

THE ASSESSMENTS OCTOBER 2002 TO MARCH 2003

117 The JIC produced eight assessments on Iraq-related matters during the period October 2002 to March 2003. The assessment of Iraq's WMD capability remained constant, although additional intelligence became available on the action being taken by the Iraqis to conceal and deceive the UN inspectors. Only limited intelligence was available on Saddam's plans to use chemical and biological weapons. Additionally, the JIC assessed the likelihood of terrorist organisations obtaining WMD technology, agents or munitions from Iraq and the likelihood of Iraq-sponsored terrorist attacks.

UN Inspections and the Iraqi Chemical and Biological Capability

118 The key judgement of the 11 October 2002 JIC Assessment was that Saddam was determined to retain Iraq's proscribed weapons programmes. It also judged that he was confident that he could prevent the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), operating on the basis of existing UNSCRs, from finding any evidence before military options started to close off in spring 2003. Concealment and dispersal of sensitive items were the main elements of Iraq's strategy for dealing with UNMOVIC, but if inspections were conducted under a tougher regime, and if specific intelligence on WMD locations was forthcoming, UNMOVIC might find evidence of Iraq's WMD programmes. The JIC did not expect a repeat of the blatant Iraqi policy of intimidation and obstruction that the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) encountered but the JIC assessed that if inspectors came close to uncovering evidence of WMD, Iraq would employ a wide range of tactics to delay their work.

119 The Assessments Staff produced an intelligence update on 27 November 2002. It reiterated an earlier JIC Assessment³⁰ that if Saddam were to be faced with the likelihood of military defeat and removal from power, he would be unlikely to be deterred from using chemical and biological weapons by any diplomatic or military means.

120. It was assessed that Saddam was prepared to order missile strikes against Israel, with chemical or biological warheads, in order to widen the war should hostilities begin. Saddam had also identified Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar and Kuwait as targets. The update also contained recent intelligence that Saddam would use Chemical or Biological Weapons (CBW) if allied forces approached Baghdad, if Basra, Kirkuk and Mosul fell to allied control, or if Iraqi military units rebelled.

121 In December 2002, the JIC assessed that Iraq's ability to use CBW might be constrained by its available stocks of agent and the difficulty of producing more while UN inspectors were present. The JIC acknowledged that it did not know the extent of Iraq's stocks of CBW.

³⁰ JIC Assessment 9 September 2002