: We now come to a question by Dr Kelly, who has written a book about politics and the war in Libya.

Dr Saul Kelly: I will not talk about that today. I shall talk about Iraq. I have a question for the panel, especially the diplomats who had experience of ground. What strikes me strongly listening to the testimony today is the constant misreading of Iraqi intentions and capabilities before, during and after the war. Why is that? Is it a failure of intelligence? Is it a failure of critical evaluation? Is it a lack of knowledge about the Saddam Hussein regime in the 1980s or is it wilful neglect for reasons of realpolitik?

Sir Harold Walker: I do not think that I can really add to what I said in my first presentation, but everyone made a mistake in thinking and believing, particularly the Egyptians, possibly Mubarak, that Saddam would not invade Kuwait. That was a plain error of thinking. I am not sure we underestimated Saddam later. Did we? In what respect?

Dr Saul Kelly: During the war and what has come up particularly from the military members of the panel is the actual fighting capability of the Iraqi forces. I can remember in the late

1970s, and it was echoed again in the 1980s, that the Iraqis were called by some western commentators the 'Prussians of the Middle East'. They were far from being that. We have heard some pretty eloquent testimony today of their fighting capabilities. That is why I was referring to the overestimation of capabilities during the war. The ceasefire is with regard to after the war.

Air Marshal Ian MacFadyen: The Iraqis had a huge Army and big Air Force, three quarters of a million in their armed forces, a force very much revered in the Middle East, at least. They had fought a big campaign against Iran and, on the whole, had fought fairly well. When it came to the Coalition Air Campaign, such was the shattering effect of air power on the Iraqi Army that it became badly demoralised. Many captured soldiers were in a terrible state, partly through being out in the field for months on end without adequate food, water or other supplies, and partly because they were badly equipped.

The air campaign especially the B-52 bombers which attacked wave on wave on Iraqi troops, especially the Republican Guard divisions, often did not do much physical damage, but did knock the stuffing out of the Iraqi troops. That was one of the big success stories. I remember General Schwarzkopf at a briefing saying, 'We did lack HUMINT (human intelligence) of what was going on in Iraq, and of what was going on in Saddam Hussein's mind. Consequently, I was forced to go more by URINT – which is a feeling in the water'!

Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine: I am not sure that we got too much wrong in the way of intelligence during the fighting itself. The kind of war that Saddam wanted to fight was the one whereby the Americans and their allies went in, and Saddam was successful in drawing them into a battle of attrition. 'The Mother of All Wars' was his phrase. That was simply not something that we would do, hence several weeks of air operations as a prelude to the ground offensive. We did not fight the war that he expected. It was as simple as that. I do not think that he could not understand why we persevered with up to five weeks of air operations before crossing the boundary. He probably thought that we did not have the guts. Then, of course, by the time we did cross the line, the Iraqi forces were either demoralised or had been severely attrited. Our own ground force was fighting a war that was quite alien to him in capability and manoeuvre, night-fighting capability and quickly overcame what resistance was left.

Sir Alan Munro: I agree with what Air Marshal Macfadyen said about the problems over HUMINT. That was certainly a feature in the few years leading up to the crisis. Examples of it were that we lacked up-to-date accurate information on what turned out to be the appalling gas attacks in Halabja. More important was the appalling holocaust of what was called the Anfal campaign about two years before the war when Saddam Hussein moved in their tens of thousands Kurds to the south to what was to be new farming areas for them, human engineering the mixing up of his population, but in fact they ended up dead in pits. That only came to light one or two years *after* the Gulf War, some four or five years after it happened. We were then told by the Iraqi Red Crescent that up to 80,000 Kurds ended up in pits from

what we understood at the time was moving them to new farming, irrigated land in the south of Iraq. That was a major lapse in human intelligence. It was a real factor at the time.

The second factor is something that we diplomats have to look out for time and again, and we tend to miss. It happened in the Iranian revolution. It is the momentum factor. When things are going very well for you and for trade, for example, there is a certain disinclination to pick up stones and look under them.

Rear Admiral Philip Wilcocks: About seven years after the end of the war, I ended up back at the Ministry of Defence as the Director of Naval Operations. I would meet my two colleagues, the Director of Military Operations and the Director of Air Operations, probably about every four weeks with our opposite number from the Intelligence community to work out what Saddam Hussein was doing. That was with the benefit of six years' post the conflict. When I reflect, I just wonder whether at the time they were speaking, the Egyptians and the Saudis were probably right: there was sabre rattling by Saddam Hussein. At what stage did he actually make the decision to go across the border into Kuwait? I suspect that it might not have been well planned. It might have just been a knee-jerk reaction, much closer to 2 August than perhaps we think. Unfortunately, we cannot ask the chap what was on his mind.

Sir Michael Weston: I have little to add to what I said this morning. Our mistake in the time leading up to the war was to assume that Saddam Hussein was logical and that he would act in the way that we would act in a similar situation. I agree very much with the previous speaker that, to some extent, he did not really know – even when his troops crossed the border into Kuwait – where he would stop. The fact that there was no resistance at all meant that he went on from Mutla into Kuwait City and down to the Saudi border. He must have wondered very much whether to go further, the greatest fear of us and the Americans – and the Saudis.

General Sir Rupert Smith: I have a couple of little examples that perhaps will show you why the point that Paddy Hine made when he said that we would not fight Saddam on his terms achieved the effect that it did. When we attacked into the defences, we created a breach and passed my Division through the breach, after which we attacked out. That all went on, on day one and by dawn at the beginning of day two, about 100 km from the breach, I had a reconnaissance unit on a line called Smash, I think. It started to make contact with columns of Iraqi tanks coming towards them. Nothing else was in range. We had a strong sandstorm and rain blowing at the time. I could not use any aircraft. I moved a rocket regiment up into line with the leading battle groups, and it was just in range to support the reconnaissance regiment. We attacked and defeated the armoured columns coming down. They were dispersed, and it stopped.

After the interrogation of the prisoners, they were surprised to find us there. They were being sent down to counterattack into the breach. I do not know what time they were given their orders, but in terms of space they were 100 km out of step with what was going on. The command control process was completely dislocated by what we were doing and the way

we were doing it. That was our intention, but it is an example of the difference between the two organisations.

The other was the effect of the air power on the enemy crews. As you have heard, it did not hit all the tanks. The Iraqis got quite good at putting old rubber tyres by their tanks and lighting them, so lots of smoke went up – in the hopes that it was recorded as a hit and no one comes back again. They also moved out of the tanks and dug holes to live in. To make it comfortable, they took the batteries out of the tanks and lit up their bunker. At the speed we were moving, they were not able to get the batteries inside the tanks even if they had wanted to, so quite a lot of tanks had their turrets taken off at about 2 km range, which were completely crewless and without electrical power. That is the evidence of the morale breaking down.

My last point is retrospective. Given the events and the JSTARS[8] collection, that was not available at the time, we can see how rapidly they started to withdraw when the attack started. I conclude in respect of the character of the people of those places in that perhaps we could have gone much earlier. Saddam Hussein might have needed to be pushed. It was no good threatening him, but we had to push him and then he would collapse. His face would not allow him to back down without being pushed. Perhaps that was a misreading of the person and the culture. I do not know, but I have held that view for some time.

Dr Robert Johnson: We have two questions that have been waiting. I shall try desperately to get through everyone in the 14 minutes that we remaining.

John Stubbington (RAF Historical Society): My question is for Sir Rupert. It goes back to his comments. He spoke earlier about the apparent lack of tactical intelligence as he was moving forward. He mentioned JSTARS as an example, but I thought that he suggested that that might have been available at the centre, behind him, but not have been available to him tactically forward. Is that correct?

General Sir Rupert Smith: Absolutely correct. I do not think that JSTARS, which was in an early version, was further forward than Army Headquarters, if that. It certainly was not at the Corps Headquarters. If you have read about the friction between Freddie Franks, my Corps Commander, and Schwarzkopf, part of that is because Schwarzkopf had a different picture literally to Franks. They did not share the picture they were arguing about.

Alastair Rosenchein: My question is in two parts. First, how seriously was the consideration that Israel might become involved in protecting its people from Scuds? Secondly, how successful were Special Forces in thwarting that threat? The last question is probably for Peter de la Billière.

General Sir Peter de la Billière: The Scuds were militarily pretty ineffective. There was a worry that they would have an input on civilian morale, but that did not even materialise because they could not get enough Scuds into the air. Looking back on the whole campaign, Scuds

were a side issue. As far as protection was concerned, we all had overhead cover and overhead protection in Riyadh, and I am sure they probably had the same arrangements in the field. We had, although we were not expecting to deal with it, a Scud that perhaps had chemical weapons on board. There was diversification, which was irritating in terms of interrupting what we were doing if we had to go down into the basement. A sure sign of a Scud attack was that all the military would disappear into the basement, while the media would roar up on to the roof, which had a message of its own.

The Special Forces in Israel was a major issue, locally, no doubt about it. I do not know what Paddy, Alan Munro and the others knew about it, but there is no doubt that the messages I received from Schwarzkopf was that we had to stop Scuds going into Israel. That was of major importance and justified his changing his mind 180 degrees in the deployment of the Special Forces because I had told him that they would probably be able to frustrate the ambition of the Iraqis. Alan, do you want to add anything?

Sir Alan Munro: Only from the Saudi end. Prince Saud was considerably concerned at the unleashing of the Scuds on the Israelis. He said that we had to do everything we could to deter the Israelis from retaliating, as they were initially inclined to do, because if they are back in it, frankly we could kiss goodbye to our coalition. The Americans took the effective lead on that.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: With the Israelis, the first thing to remember is that the only country that counts is the United States. The United States deployed an enormous effort to ensure that the Israelis did not retaliate. Larry Eagleburger,[9] the Deputy Secretary of State, practically lived in Jerusalem throughout the conflict, holding the hand of the Israelis. It was a fraught issue because no Israeli Prime Minister ever wants to be one who it can be said allowed an attack to be made on Israel and did not retaliate. It was difficult, but it was managed extremely skilfully by the Americans, and we all breathed an enormous sigh of relief because the effect on the Arab members of the coalition and on the diplomatic coalitions in New York if the Israelis had retaliated would have been disastrous.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine: From what has been said, the audience will gather that Scud was really a political weapon with which Saddam wanted to turn the whole conflict into a jihad. The Americans handled the Israeli side of it extremely well, as you have just heard, and deployed a lot of Patriot missiles to intercept the incoming Scuds. I wonder though what the Israeli reaction would have been if one of those Scuds had gone into a huge block of flats and killed 300 or 400 people. To have kept them out of the war in those circumstances would have been a lot harder.

Duncan Anderson (Royal Military Academy, War Studies, Sandhurst): My question goes back to Sir Rupert's statement about Saddam requiring one push to get him out of Kuwait. My reading of the last UN resolutions coming through in December and January 1991 was that, rather than trying to push Saddam out of Kuwait, it was really intended to pin him in position so that we could move our forces into positions from where they can attack. This is

from memory, so I might have it slightly wrong, but one of the resolutions advocated compensation for the al-Sabah family to which it was impossible for Saddam to agree. Am I right in thinking that some resolutions were, in fact, designed to pin Saddam rather than to push him out, or have I completely got the wrong end of the stick?

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: You have got it wrong. First, there were no resolutions passed by the Security Council in December or January 1991. I do not remember any resolution on compensation for the al-Sabah family. Resolutions talked about compensation for the costs that Saddam had inflicted on a wide range of people who did, of course, include the Kuwaitis, but also included the Saudis, the Indians, Sri Lankans, Bangladeshis and others who had taken huge costs out of the need to repatriate their people.

No, there were 12 resolutions at the time the war started. The last one was that adopted at the end of November authorising the use of force if, after a period known laughingly as the 'pause of goodwill', Saddam had not withdrawn from Kuwait. The sanctions resolutions were designed to bring about a change of policy and they failed in that respect. They were certainly not designed to prevent his changing his policy.

Audience Member: I am also on a course here. I wish to go back to the political and diplomatic reasons for stopping the war short of capturing Baghdad. Were there any serious pressures from the Arab countries, the members of the coalition and the host countries of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait as well as examples shown, for example, by Ecuador, for the coalition not to violate legal principles of sovereignty and get rid of an Arab leader. To me, the Kurdish issue played a central political part in matters. I am just wondering whether you can confirm or deny that.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: I do not think that the timetable lends itself to a very satisfactory answer to your question. The Kurds had not risen up at the time of the ceasefire at Safwan. The Kurdish and Shia risings came in March, which was after that ceasefire. The coalition would have had to break the ceasefire if it had wanted to resume hostilities and that was not something that any of the Governments concerned were prepared to contemplate. Moreover, I do not believe that there is much of a secret about attitudes. President Bush in his memoirs as well as James Baker and others all made it very clear that they were quite determined on a number of grounds not to go beyond the limits laid down by the authorisation to use force, which was to get Saddam Hussein to retire from Kuwait. The issue of restoring peace and security in the region would not in itself have justified marching into Iraq.

There were other reasons, too. The very sensible reason ignored by Saddam was that they did not wish to become responsible for the governance of Iraq. There is not much mystery about that, frankly. Where the Kurdish dimension did complicate things a bit was that, when the Kurds – alas – rose up too late after the ceasefire and not much could be done, there was among the western allies a desire not to take any steps that would lead to the disintegration of Iraq or its separation into three different states.

Dr Robert Johnson: There is time for only one more question.

Audience Member (United Arab Emirates): I am a student. My question regards the war principles. Was the commander faced with a challenge of how to keep morale on the field, whereas western soldiers were fighting in other countries on their behalf? Secondly, had industry provided a new weapons system or new equipment for the Army to try during the war?

General Sir Peter de la Billière: As for the three British services out there, morale was not an issue because they were well led. Sound plans were put in place in which they participated. It was not something that crossed my mind as being an issue. However, there was one exception. It is something that we have not discussed at all today—the media. In terms of influence on morale, the media are central. If they report adversely, you will get the British people either ill-informed or perhaps made fearful, and that will reflect in terms of their communications with the servicemen at the front and have a dramatic impact on morale quickly. We were fortunate, thanks to the support from Paddy's headquarters and work on the ground by some 200 people, that the media side was well contained, as a result of which the reporting of the war was, generally speaking, favourable and that helped to boost morale.

Dr Robert Johnson: There are many more questions but, sadly, we are out of time.

I have learnt a great deal today, and I am sure that the panellists feel that they have also learnt from each other today. I have learnt why many vehicles in Germany were up on bricks rather than manoeuvring around the north German plain. I cannot possibly sum up the day, all the richness of information and the candour with which people have made their remarks, even on the record. Perhaps it is worth reflecting on the fact that our understanding of victory as a strategic victory is much more important than an operational victory. I will leave you with that thought – with the current campaign in Afghanistan in mind. Thank you, Lords, Generals, Admirals, ladies and gentlemen for your time today.

Notes

[1] Word missing in original transcript and subsequently inserted by RAF CAPS.
[2] Colin Powell, US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1989–93. Secretary of State 2001-2005.
[3] General Leopoldo Galtieri (1926–2003), President of Argentina, 1981-2. Within days of the British decisively ejecting the Argentines from the Falkland Islands, Galtieri was removed from office.
[4] Ali Larijani, Iranian Foreign Minister.
[5] Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London, 2005).
[6] Chemical weapons.
[7] Battle of Quarah Island.
[8] Boeing E-8 Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS).
[9] Larry Eagleburger (1930-2011), Deputy Secretary of State, 1989-92.