ANDREW MARR:
It was the deal that terrified Israel, worried American right wingers and infuriated hardliners in Iran, but in the end, at the last minute, it didn’t happen. Senior ministers from all over the world, including our own Foreign Secretary William Hague, had gathered in Geneva for talks meant to rein in Iran’s nuclear weapons ambitions in return for an end to sanctions. Hopes rose and rose, but right at the last minute something went wrong. What was it? It’s just a few hours after the talks ended and Mr Hague joins me now - not too red-eyed, I think - from Geneva. Mr Hague, welcome. What went wrong?

WILLIAM HAGUE:
Good morning. Well there are still some gaps. They’re narrow gaps. You ask what went wrong and I would say that a great deal went right. This is a very difficult negotiation, but it’s fundamental to international peace and security over the next few years, so we have to persist. These talks have been very detailed, they’ve been about every aspect of Iran’s nuclear programme. They have made a lot of progress and there’s no doubt, as John Kerry, Secretary Kerry said here during the night, that the parties are closer together; we’re all closer together than before we had these talks. So we haven’t been wasting our time.
ANDREW MARR:
*(over)* Would it …

WILLIAM HAGUE:
But it is a formidably difficult negotiation, of course, and we are going to reconvene these talks in ten days time here in Geneva on 20th November and try to maintain that momentum. It’s vital to keep the momentum and there is a deal there. A deal is on the table and it can be done.

ANDREW MARR:
Would it be right to say that the big problem is proving that enrichment for civil purposes can’t be used for nuclear weapons and that actually nailing that is the big problem you’ve got?

WILLIAM HAGUE:
Yes, well that is right. Of course that is a very big problem. There is a lack of trust of course about Iran’s intentions and nuclear programme. Over many years, they have hidden things from the rest of the world, they have disregarded the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and disregarded the International Atomic Energy Agency. So there’s bound to be a terrible lack of trust and that means …

ANDREW MARR:
*(over)* You say that …

WILLIAM HAGUE:
… that we have to go over every detail of it. It means that we have to look at every aspect of the programme. We have to be sure exactly what would happen in a deal with Iran. But one of the other good things about this is that the so-called E3+3 countries, of whom we are one - the six countries negotiating with Iran of whom we are one - are clearly united. At the end of the negotiations last night, the final meeting that we had in the early hours of this morning, we were all saying the same thing to Iran and supporting the same deal that can be done, and that is something for the Iranians to think carefully about over the next few days.
ANDREW MARR:  
You’ve looked into the eyes of the Iranian negotiators now for a long time. Do you trust them?

WILLIAM HAGUE:  
Well let me say we have a good relationship, a working relationship, an amicable personal relationship with the Iranian Foreign Minister, Mr Zarif. He’s a tough negotiator, but he is very constructive. I do believe that he wants to solve this problem; that he is out to do a deal, he would like to do a deal with the international community. After all, Iran is under very, very serious pressure and this is one of those cases where sanctions applied by a large part of the world are having a big impact. It is putting the Iranian leadership and the Iranian economy under very serious pressure and, as long as there isn’t a deal, that pressure is going to continue. So …

ANDREW MARR:  
So …

WILLIAM HAGUE:  
… I do believe in his sincerity about it, let me put it that way …

ANDREW MARR:  
Okay.

WILLIAM HAGUE:  
… but there’s a complex power structure in Iran and many different views about this in Iran …

ANDREW MARR:  
Indeed.

WILLIAM HAGUE:  
… just as there are in our own countries.
ANDREW MARR:
And in Israel this morning, there’ll be relief and delight there hasn’t been a deal. The Prime Minister there described it as potentially a “black day for the world” and they are terrified of the Iranian bomb. Do you think that a) the deal is going to happen within the next few weeks whatever they say; and b) you will be able to get clear guarantees that will satisfy people like the Israeli government that there will not be an Iranian bomb any time soon?

WILLIAM HAGUE:
Well on the question about will it happen in the next few weeks, there is a good chance of that. But, as I say, it is a formidably difficult negotiation. I can’t say exactly when it will conclude. But we will be trying again on the 20th and 21st November, our negotiators will be trying again, so we will keep an enormous amount of energy and persistence behind solving this. Will that be a deal that will please everybody? Well no it won’t because compromises will have to be made. But I have discussed things yesterday with Israeli ministers on the telephone while I’ve been here in Geneva and put the case for the kind of deal that we are looking at making, and it is in the interests of the whole world - including Israel, including all nations of the world …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) For this to happen.

WILLIAM HAGUE:
… for us to reach a diplomatic agreement that we can be confident in on this issue, which otherwise threatens the world with nuclear proliferation and with conflict in the future.

ANDREW MARR:
Let me take you to an issue closer to home. There is a furious row going on here about the NSA and the spying revelations - the fact that so many of us are being spied on by the Americans and using digital cables and all the rest of it. Your former colleague Liam Fox has called for the Guardian, which has been instrumental in telling us all this, to be prosecuted, and I’m just wondering what your view is?
WILLIAM HAGUE:
Well that is a legal matter. That is something on which the Attorney General would decide and does decide, so you can see the Government’s position on that. That isn’t something that has happened, but …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) You allowed our … Sorry. You allowed our top three …

WILLIAM HAGUE:
(over) Sorry, go on.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) … our top three spooks (if I can put it that way) from GCHQ security services and so on to be questioned by Parliament very briefly and they spoke about, for instance, al-Qaeda rubbing their hands with glee. But that wasn’t really a proper investigation into what they were doing. It was very short and I’m just wondering a lot of people will see that more as a propaganda exercise on behalf of the security forces than a real act of invigilation or interrogation.

WILLIAM HAGUE:
Well I think that committee hearing the other day with the three chiefs of the intelligence agencies did show to the public how seriously we look at all these issues; the number of terrorist plots against the United Kingdom that have been detected, defeated or disrupted through the hard work of our intelligence agencies. And we should pay tribute to them by the way on this Remembrance Day as well …

ANDREW MARR:
Indeed.

WILLIAM HAGUE:
… because a great deal of very dangerous and difficult work goes on to protect this country by the people who work for our intelligence agencies, and people have been able to see that we take the decisions about any interception of anyone’s communications in a very strong and robust legal framework with many, many checks
and balances. Now is that only looking at part of this when you do it in a public hearing? Well yes, but remember that those same intelligence chiefs appear before that same committee in secret; and it has to be in secret because of course if we don’t do some things in secret …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Of course, of course.

**WILLIAM HAGUE:**
… then terrorists, organised criminals or hostile intelligence agencies can take advantage of our situation.

**ANDREW MARR:**
But the new programme to use fibre-optic cables to listen in on everybody’s emails and text messages and Googling and so forth - which is a huge extension … I mean it’s perhaps a natural extension of what’s been done in the past - we gather wasn’t discussed at cabinet, wasn’t discussed at the National Security Council. Now you were there. You must have known about it. Why did you not tell your colleagues about it because it seems extraordinary that something so important to you know the privacy of individual British citizens should not have been discussed at cabinet?

**WILLIAM HAGUE:**
Well first of all, of course, we don’t … I can’t confirm or deny various stories about our intelligence agencies for very good reasons, even if they’re very speculative or not true. We can’t make that clear because otherwise people go on to ask other questions …

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* The next question, of course.

**WILLIAM HAGUE:**
… which would be damaging to our national security to reveal. So I can’t do that. But are these things discussed in government? Well yes they are because I, the Foreign
Secretary, and the Home Secretary have very important responsibilities we take very seriously …

ANDREW MARR:

(over) But not … Sorry …

WILLIAM HAGUE:

(over) … that we are exercising every day …

ANDREW MARR:

(over) But not apparently in cabinet …

WILLIAM HAGUE:

(over) Sorry.

ANDREW MARR:

(over) … not apparently in cabinet or the National Security Council?

WILLIAM HAGUE:

Well that’s because we do have a particular system for dealing with these things where the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary take those decisions, overseen by commissioners who are senior judges, who report to the Prime Minister on how we carry out our tasks. And that is the political and legal framework in which these decisions about intelligence are made. Are they made in much larger groups? Well no they’re not, but that’s because so much of what we do has to be so secret in trying to protect the country from the sort of threats that I’ve just been referring to.

ANDREW MARR:

All around the world senior politicians have been pretty outraged and upset - people like Angela Merkel - to find that their own phone conversations were being bugged by the Americans. How would you feel if your phone was being bugged by the Americans?

WILLIAM HAGUE:
Well you know we all have to anticipate in the work that we do as politicians, in all countries of the world, that somebody somewhere is trying at least to look at our communications. But again I can’t go into any details …

ANDREW MARR:

(over) Of course.

WILLIAM HAGUE:

… about what we do about that in the world. Can’t go into that. I can say of course that we work very closely with other countries, including with European countries, to protect their security as well as ours; and what our intelligence agencies do very often saves lives in other countries. And I’ve seen many specific instances of that in the last three and a half years as Foreign Secretary, so it’s of benefit to other countries as well.

ANDREW MARR:

And are you personally convinced that the Snowden leaks have put our security at risk, have caused real harm to the hunt for al-Qaeda operatives and other terrorists in this country?

WILLIAM HAGUE:

Yes, what the intelligence chiefs were saying the other day is absolutely right from everything that I have seen. The Snowden allegations, let me put it that way, certainly have endangered our national security, made it harder for us to protect our country and other countries from terrorist attacks. By speculating about our capabilities, it makes it easier …

ANDREW MARR:

Alright.

WILLIAM HAGUE:

… for people who want to evade interception but are seeking to damage our country or to kill people, it makes it easier for them to evade interception. And that is something that’s very, very serious and very damaging.
ANDEW MARR:
We’re on the edge of a big commonwealth summit in Sri Lanka. Not just the Canadian Prime Minister but now also the Prime Minister of India have decided to boycott this because of the appalling accusations made against the governments there at the end of their civil war. Do you understand that boycott and is there any chance of Britain joining it?

WILLIAM HAGUE:
We do understand that, but we’re not joining that. By the way, the Indian Foreign Minister will be attending, so in the case of some of these countries although their prime ministers are not going, other ministers are going. We have decided that if we were to stay away from this meeting in Sri Lanka next week, it would damage the commonwealth without changing things positively in Sri Lanka. We need to be there at the commonwealth meetings. We’re discussing there the future of international development, how we’re helping developing countries. I want to discuss with the whole commonwealth our efforts to prevent sexual violence and conflict. We can only do that if we’re there. And yes …

ANDEW MARR:
(over) If you’re there. And are you going with a heavy heart and are you going to read the riot act to some of your Sri Lankan counterparts?

WILLIAM HAGUE:
Well we are going to say well Sri Lanka is in the spotlight, so let’s make full use of it being in the spotlight. Rather than sit in London and talk about it, we will be there in Sri Lanka. The Prime Minister is going to visit the north. He will be the first head of government from any country, since Sri Lankan independence in 1948, to go to the north.

ANDEW MARR:
Right.

WILLIAM HAGUE:
I will be visiting places to promote reconciliation in Sri Lanka, talking about our
efforts there to prevent sexual violence in conflict. It will make more impact in Sri Lanka with the Prime Minister and me there doing that than sitting in our offices in London.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Finally, in Geneva you’ve been meeting and talking to your Russian counterparts as well. Have you raised the question of the Greenpeace activists who are trying to save the Arctic and have been banged up for hooliganism for many years in Russian prisons? There’s a lot of worry here about that.

**WILLIAM HAGUE:**
Yes we have been raising that over the last six weeks or so since this happened, and I’ve discussed it in the last week with the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov. The Prime Minister has discussed it with President Putin. So they’re very clear about our concerns. They have ensured that we have consular access to the individuals who have been arrested in Russia, so we’re keeping in close touch with the people concerned, we’re keeping their families informed. And, yes, the Russians are very well aware at the highest level of our concerns about this case.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Foreign Secretary, thank you very much for joining us this morning.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**