

50. This report was raised at the JIC meeting on 4 September, which was considering an assessment titled *Iraqi use of Chemical and Biological Weapons – Possible Scenarios*. The intelligence had not been included in the original draft of the assessment because the SIS report was issued after the meeting of the Current Intelligence Group where the assessment was drafted. The JIC asked for recent intelligence, which it described as important and valuable¹⁵, and which included the 30 August SIS report, to be assessed and included in the assessment. The Assessments Staff then further discussed the intelligence with the DIS and SIS before the revised JIC Assessment was circulated for comment. The JIC formally issued the assessment on 9 September. The assessment contained the following reference to the readiness time in the section sub-titled Chemical and Biological Capabilities in the main body of the assessment (it was not repeated in the assessment's Key Judgements):

"Intelligence also indicates that chemical and biological munitions could be with military units and ready for firing within 20–45 minutes"

51. The Committee questioned the Chief of the SIS on the intelligence and its sourcing. He told us that the sourcing was regarded as reliable. The senior military officer named and quoted in the report was in a position to comment on the deployment of chemical and biological weapons.

52. We then questioned the JIC Chairman and the Assessments Staff over the use of this piece of intelligence in the 9 September assessment. The JIC Chairman confirmed that this was the only piece of intelligence the UK had with definite times associated with the deployment or use of chemical or biological munitions by Iraq. The Assessments Staff stated that they, and the people they had consulted, did not know what munitions the Iraqi officer was referring to or their status. Nor did they know from where and to where munitions might be moved. They assessed that the Iraqi officer was referring to the time needed to move the biological and chemical battlefield munitions from where they were held by Iraqi Security units in forward-deployed storage sites to pre-designated military units.

53. We were told that this was consistent with the Assessments Staff's and the DIS experts' understanding of the Iraqi military and its capability to use weapons. The assessed intelligence was included in the draft JIC Assessment¹⁶ as follows:

"Intelligence also indicates that from forward-deployed storage sites, chemical and biological munitions could be with military units and ready for firing within 45 minutes"

¹⁵ Minutes of JIC Meeting 4 September 2002

¹⁶ Draft JIC Assessment of 5 September 2002