



WITH US OR AGAINST US

R4 FINAL

2. Gathering Force

THEME

GOLD: There were some in the United States who felt that the road to bases in the Middle East went through the West Bank and Gaza strip. **BOLTON:** The Uzbeks didn't think they needed permission from the Russians. They thought they were going to make that decision. And they did. **ROBERTSON:** President Putin and I, as we left, he said in English to me, he said 'If we can make this work Mr Secretary General we'll change the world.'

ED: September 21st . In his address to Congress the previous evening George Bush has rewritten the rules.

Colour guard:[from under] (applause) Colour guard. Parade the Colours.

ED: Now you are, in the President's words, with us or with the terrorists.

CD99550: God Bless America cheers [fade under]

ED: From this day American will and American might are the defining forces shaping a new world order.

CD99550: Left right, left right, left right left. . .Colour Guard halt: Peace.

ED: Nine days after the attack on the World Trade Centre, the EU Commissioner Chris Patten flies to Washington for a meeting with the Secretary of State, Colin Powell.,

CD99550: UPSOF [Singing starts then dips]

PATTEN: We went to Washington in late September. It was one of those in and out trips, we were only there for twenty-four hours if that. But for me almost the most extraordinary feeling was that of a wounded sense of almost innocence, that here was America which had felt invulnerable for years which had never experienced anything like this. And I had this extraordinary sense as we were driving through the suburbs of Washington one lovely autumn evening, had this terrible sense that something had changed in America and it was going to be very very difficult to put all those, all that self-confidence back in shape (Do you think that that has happened?) I think that all of us outside America are constantly in danger of underestimating the impact on American policy-making and above all on the American psyche of what happened in New York and what has happened subsequently.

MEYER: I don't know about others but I mean the White House, State Department, Defense Department were in a state of permanent meeting.

ED: Sir Christopher Meyer the British Ambassador in Washington.

MEYER: They were very active planning, there was a lot of direct telephonic contact across the Atlantic between London and Washington and my staff and I were virtually living you know out of the White House or the State Department.

ED: In the immediate aftermath of September 11th, here is suddenly space to improvise. Tony Blair assays a coup de theatre from his plane on his way to meet George Bush in Washington. High in transatlantic airspace, he puts in a phone call to President Khatami of Iran – the usual meticulous planning required by Britain's notoriously prickly relations with Teheran swept aside in the diplomatic maelstrom.

BLAIR: I was determined that we built a strong coalition, both amongst the western world - I knew that we all had to, Europe and America, Russia, etc, we all had to hang together with the Americans. I was sure of that. But also in the area that we got on board all those countries

might have been unsympathetic to the American position. And so it was important we made copious efforts with Afghanistan, with all the various 'stans circling Afghanistan, and of course with Iran. And so, it was an unusual thing to do, but I thought these were unusual times and it took unusual actions.

ED: The Iranians have suddenly become natural allies - they've long been opposed to the Taliban. But they are not so easily seduced. Dr Javad Zarif, Iran's deputy foreign minister.

ZARIF: President Khatami warned the Prime Minister of the dangers that are posed if this behaviour by a group in the Islamic world would turn into a clash between Islam and the west and the prime minister also agreed that this was a very serious threat and a very serious possible threat, and that is why we agreed that we should work together on that issue. We have not been very successful in that front I just wanted to, to mention, because we see this very serious exacerbation of Islamophobia in the West, and this will have implications that are far greater than the September 11th and the tragedies that, that ensued.

ED: The aftershocks are being felt in every region. In the Middle East itself Yasser Arafat gives blood for the victims of the attack on the World Trade Centre - a calculated signal to his own people and Washington about which side HE is on. Arafat has been a player in Palestinian politics since the 1950s, and his survival instincts are eerily acute - Nabil Sha'ath is a senior member of his Cabinet.

SHA'ATH: President Arafat knew immediately the implications of that tragedy and he felt that he cannot possibly allow events to pass by letting Israelis do what he predicted they would do: trying to tarnish him with the brush of Bin Laden terrorism, a very regular habit of the Israelis, who find it very convenient to call our national struggle for liberation against their occupation 'terrorism' and therefore he rushed seeking a sign of support for the people of US, of condemnation of such an attack and of aligning himself away from the camp that would support such an act.

ED: Arafat's instincts prove accurate. Within days the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon tells the American Secretary of State Colin Powell that Arafat is Israel's bin Laden.

Sharon vetoes a planned meeting between Arafat and his own foreign minister Shimon Peres. Peres has built a lifetime in politics on the belief that it pays to talk to the other side - feeling against Arafat will soon be running so strongly in Israel that even this elder statesman can't stem the tide.

PERES: Arafat from time to time can make right decisions but from time to time extremely erroneous decisions like when he supported at the early time Saddam Hussein. He learned quickly he cannot do it. Today he has to decide that he cannot be on both sides, a little bit of terror and a little bit of peace. It doesn't go together. And I think the pressure is upon the Palestinians to make up their mind - to which camp do they belong?

ED: But in these febrile first days of the new world order no one yet know how the cards will fall. Despite the Israeli attempts to tar Arafat with bin Laden's brush, the Palestinian leadership sees a window of opportunity opening in Washington - Nabil Sha'ath.

SHA'ATH: There was probably advice by Bush Senior and others who fought the Gulf War in back in 1990 that even if there were terrorists in the Middle East you cannot fight them without allies in the Middle East as well, and, to get allies in the Middle East especially those people who are against terror and have suffered from terror in their own you need to address the major concern which is the Palestinian problem. That was not something that the Americans had to divine. That is was something the Americans were told by everyone including the Saudis, Egyptians and everybody else.

ED: The Israeli Prime Minister's inner circle are watching the direction of American thinking with growing anxiety - Dore Gold advises Ariel Sharon on foreign policy.

GOLD: Initially it seemed that the US was simply following the pattern that it had learned during the Gulf War, and was trying to put together that coalition. At the same time, if the United States was going to pursue a coalition of states against terrorism, trying to replicate the concept of the Gulf War, it could be that Israel would have to pay the price of the glue that would hold that coalition together. And that could have put tremendous pressure on Israel to make concessions that it would regard as against its interests in order that Saudi Arabia would open up its air bases to US aircraft and other Arab states would follow suit. There were some in the United States who felt that the road to bases in the Middle East went through the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

ED: It is as if a shot of adrenaline is coursing through the veins of the world's body politic. Within a fortnight of the attacks in New York the United Nations receives an unexpected cheque in the post - 852 million dollars owed by the United States in unpaid dues, some of them going back to the Reagan years.

Scepticism about the UN and all its works runs bone-deep on Capitol Hill in Washington - is this perhaps a thank you for UN support - an inducement, even, towards future co-operation? The Secretary General, Kofi Annan, is too fleet of diplomatic foot to be drawn into any such suggestion.

ANNAN: September 11 may have helped, I think the atmosphere that was created, in the sense that we all need to stick together, and that the UN came into the centre of things and we should not forget that the resolutions that the Security Council passed and what happened in the General Assembly were historic, I mean they responded promptly and also, if we are going to win this war against terrorism, I don't think we are going to be able to do it through military means, it has to be through international law, co-operation, the sort of resolutions and conventions that this organisation has passed.

ED: At the end of the month the Security Council passes a resolution requiring member states to hit the financing of terrorism. Britain's ambassador, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, gets the chair of the UN's new anti-terrorism committee.

GREENSTOCK: I remember talking to, to London about this, David Manning the prime minister's adviser on international and national security affairs, and I had a conversation on the telephone about whether it would in any sense be possible to get a hard resolution through the security council which.. didn't just condemn terrorism, but set up a whole global set of actions to deal with terrorism, 'Are you sure, won't there be a reaction from countries that normally watch the United States very carefully and don't like to give it very much latitude'. I said 'You should sense the mood in New York, the UN has become part of New York city over this, and I think if you're ever going to get something of this nature through, you're going to get it through now'.

ED: But it is now an open secret that while America may want to keep the UN sweet, they'll fight their war on their own terms.

America's diplomatic scouts are on the prowl - seeking the allies who'll provide the bases they'll need to take on the Taliban. The Saudis were pivotal to the last American campaign in the region - the war against Iraq.

AL-JUBEIR: We were willing to provide whatever was required to make this effort a success. The United States asked for everything that it wanted and we provided it to the United States.

ED: Adel al-Jubeir, adviser to Crown Prince Abdullah. It is an extremely sensitive for the Saudis - it was after all the American presence in the country which radicalised Osama bin Laden.

AL-JUBEIR: With regards to the Saudi bases, the United States did not ask for use of our bases in the, in the war effort just from a practical perspective. They would have to launch their aircraft from Saudi Arabia, fly over Iran into Afghanistan, make a u turn, fly back over Iran and come to Saudi Arabia. The aircraft would not have the range, they would need to refuel at least twice and in most cases refuel over Iran, and this was not an option, nor was this something that the Iranians would agree to, so from that perspective our bases from an operational perspective were not useful to the US and that's why the US did not ask for it. The US had wanted to use a command and control centre in Riyadh which we agreed to from the first day. It was unfortunate that there were a lot of leaks in the newspapers about Saudi Arabia denying the US access to the command and control centre, but those leaks were just not correct at all because the day they appeared in the newspapers, there were over a hundred American officers operating out of that command and control centre.

ED: On September 26th John Bolton, a senior official at the State Department, makes a discreet visit to Uzbekistan in Central Asia.

BOLTON: Just given the geographical location of Afghanistan – completely landlocked – and with the delicacy in the Indian-Pakistan relationship, it was obviously a significant potential advantage to be able to base operations north of Afghanistan and come in south. And Uzbekistan was the principle site that they were looking at at that point. (Was it apparent by that stage that Saudi Arabia and the bases there, might prove difficult because of the sensitivities involved?) I think the military felt that we had adequate capabilities from the sea, from the south, and the real question was both for search and rescue missions and for other kinds of operations to see if there might not be some possibility of land-based forces in the north

ED: America is now seeking military alliances in the heart of the old Soviet Union, and it can't be done without Russian acquiescence.

Vladimir Putin announces a five point plan of co-operation with America and it covers just about everything Washington could hope for; intelligence sharing, open airspace, help with search and rescue missions, military aid for the Northern Alliance and, above all, a green light for Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikstan to consummate America's new Central Asian love affair. Sergei Lavrov is Russia's ambassador at the UN.

LAVROV: President Putin was very clear that he had no intention to allow or prohibit anything to sovereign states and that it was up to them, as sovereign states, to take decisions. And I think that those countries decided to help Americans, providing their territory, their air space, for the coalition members. And just recently during several visits by American officials in the region those countries reiterated that this offer stays and as long as the anti-terrorist operation continues they would provide this type of assistance. (And Russia's quite happy with that situation?) Well I don't think anybody could describe our feelings as being happy, but we are satisfied that there is a coalition, that we are part of that coalition, that our in Central Asia are, are part of that coalition because their, their co-operation is crucial to prevent the terrorist threat, still emanating from Afghanistan, to come to Russian borders.

ED: If there's a hint of anxiety there it is scarcely surprising – in his meetings with the Uzbek leadership John Bolton detects a hidden agenda.

BOLTON: The perhaps surprising outcome was the clear Uzbek desire to have the United States present, not just for the immediate needs of the Afghan operation, but over the long-term as well. (What was behind that, do you think?) I think that the Uzbeks felt that continuing American presence in Central Asia would help be a reinforcement of their independence from the former Soviet Union and would also be of assistance to them in their struggle against Islamic fundamentalism. I think a very significant step by President Putin was his decision to welcome an American presence in Central Asia for the purposes of the struggle against terrorism. But the Uzbeks didn't think they needed permission from the Russians. They thought they were going to make that decision on their own. And they did.

ED: The British government is still trying to prise open the diplomatic door to Tehran. Jack Straw flies to Iran – the first time a British foreign secretary has visited the country for two decades.

STRAW: They were taking a very constructive role in respect of terrorism on September the eleventh. They of course had suffered grievously from the instability and the terrorism of the Taleban in Afghanistan, had getting on for two million refugees come across the western border of Afghanistan into the eastern part of Iran. So they were all too well aware of the nature of the Taleban and, of course, in a sense it was their people - Shias - who were amongst others the victims of the Taleban Sunni Muslim fundamentalists.

ED: But making new friends risks making new enemies too. While he's there Mr Straw publishes an article in which he refers to "Palestine", suggesting it enjoyed the standing of a state, and apparently implies that Israel is partly to blame for inspiring terrorism.

From Tehran, Mr Straw flies to Tel Aviv – and immediately comes under fire for what he's written. The Israeli Prime Minister's foreign policy adviser Dore Gold.

GOLD: Well I recall several things about Foreign Secretary's Straw's statements at the time. I recall references to the word Palestine which every so often you hear in statements made by western diplomats. But I think what was more disturbing was the statement which tried to explain away, or understand, the hatred that must have motivated that strike at New York at the World Trade Centre and in the Pentagon in Washington. And as some western diplomats tried to understand the source of that hatred they tend to pin it on Israel or the support that the western alliance had provided with the state of Israel over the last number of decades. We of course had a different view. We analysed very carefully what was the source of the grievance of the people around bin Laden and his more passive supporters in the Arabian Peninsula. Their number one grievance was the large western presence in the Arabian Peninsula, including the US forces. Their second grievance was the whole war against Iraq. And the whole Palestinian issues was a distant third if you look at the statements made by bin Laden and his followers. Nonetheless there was a temptation in the west to blame all the hatred on Israel.. .

STRAW: No there was no suggestion about that. What there was was a phrase to the effect that we should condemn terrorism full stop but we should also seek to understand its causes and that seems to me to be an obvious and prosaic truth.

ED Ariel Sharon himself angrily declares he won't meet the British Foreign Secretary. It takes an eighty minute telephone conversation between Ariel Sharon and Tony Blair to patch things up so that Jack Straw can go ahead with his visit.-

Straw in Israel - I am looking forward very much to my trip. As I say I am not going to get involved in any textual analysis but my record in fighting terrorism in the United Kingdom and in supporting very strongly the fight against terrorism elsewhere in the world but above all here in Israel as a people have suffered more grievously from terrorism I would suggest more than any other nation is [fading] I believe one that speaks for itself.

ED: Jack Straw's Israeli counterpart is Shimon Peres.

PERES: As a Foreign Minister I am not in search of enemies right or wrong and I am not quick in accusing people and we have had a very good talk privately and I believe I trusted what he told me.

ED: October 2nd , a week after Jack Straw's visit to the Middle East. In Washington George Bush talks for the first time about a Palestinian state. This is much more than a gaffe - it marks a profound change in American policy.

On the 4th - Ariel Sharon makes an unprecedented attack on Washington. This is the nadir of relations between Israel and the United States. Sharon's advisers have told him to tone down the rhetoric, but he won't.

BBC NEWS BULLETIN: "Do not try to appease the Arabs on our expense. This is unacceptable to us. Israel will not be Czechoslovakia. Israel will fight terrorism".

ED: A coalition campaign to woo Muslims is being fought on the home front too.

Prime Minister Tony Blair's meeting with leaders of the Muslim communities: I'd like to start by making one thing absolutely clear: what happened in America was not the work of Islamic terrorists. It was not the work of Muslim terrorists. It was the work of terrorists, pure and simple.

ED: Tony Blair has called the leaders of Britain's Islamic communities to Downing Street. It is already clear to the Prime Minister adviser's Alastair Campbell that communications will play a central role in fighting the war on terrorism.

CAMPBELL: Long before September 11th we've been trying you know with limited success, and I think we have to acknowledge that it was limited, we've been trying to improve our outreach to Muslim opinion in Britain and to the, to Muslim opinion abroad. And what I think became very very clear to us after September 11th is just how limited our success in that had been and we, we set up these regular briefings for the Arab media based in London but also trying through, we set up a new Islamic media unit in the Foreign Office which is carrying on and I think now will carry on permanently, whose job is to just improve understanding with the Islamic world.

ED: The Americans are on charm offensive to Islam too - but they are arresting Muslims by the score. Some five hundred people are picked up before the end of September. More than a hundred of them are Egyptians – Ahmed Maher is the Egyptian Foreign Minister.

MAHER: We found that there was a general atmosphere of panic, people were being arrested for reasons that we didn't know, we didn't, people started missing and we did.. not know anything, and when we talked to the Americans at the time, we heard two things. One of them is that the inquest kept them so busy that they did not really have time to look to what they considered niceties of informing embassy, and secondly they said that the, the people who had been arrested had not asked to contact their embassies, but until now, we do not know exactly the number of Egyptians who are under arrest in the United States.

ED; The number of Saudis arrested is even higher – Adel al-Jubeir, who advises Crown Prince Abdullah.

AL-JUBEIR: Well September 11 was a, for Saudi Arabia a triple shock. The first shock was just the sheer horror of the crime and the second shock was when we discovered that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudi. The third shock, which to us was the most painful shock, was the reaction to Saudi Arabia in the United States and the doubts that were expressed by Americans about Saudi Arabia. America may have over reacted when it instinctively rounded up every Arab that, every Arab who was visiting the United States just because of their name or because of their nationality. We had several hundred Saudis who were arrested or detained, including a person who was on dialysis, waiting for a kidney transplant, and he was in critical condition because of his inability to go through dialysis and so we were very concerned about the welfare of our citizens and we were very upset.

ED: Yet another diplomatic front is being opened by Britain, and another diplomatic tool deployed - the special envoy. meanwhile, is opening another diplomatic front.

POWELL: I have no idea why No 10 thought of me to go to Damascus. That wasn't ever raised with me. I had been abroad, I had just got back I was asked to go down to No 10 and see the Prime Minister who said 'Look I have been talking to President Assad on the telephone. We're keen to develop the dialogue, give it a bit of meat. He suggested sending some personal envoy down, I would be grateful if you'd go and how about tomorrow'.

ED: Lord Powell is the quintessential insider. For 8 years he served Margaret Thatcher as her adviser on foreign affairs, and Downing Street has stayed in the family – his brother Jonathan is Tony Blair's chief of staff. Lord Powell is now in private life, but the Prime Minister has a job - and this most discreet servant is the man to do it.

On September 29th he slips into Damascus without attracting the attention of the press.

POWELL: We had a long meeting, nearly two hours - just myself on our side as it were and President Assad and one of his most senior officials and interpreter on the other. We spoke partly in English, partly in Arabic when he wanted to explain more precise points and more complicated points. His whole approach was one of first of all understanding the awful impact of 11 September- and he made no bones about that - that his great sympathy for the Americans at what had happened. Secondly, that everything the Taliban and bin Laden stood for was complete anathema to Syria. So no sympathy at all with what they were doing. At the same time obviously a feeling that he couldn't really just sign a blank cheque to the Americans to do whatever it was they wanted internationally.

ED: The British overture is built on the calculation that September 11th has changed things in Damascus too - after all, there is a new President recently installed there. Adnan Omran, is President Assad's Information Minister.

OMRAN: The position which was declared as 'You are either with us or with terrorism' it was difficult for us to understand the meaning of the thing because we are not with terrorism and if we are not with terrorism - which is a fact - it does not mean necessarily that we are going to be with you on your terms, because we say at that time that there is third option - we are with international law.

ED: Autumn brings the party conference season to Britain, but it is far from business as usual. Tony Blair's speech in Brighton is different this year – a bit less slick perhaps, not so much the polished product of the speechwriter's craft.

BLAIR: Tuesday October 2, 2001 Blair's Party Conference Speech: In retrospect, the Millennium marked only a moment in time. It was the events of September 11 that marked a turning point in history, where we confront the dangers of the future and assess the choices facing humankind.

ED It is a mission statement of sweeping ambition – a credo in the power of governments to reshape the world after the tragedies in New York and Washington.

BLAIR: I did very much see it as an opportunity to give some effect to the global order around us, to take action against terrorism, of course, but also to try and tackle some of the underlying causes of disaffection and disillusionment in the world, to deal with issues to do with poverty and deprivation

ED: [with Russian coming up underneath]Within two days the global Blair mission has begun; he leaves on a swing through Russia, Pakistan and India – first to Moscow to meet President Putin.

Joint press conference: PUTIN: [Russian]: “We consider our continued contacts today as a follow-on to our contacts with the United States, with the European Community, the European Union.....”

SEGUE:

BLAIR: We were very very close together and I find him a very good person to deal with, and he had no doubt whatever that America had to be given full support.

ED: That evening the two men travel out off Moscow to Vladimir Putin's dacha. Dinner is Russian stew, fish and vodka - there is a game of snooker, and President and Prime Minister take the Putin family labrador for a walk in the woods.

BLAIR: There was no diplomatic circling at all. We were just straight talking as to what the best thing to do was, and I remember during the course of the dinner that George Bush actually phoned, so we had a three way conversation between George Bush, Vladimir Putin and myself, and that was unusual too. (Is it easy to have that kind of conversation with somebody like President Putin in those rather more relaxed circumstances somewhere out in the country, rather than in the formal way that you presumably usually meet?) Yes it is, and I think it is very important that leaders do that with each other. And it is a strange paradox of today's world that in some respects governments are less powerful, but at certain critical moments, governments are very, very powerful indeed, and the personal relationships between the people are of fundamental importance, far more so than people I think could ever guess from the outside, and you need to be able to know that you can trust that other person.

ED: Tony Blair is not the only western leader beating a path to Moscow – the NATO Secretary General George Robertson is also wooing Vladimir Putin.

ROBERTSON: We both agreed to stop this as I called it 'diplomatic sword dance' about Russia being invited to join Nato. I told them that they could apply for Nato if they wanted but it wasn't handed out on a plate - you had to apply. It set an impetus going that I think will transform the NATO-Russian relationship and after we'd discussed it in the Kremlin, President Putin and I, as we left, he said in English to me, he said 'If we can make this work Mr Secretary General we'll change the world'.

ED: Tony Blair moves on to Pakistan.

NEWS BULLETIN. BBC 1 News 5.10.01. In the distance the Himalayas and on board the Prime Minister on the second leg of his whistle stop tour of the region. The purpose really of what we are trying to do is to make sure that rather than simply take action immediately, we take action that is effective, that is properly targeted and that covers all the right bases - humanitarian as well as military.

ED: President Pervez Musharraf has already signed up to America's war – the British Prime Minister comes like a plenipotentiary for the coalition, a viceroy almost, acting on America's behalf. The British ambassador in Washington, Sir Christopher Meyer, is one of the choreographers of the Blair-Bush diplomatic dance.

MEYER: Tony Blair, who seized this issue with the firmest of grasps, came to sets of conclusions with his advisers in Downing Street about the places he ought to go to. He felt he ought to visit - I cannot remember the exact itineraries now of his various visits but then the way it went was we would say to the Americans, the Prime Minister is planning to go to ABC and D, and he plans to say this, and they'd say terrific, or would you like to add this, or have you thought of going there? I mean it was done, done like that but we never, we never were in a situation where the Americans came to us and said "Awfully helpful if Tony Blair went to this country or that country". It didn't work like that.

ED: The first days of October are the last days of peace. Even then there is a faint hope that war can be averted –Pakistan's government sends a team to the Taliban to persuade them to give up Osama bin Laden and the Arabs of Al Qaeda. The American State Department awaits news of Pakistan's initiative – Richard Armitage,

ARMITAGE: They certainly thought that if they could get the Arabs out then the people in whom Pakistan had been investing for the previous almost decade, that is, the Taliban, might be able to stay. And indeed, if you'll remember, we didn't initially demand the Taliban's removal; we demanded they hand over al-Qaeda. It was only after the bombing started that we upped the ante on Mullah Omar and his colleagues, by saying they had to go as well. So the Pakistanis were using what leverage they had, and it was a very good leverage, trying to remove the foreign presence from Afghanistan and keep the Taliban in power. But the Taliban wasn't smart enough to listen to the advice they were getting from Pakistan.

ED President Musharraf believes he can trade on his government's close relations with the Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

MUSHARRAF: I always thought that we'd be able to persuade Mullah Omar. I really thought, in fact I was always going to go myself to persuade him to hand over Osama bin Laden. I thought a person would not be that senseless, and he would see reason and not harm his country and his people for the sake of one person who's pulling the whole of the country and the Afghan people to this disastrous situation, so I was quite confident I would say that he'll agree, but somehow he was much more obstinate than I thought.(You say you almost went yourself, that's very interesting, what.. made you change your mind.) All my advisers, they all thought that if I go and I come empty handed it'll be quite a, it wouldn't be good, it will be quite humiliating in fact if I went there and I return empty handed, so they thought that they should prepare the grounds and if there is a reasonable indication that something positive will happen, then only I should go, so therefore I agreed with them..

ED: October 6th – Tony Blair returns to London, mission accomplished. His communications director Alastair Campbell is with him as the plane touches down at RAF Northolt.

CAMPBELL: We got back from this trip and we'd come back from India, and we got off the plane. I think we knew by then what was going to happen, but the Prime Minister had a call booked with President Bush. We got off the plane, got into the car and of course it was the England/Greece game and in part because we want to know but also because the journalists on the plane were sort of you know constantly sending notes down to demand to know the score and what have you, so the pilot had been getting, being kept in touch and of course when we got off the plane as things stood England were not going to go through automatically. And then as we got in the car, turned on the radio and Beckham had this free kick

RADIO 5: Beckham comes forward, right-footed - up over the wall - into the net.. David Beckham has done it. David Beckham has prized a stoppage time equaliser for England... .

CAMPBELL: and he, and he scored it so I mean that was a very very happy landing and then we got into Number Ten. Prime minister had the call with President Bush. Now what was, by then what was really given that the military plans as it were were set, the discussions we were then having were, were with our opposite numbers were about you know how it was going to be announced, when, when the president would go out and speak on television, when the prime minister would do likewise and these, these big big events like that, they kind of take over themselves.

ED: It is the first reckoning of the power pecking order in the post September 11th world – and it is brutal. Your status is defined by who calls and when.

ARMITAGE: Prior to the bombing, we had the senior leadership of the administration determine who would call whom at what time prior to the initiation of hostilities. We had quite a bit of notification of Capitol Hill. It's very important for us to keep our Members of Congress involved. And we were involved in all of that. (Can you tell me, who you had to call?) No.

ROBERTSON: (7/10) (Did the Americans tell you when it was going to begin?) Yes I had a phone call from the vice President of the United States before it started.

ED: The NATO Secretary General George Robertson.

(Can you tell me what he said) He said I am calling you because very shortly from now we are going to start a military campaign against Afghanistan. I thought you would want to know in advance and I am phoning a few people to tell them that this is going to happen. He said that it is going to be a heavy attack but they have refused to give up bin Laden and refused to expel the Al Qaeda terrorist network and we have no alternative therefore in the circumstances so as the leader of our primary alliance I am letting you know. (And when he said very shortly, how shortly did he mean?) Within the hour. (So you found out really right at the last minute?) They were phoning most people at that time. I think that as Secretary General of Nato I was pretty high up in the hierarchy.

ED: The European Union's external relations commissioner Chris Patten gets the news second hand from the British foreign secretary.

PATTEN: I was in my car on the way from my home in Barnes to London City Airport on a Sunday afternoon and Jack Straw phoned me up on my mobile. (And what was your reaction?) I was interested there were, that there were as the phrase goes, British assets involved, and I was interested that it had started then because it had been rumoured to start for some time but I think to borrow a phrase, they had needed to get their ducks in a row.