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THE SADDAM DOSSIER

Has Blair made the case for war?

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Labour MPs split over Iraq dossier

● 56 rebel against Blair's war policy

● Bush cites evidence to urge regime change

By Philip Webster, Roland Watson and Greg Hurst

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The rebellion came on a technical motion at the end of an all-day emergency debate after publication of the Government's dossier on President Saddam Hussein's arsenal.

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plain that they would go along with Mr Blair so long as he stayed within the ambit of the UN, where efforts were stepped up yesterday to secure a new resolution requiring Saddam to decommission his weapons within months.

If Mr Blair later breaks with the UN and goes along with an American-led campaign to oust the Iraqi leader he seems certain to face the biggest trouble of his leadership.

Mr Bush's reaction yesterday illustrated the problems ahead and will be grasped by Labour MPs who claim that Mr Blair is too close to the US Administration. Speaking after a Cabinet meeting last night, Mr Bush urged the Security Council to pass a strong



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The rebellion came on a technical motion at the end of an emergency debate after the publication of the Government dossier on President Saddam Hussein's arsenal.

The dossier, based on secret intelligence reports, suggests that Iraq could deploy chemical or biological weapons within 45 minutes of an order being given, that it is developing longer range missiles that could threaten Europe, and that Saddam's agents are trying to buy African uranium to make a nuclear bomb. The Times has learnt that they have approached 13 countries.

Iraq greeted the document with derision. Amar al-Saadi, one of Saddam's top aides, described it as a "hotchpotch of half-truths, lies, short-sighted and naive allegations" and urged Mr Blair to send it to the UN so that the weapons inspectors could check its claims for themselves.

President Bush said it contained enough evidence to warrant the toppling of Saddam.

That view was distinctly off-message in the eyes of many Labour MPs, European countries and the UN and it brought home the difficulties the Prime Minister faces in persuading his party and the country to support his approach to Iraq.

In the Commons, Mr Blair limited the size of the Labour rebellion by highlighting the differences between Washington and London. He insisted that disarmament rather than the overthrow of Saddam was his objective and promised to follow the UN route in dealing with Iraq. White regime change would be "wonderful", the Prime Minister made plain that that was not the object of the exercise.

Even so, war critics felt sufficiently strongly to force a division on a procedural motion and expose stark divisions on the back benches. Fifty-three Labour MPs voted against the Government, with three more acting as tellers.

While the revolt was far smaller than had been predicted by its leaders two weeks ago, it was still too big for the comfort of the Labour leadership and probably understated the magnitude of concern among the party's MPs. Others would have abstained had they been ordered to vote by the whips, but in the event many potential abstainers went home early.

During the debate one Labour MP after another made

plain that they would go along with Mr Blair so long as he stayed within the ambit of the UN, where efforts were stepped up yesterday to secure a new resolution requiring Saddam to decommission his weapons within months.

If Mr Blair later breaks with the UN and goes along with an American-led campaign to oust the Iraqi leader he seems certain to face the biggest trouble of his leadership.

Mr Bush's reaction yesterday illustrated the problems ahead and will be grasped by Labour MPs who claim that Mr Blair is too close to the US Administration. Speaking after a Cabinet meeting last night, Mr Bush urged the Security Council to pass a strong resolution holding Saddam to account, adding: "If they are unable to do so, the United States and our friends will act, because we believe in peace. We want to keep the peace. We don't trust this man."

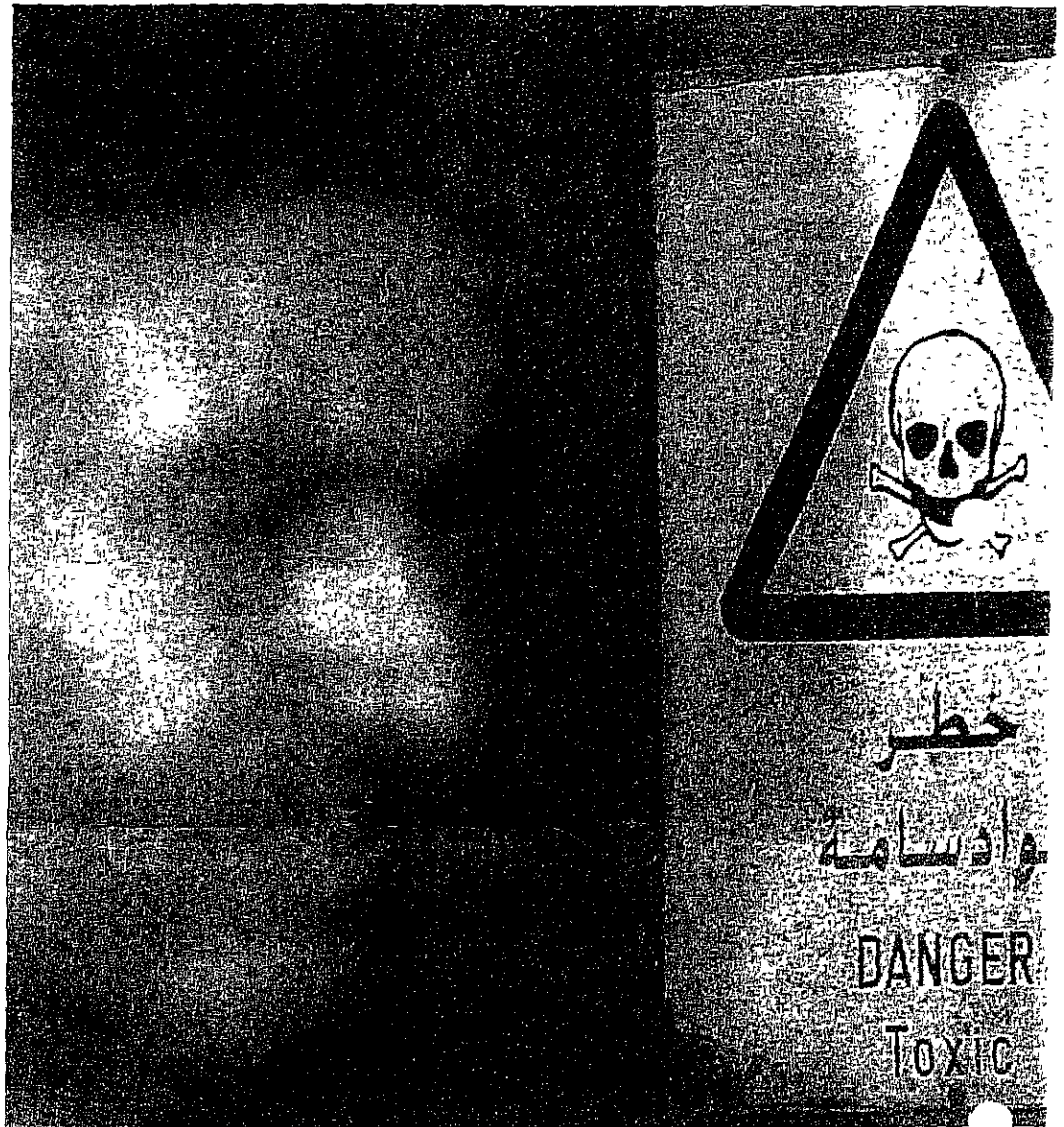
In the Commons, Mr Blair said: "I defy anyone to say that this cruel and sadistic dictator should be allowed any possibility of getting his hands on more chemical, biological or even nuclear weapons. His weapons of mass destruction programme is active, detailed and growing."

He urged MPs to read the dossier for which he has written a foreword saying: "Unless we face up to the threat, not only do we risk undermining the authority of the UN, whose resolutions he defies, but more importantly and in the longer term we place at risk the lives and prosperity of our own people."

Mr Blair also promised that the Commons would be consulted if later decisions were made about military action, but he gave a clear hint that MPs would not be asked to give advance approval for an attack.

He insisted the Government was not seeking war, but said that having raised the issue of disarming Saddam, the matter could not go unresolved. "If the international community having made the call for his disarmament, now, at this moment, at the point of decision, shrugs its shoulders and walks away, he will draw the conclusions dictators face with a weakening will always draw: that the international community will talk but not act, will use diplomacy but not force, and we know, again from our history, that diplomacy not backed by the threat of force has never worked with dictators and never will work."

The Government's dossier not only claims that Iraq has chemical weapons that could be fired within an hour, but also that it is pressing ahead with the development of a new generation of missiles capable of striking Europe. Continued on page 2, col 8



A worker at the al-Qa'qa chemical plant near Baghdad yesterday. Saddam is said to be rebuilding weapon stocks and producing biological

Saddam's nuclear shopping tour

By Michael Evans and Richard Beeston

IRAQI agents have been scouring countries across Africa for uranium to help Saddam Hussein to build nuclear weapons, The Times has learnt.

The dossier released by the Government yesterday noted in passing that Baghdad had recently tried to acquire "significant quantities of uranium from Africa". But what it left out was evidence supplied to the Cabinet Office's Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) showing that Saddam's agents have secretly visited a number of African countries, 13 of which have uranium as a natural resource.

Uranium, once enriched, could form the core of a nuclear bomb, but there is no evidence yet that Saddam has succeeded in acquiring it. "If Iraq had succeeded in buying uranium from Africa, the dossier



would have said so" one Whitenall source said. The Iraqis are known to have targeted the war-ravaged Democratic Republic of Congo, though no uranium has been extracted there for several

The Saddam dossier

Mr Blair carries the heavy responsibility of persuading Americans that Europe is not hostile to them

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years. The mine that produced the uranium used in the American bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 is in an area controlled by Zambian troops. The dossier draws on top-

secret intelligence, and refers only generally to "Africa" as a potential source of uranium, possibly because of the fear that too detailed an insight might expose the sources. The Prime Minister has said that although an unprecedented amount of intelligence material pushed in the document, some of the most sensitive information has been excluded.

The dossier states that Iraq is producing biological and chemical weapons that can be deployed in 45 minutes, that it is developing missiles with a range of 1000km (600 miles), and that Saddam may have given his son Qusay the power to order the use of such weapons.

What the document does not do is link Saddam to Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda and the September 11 attacks. The intelligence committee has concluded that Saddam has no sympathy for Islamic fundamentalism.

INSIDE Buyer's market

Golf, Sven and the art of multi-ego maintenance

By Simon Barnes

12 raging individualists to pull in the same direction

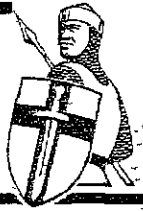
"Wow man, I've just sussed out the Universe. But it's too

look after for the weekend. Some love it, others can't cope at all

our of his usual sacred routines for practice, gym work, trying on new woolsies etc etc

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Dossier on the world's most evil man



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