



I didn't have any doubt that once we went into it, we had to go into it with the fullest extent of the power we could bring to bear.// Everyone I think generally agreed that it should be short, but short is really a comparative term. // I had foreign ministers on the phone in my office here in the Foreign Office almost pleading with me to do what I could to ensure that 20 or 30 of their military were able to take part.

(fx press room) Here we go. Ladies and gentlemen we are beginning another front in our war against terrorism so freedom can prevail over fear. The President will address the nation at twelve fifty. Thank you.

On my orders, the United States military has begun strikes against al-Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. These carefully targeted actions are designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime.

:

SEGUE

Fx. The Taleban's press conferences have something of a school of theology or philosophy about them. On the closely clipped lawn of their embassy garden the ladies and gentlemen of the press sit like eager students at the feet of the imposing figures of the ambassador and his assistant. The message is clearly designed to play on fears of Islamic reaction to the bombing. [Taleban presser] "It has sparked off the fury of not only the Muslim people of Afghanistan but all Muslim world (Fx phone). We appreciate the Islamic feelings and support shown by all Muslims of the world with the Islamic Community of Afghanistan".

I was confident all, all along, because I knew that the people of Pakistan are with me and they have confidence in my judgement, and secondly I knew that the religious extremists in Pakistan are in a very small minority. I know the results of all our elections in the past, I know that they don't enjoy the confidence of the masses, the people of Pakistan, therefore when they were out on the streets I knew that this is a minority and that the majority is very, very strongly with me. I was quite sure and quite confident about that.

He was telling us he could handle it. The talk in Pakistan to which you refer was primarily among the members of the press stationed there, and much less than in the general population. And President Musharraf had a very good handle on it, and he subsequently was shown to be absolutely correct.

President Bush asked me to come to Pakistan to demonstrate our enduring commitment to our relationship with Pakistan. We are . . . [fades under].

In the initial stages I didn't consider it to be correct or even gentlemanly I would say to demand some returns for whatever one is doing. I didn't think it was appropriate at all to be talking of what are you going to give me, there's no bargaining going on, so we, whatever we did and whatever we are accepted to do was without any demands or, or returns, but when Mr. Colin Powell came here, by that time of course he also knew that we required certain things, we have certain problems of our own, and he offered to help us, and then we had to mature our ideas and I was very frank with him when we discussed what are Pakistan's requirements. (Can you tell me what those were, what you did discuss at that meeting.) Well my concern was the economy of Pakistan really and I said there are three elements, one is debt relief, the other is, is fiscal support, budgetary support, and the third is market access for our goods, so I really discussed these three aspects of assistance from the United States. (And do you think they've delivered as you would hope they would have done.) Reasonably I would say. On the debt relief, yes they have, President Bush has promised me one billion dollars write off, so debt relief is there. As far as fiscal support is concerned, yes, in all nearly we've got nearly about one billion dollars in fiscal support, but my regret is about the market access, we haven't got it as yet.

We were well aware of the fact that after twenty years of civil war none of the groups in Afghanistan had completely clean records. And they themselves will admit that. I mean that is a, a sort of I think the result of you know twenty years of civil war and the fact that they were operating within the context of a failed state. But underpinning our approach was the objective of ensuring that when the job in Afghanistan was done, in the sense of dealing with al-Qaeda and dealing with the Taleban, that we didn't see rule by another armed group, but we did see a move towards a genuinely broad based and representative government.

What we did in that meeting was discussed politically what we might to do help bring about an Afghan opposition, and at that point a lot of the thinking was about essentially how we could encourage Afghans to do it themselves. We also talked about economic plans, humanitarian plans, as well as economic reconstruction ideas, and we also talked a little bit about security arrangement, about what might be done during a struggle and after a struggle to help secure Afghanistan. So what it was was really the first comprehensive conversation between ourselves and the United Nations, and I think what was good about it was we saw the situation quite similarly, and it laid, I'd like to think, something of a foundation of trust and confidence that we were essentially marching in the same direction on this, because we knew that we needed each other for this to succeed.

FX BATTLE: Battery stand by. Fire.....

: When I realised some months afterwards that it had only been twelve days from October 7th to the beginning of the bombing to October 19th the first troops on the ground I couldn't believe it because I heard so many discussions between Rumsfeld and General Franks with others of us participating about how important it was for us to get special forces in to get troops on the ground. And the sense of impatience from the Secretary 'Why is it taking so long?'

"I've come to Shanghai because China and other Asia Pacific nations are important partners in the global coalition against terror. [

I saw the meeting of the very interesting coalition in Shanghai headed by Jiang Zemin the President of China, Bush the President of the United States and Putin the President of Russia - all of them in silky jackets, very beautiful blue and red. I told President Bush 'You've developed a very silky relations'. He thought I am saying 'a very silly relations' so he says 'Why did I look silly?', so I says 'No Mr President. You looked silky'. But it is not that all of them fall in love with President Bush but all of them feel in the same camp and this is an ongoing coalition

: [fading up] “ . . .the wheels shown on TV by the Taleban officials were, in fact, from a U.S. MH-47 helicopter. During Friday night's mission, the helicopter's main landing gear came in contact with a barrier, which tore the wheels off. The aircraft continued[fades]

(Coughs.) Excuse me. While there, they took hostile fire, aborted the refueling, returned fire and departed. There were no casualties among the U.S. crew and no reports of casualties on the ground.

At 9:05 a.m. [EDT] on Sunday, a U.S. Navy FA-18 Hornet missed its intended target and inadvertently dropped a 1,000-pound bomb in an open field -- an open area near a senior citizens' home outside Herat, Afghanistan. The intended target was a vehicle-storage building. . . .

I would say that with the exception of the President, there was time when everyone got a little impatient, because there was a lot of question as to when the Northern Alliance was actually going to move. And there was a little bit of a concern that winter was going to come on, and Afghanistan's a tough place to fight in the winter, and what would really have been achieved by that time, and would we have lost the initiative and the momentum if by, say, the first of December there had not been major advances?

What became clear is that in these huge international events, which command attention now right round the world you know where deadlines don't matter, time zones don't matter and it's just a story that is happening all the time, an individual country or an individual part of a government just isn't equipped to deal with it because the media now is so fast and it's so big and what happens in one part of the world now, on the television now can have an impact on every single government around the world that's having to deal with it. Something that somebody says, an incident. So what the CIC was about, which was in a sense a bigger version of what we'd done for Kosovo, was to put together the main parts of the coalition response in communication terms and have systems that meant that they were constantly interconnected so that we all knew the main things that were happening, the main messages that were being put out by the main players, the main vehicles for that to happen and it's just a way of making sure that you're working together and maximising your resources, and that you are helping each other with the problems that arise.

I said that again – in the line of either you're with us or against, and you can either co-operate as you can or else, if you're harbouring terrorists or if you're part of it, you may yourself become a target. The Syrians chose to view this as a threat, and I was happy they did. (You were happy they did?) I was delighted they did. (Why?) They didn't miss the signal.

: We cannot accept what

It is difficult

because of the history and the differences to come here, to have a press conference such as this. It is an attempt to find new understanding and a new way forward to resolve the differences that we have.

Well, I have never minded about that because I have done press conferences like that with people with people when they have said things that I don't agree with, and you probably wish they weren't saying, but I felt it was very important to go to Syria, because whatever was said at the press conference, there was also a very strong message that I delivered which was that for Syria there was a choice too, and I think that choice still remains, incidentally, that it can either play around with support for terrorism, or it can join the proper community of civilised nations, but it is not in any sense a proper pursuit of a political cause to blow up innocent civilians.

One thing which we consider is very natural and normal was misread in London by the media - that was in the press conference when the two men spoke about their position (Mr Blair and Mr Assad) and we took it in our own media as a normal thing. We enjoyed that kind of bit of differences here and there but apparently British media did not expect any party to make his views freely.

If it meant getting a couple of days' bad headlines about President Bashir giving him a bashing as the press put it, then so what? I also think it was actually, in part our media are not necessarily used to hearing what the Syrians have to say about us or the way that they say it, and the Syrians are not used to dealing with that kind of event.

To be honest I was quite surprised there was a press conference. I think it is unwise to have a press conference in those sorts of circumstances when you are not expecting to be in a position to announce detailed agreements or joint actions or something of that sort. You are down there for a first meeting with somebody who represents a government which has had a very different view from yours in a highly volatile complex political situation. Better not to go for too much public exposure immediately afterwards. (If you'd known that something like that had been going to happen would you have recommended that he went?) Oh I still think Tony Blair should have gone. Yes I think he is brave to have gone and I think he was right to have gone.

The work really involved is for me to have met with Prime Minister Sharon and with Chairman Arafat before the prime minister came. I had meetings with them and with their key advisers, with the leaders of the Palestinian authority, with cabinet ministers and with members of Prime Minister Sharon's team, and to try and really get a feel of exactly where the state of play was at, where their mindset was at.

There were those in Washington who felt that the establishment of a strong American-Arab coalition, as well as other regional states, was a prerequisite for a successful military campaign. But as the military campaign got underway the US establishment I think understood that it was able to reach a decisive outcome, even without this formal coalition existing. There was a world of difference between the Gulf War campaign that required a half a million troops in the Arabian Peninsular, and the campaign against al Qaeda in Afghanistan that was based on special operations and air power.

You know the government is a red/green government – so you have quite a number of pacifists supporting this government – so that was not so easy for a German government to commit itself. But the Chancellor was very clear that for him this was a make it or break it commitment he has given to the Americans . . . We went through the parliament because in Germany you have to have this endorsed by resolution in parliament. We got the majority later for this engagement – this was not easy. Also because the German public is, after the experiences of the past, a very non-ballistic public – war is not popular in Germany and surely participation in war is not popular. But I think the people have understood that in these circumstances it was unavoidable.

Some of them had gone to a great deal of trouble with parliaments and with their own militaries in order to get the decisions made but I think they all understood why it was that the United States couldn't quickly or easily mesh in the offers that were being made but there was certainly some disappointment about, but I think it was understood. (Is it fair to say that the Americans are now so sophisticated, so far ahead of the rest of us that it will never be necessary for them to call on other people in these sorts of circumstances?) It would not be true to say that they've reached a level of sophistication that they will not need people to help. In the particular circumstances that were involved in Afghanistan they were able to do it and to do it on their own.

: I was pretty confident actually. I mean the way things tend to work in Afghanistan is that nothing appears to happen. And then a lot happens very quickly. And it's as if you're pushing at a rotten door, and you push and you push and you'll push. And suddenly all the timbers give way together. (So you perhaps weren't that surprised when Kabul fell - a lot of people were but you weren't?) No. No I had predicted it the week before in the kitchen in the emergency unit. The reason was Mazar-e-Sherif fell and I think it was it was the day that Mazar-e-Sherif fell, I was having a cup of coffee and talking to a colleague and he said, 'Do you reckon Kabul will go this year or next?' And I said 'It'll go next week'. It's the way it goes. That once the, the Taliban start to pull back and give up they will give up a large swathe of territory very quickly and probably fall back on Kandahar.

: I'm not sure if that was the end of the beginning, or the beginning of the end.

The fall of Mazar-e-Sherif was clearly not simply the military turning point of the battle, but it was also the political turning point, because once Afghans on the ground saw what was happening, a lot of them recalculated their positions, which is exactly what a lot of us predicted would happen, that once you had a decisive military victory, that would establish a trend, and more important it would establish the perception that a trend was inevitable, which then became self-fulfilling.

: Our World Affairs editor John Simpson was with Northern Alliance troops as they moved towards Kabul. He described their rapid advance.

There's hundreds of, perhaps even thousands of soldiers pouring down the main road towards Kabul, passing us. They are carrying their rifles, they are carrying their RPG-7 rocket launchers over their shoulders. They are a conquering army. They have passed through the first two lines of defence towards Kabul like a knife through butter.

I mean some people may have been surprised. I can't remember exactly but all I can say to you Ed is if you're going to have a choice between problems of failure and problems of success, go for the latter every time.