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The Rt Hon David Cameron MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

13 July 2012

*Dear Prime Minister*

**IRAQ INQUIRY**

I wrote to Gus O'Donnell in October last year to inform him of the Inquiry's progress and when we might hope to conclude the task we were set by your predecessor. I said that it would take at least until this summer to prepare a draft report. I also said that if the Inquiry concluded that criticism of any individual should be made the "Maxwellisation" process, whereby they would be informed of the Inquiry's views and offered the opportunity to make representations, could only begin when all the relevant sections of the draft report had been prepared. My letter and Gus O'Donnell's reply of 2 December were published on the Inquiry's website.

My colleagues and I have recently considered progress and concluded we should write to inform you of the current position before Parliament rises for the summer recess. I should like to put a copy of the letter on the Inquiry's website on Monday afternoon.

As Mr Brown recognised when he set up the Inquiry, its scope is unprecedented covering an eight year period and the full range of the Government's decisions and actions in both the lead up to the use of military force in March 2003 and the UK's subsequent role in Iraq before the withdrawal of UK forces in July 2009. He envisaged that the Inquiry should begin its review in the summer of 2001. In fact, the evidence showed that the Inquiry should begin

with the government's review of Iraq policy in the autumn of 2000. The government has provided the documents necessary to facilitate that.

The Inquiry decided at a very early stage that it would be essential to establish as accurately and reliably as possible what had happened to enable it to identify lessons. We have approached that task with open minds and a determination to be thorough, rigorous, fair and frank and a commitment to reach impartial and evidence-based judgements. The Inquiry decided that it should not produce an interim report. That remains its view.

Following the announcement of the Inquiry it was agreed that it would be essential to hold as much of the Inquiry as possible in public, consistent with the need to protect national security and to enable candour in the evidence given by witnesses. The Inquiry has taken evidence from more than 150 witnesses in oral hearings, public and private, and asked more than 20 additional witnesses for written evidence. The government undertook to provide the Inquiry with all relevant material and the Inquiry holds tens of thousands of government records. The Inquiry visited the US, France and Iraq to discuss the UK's role. The Inquiry has also received a number of written submissions, including from current and former Parliamentarians, and experts in international law. It held two seminars with academics and experts. There is also a substantial amount of published material which is relevant to the Inquiry's considerations.

It was also agreed that it was important the Inquiry should hear direct from those who were seriously affected by the conflict, including those military and civilian personnel who served in Iraq and the families of those who died there. The Inquiry has had a series of meetings with those groups.

As it has reviewed the oral and documentary evidence, and other information, the Inquiry's determination to produce a balanced, fair and accurate account on which to base its findings has been reinforced. The evidence the Inquiry has examined is not wholly consistent. That is largely explained by the fact that most of those involved had only a partial picture of events and their levels of understanding varied significantly. There are also gaps in the documentary record and lapses of memory so many years after the event. Where it believes the issue is significant, the Inquiry has sought to establish the fullest picture it can of the context in which decisions and actions were taken by Ministers and officials before reaching conclusions. It is a time consuming and challenging task; but one which the Inquiry regards

as essential if its judgements are to be well-founded, including where there is adverse comment or criticism.

The Inquiry committed itself to publishing as much as possible of the evidence which is necessary for the understanding of the Inquiry's findings and confidence in the integrity of its process, within the protocol agreed with the government. The Inquiry has already published the transcripts from many of its private hearings. It has also published some documents, many of which were previously highly classified, which were directly relevant to its hearings, public and private. The Inquiry expects to publish material from thousands more documents in support of its report: by publishing complete documents at the same time as the government publishes the Inquiry report in Parliament; by reproducing parts of documents in its report; or by including a gist of the contents if that is the only way to avoid damage to national security, international relations or other issues governed by the *Protocol Regarding Documents and Other Written and Electronic Information between the Iraq Inquiry and Her Majesty's Government*.

As Gus O'Donnell commented in his letter of 2 December 2011, the declassification of that material is a labour intensive process: both for government departments and the small Inquiry team. The Inquiry is grateful for the very significant progress which has been made in agreeing the requests it has already made.

There are, however, a number of particularly important categories of evidence, including the treatment of discussions in Cabinet and Cabinet committees and the UK position in discussions between the Prime Minister and the heads of State or Government of other nations, to be addressed. An exchange of correspondence with Gus O'Donnell in advance of Mr Blair's second hearing in January 2011 identified some of the issues which will need to be resolved. The Inquiry expects to begin a dialogue with the Cabinet Office on those areas later in the year.

The Inquiry has concluded that, without the opportunity to put individual pieces of evidence into their proper context, the Inquiry should not publish further material piecemeal and in advance of its report. That would risk misinterpretation and potentially prejudice the fair treatment of individuals. That material, which includes transcripts from a small number of the private hearings which have not yet been published and statements from a small number of witnesses will also be published alongside the Inquiry's report.

The Inquiry has made extensive progress in drafting its report, which will comprise both a reliable account of the events and the Inquiry's conclusions, but its task is not yet complete. The issues are complex and difficult and there are significant lessons. Some of those are specific to the circumstances of Iraq, but most have more general application for the conduct of government. The final report is likely to be more than a million words. The importance of the issues and the need to learn the appropriate lessons are uppermost in our minds. I attach an outline of the scope of the report.

My colleagues and I have concluded that we shall be in a position to begin the "Maxwellisation" process by the middle of next year. Once that process is complete, the Inquiry will be able to submit its report to you. To assist public understanding, the Inquiry intends to produce an abstract of its key findings.

As you know, Martin Gilbert has been seriously ill since early April and has not been able to contribute to the work of the Inquiry since then. He is much missed but we continue to draw on the work he had already done to inform our analysis and conclusions. We hope that his recovery will continue and that he may be able to rejoin the Inquiry. I am sure you would share that view.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Jeremy Heywood.

*Yours sincerely,  
Sir John Chilcot*

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT**

# IRAQ INQUIRY: SCOPE OF REPORT

## Introduction

- Terms of Reference
- Methodology

## Context

- Iraq pre-1990
- UK strategy towards Iraq 1990-2000 (including the UN framework, the strategy of containment and its effectiveness, and Iraqi responses)

## Development of the UK's strategy 2000-March 2003

- The UK's strategy pre-9/11 and its effectiveness
- The effect of 9/11 and the decision to pursue an ultimatum through the UN
- The UK's understanding of Iraq's WMD capability, and the production of the September dossier
- The negotiation of UNSCR 1441
- The inspections process and the pursuit of a second resolution
- The legal advice to the government
- Contingency planning and preparation for a military intervention
- Contingency planning and preparation for a post-Saddam Iraq

## The decision to take military action

- The UK's objectives; legal considerations; military advice and instructions; Parliament; and machinery of government

## The UK's role in the invasion

The UK's strategy for Iraq between the invasion (March 2003) and the transfer of sovereignty to an Iraqi Interim Government (June 2004), and the effectiveness of the UK's actions

- The UK's preparedness and actions to meeting its obligations as an occupying power before the adoption of UNSCR 1483
- The UK's role in the development of UNSCR 1483 and its preparedness and actions to meet its obligations as one of the two Joint Occupying Powers designated by that resolution
- The UK's role in the decisions on de-Ba'athification and disbandment of the Iraq security forces, and their implications
- The UK's approach and contribution to addressing the security challenges in Iraq and their effectiveness.
- The UK's approach and contribution to political and constitutional development in Iraq
- The contribution of the UK to meeting its obligations for the reconstruction of Iraq
- The UK's contribution to security sector reform, including the restructuring and replacement of the Iraqi Security Forces
- The search for WMD, the review of intelligence and the conclusions of the Iraq Survey Group

The UK's strategy in Iraq between July 2004 and July 2009 and the effectiveness of its actions

- The UK's strategy and its implementation
- The UK's contribution to the transitional political process in Iraq between 2004 and 2006
- The UK's approach and contribution to supporting reconciliation in Iraq

- The UK's approach to addressing the security challenges of Iraq, including its responsibilities in the South East
- The UK's contribution to Iraq's Security Sector reform and its effectiveness; and the transfer of security responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces
- The UK's contribution to stabilising and rebuilding Iraq
- The impact of the UK's decision to commit troops to Afghanistan on its ability to fulfil its obligations in Iraq

#### The human cost of insecurity in Iraq

#### Resourcing the UK's actions in Iraq

#### Military equipment

- Preparations for the invasion
- Issues post-invasion

#### Military personnel

- The government's approach to supporting military personnel on operations
- Addressing the physical and psychological injuries sustained as a result of service in Iraq
- The government's approach to families of military personnel who died in, or as a result of service in, Iraq
- The conduct of investigations into military fatalities in, or as a result of service in, Iraq

#### Civilian personnel

- The government's actions in deploying and supporting civilian personnel, in Iraq and subsequently, including aspects of support for locally employed civilians (LECs)

#### Conclusions



10 DOWNING STREET  
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THE PRIME MINISTER

16 July 2012

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 13 July, setting out the latest position on the Inquiry, and your expectations about the timing for submitting the report to me.

I recognise the efforts the Inquiry is making in its important task and very much hope that it will be possible to meet this new timetable.

I was sorry to learn of Martin Gilbert's illness. Like you, I hope his recovery will continue and that he may be able to rejoin the Inquiry.

I am content for you to publish this letter alongside yours to me.

I am copying this letter to Sir Jeremy Heywood.

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The Right Honourable Sir John Chilcot GCB