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Chairman, Joint Intelligence Committee

Jp177

JIC MEMBERS

IRAQI WMD: PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF INTELLIGENCE MATERIAL

1. Some of you will have seen Alastair Campbell's note to me of 9 September setting out the broad, proposed structure for the "dossier" on Iraqi WMD which is now under active presentation. Alastair did not refer to an additional section, which I have agreed with him, would be considered for inclusion in the "dossier". This would give an account of the JIC assessment of developments in Iraqi WMD programmes since UNSCOM inspectors were withdrawn in late 1998. On present plans, within the "dossier", it would follow the section setting out the intelligence-based account of what the Iraqis had been doing since late 1998 and where they have now got to in terms of capabilities. The JIC section would demonstrate that this question has been the subject of continuous assessment throughout the four years and has been brought to the regular attention of the Government.
2. I attach a self-explanatory first draft for the proposed section. You will see that it draws explicitly on the conclusions of four full JIC assessments and in some cases refers to intelligence items in the papers themselves. Some of these items have already been cleared by the relevant Agencies for inclusion in the previous section of the "dossier". We are seeking clearance for the remaining items through the normal channels and will retain or remove them accordingly.
3. I have consulted Historical and Records Section of the Cabinet Office about this proposal. Their initial advice is that a decision to release extracts from these Cabinet Committee documents does not undermine the right of the Government to continue to withhold the papers as a whole on the grounds that the assessments are exempted documents which would it not be in the public interest to release. I have asked Historical and Records Section to confirm this advice and am copying this note, without the attachment, to Alan Glennie.