

down it is up and running

The dossier is based on the work of the British Joint Intelligence Committee. For over 60 years, beginning just prior to WWII, the JIC has provided intelligence assessments to British Prime Ministers. Normally its work is secret. Unusually, because it is important we explain our concerns over Saddam to the British people, we have decided to disclose these assessments. I am aware, of course, that people are going to have to take elements of this on the good faith of our intelligence services. But this is what they are telling me the British Prime Minister and my senior colleagues. The intelligence picture they paint is one accumulated over the past four years. It is extensive, detailed and authoritative.

It concludes that Iraq has chemical and biological weapons, that Saddam has continued to produce them, that he has existing and active military plans for the use of chemical and biological weapons, which could be activated within 45 minutes, including against his own Shia population, and that he is actively trying to acquire nuclear weapons capability.

On chemical weapons, the dossier shows that Iraq continues to produce chemical agent for chemical weapons, has rebuilt previously destroyed production plants across Iraq, has bought dual-use chemical facilities, has retained the key personnel formerly engaged in the chemical weapons programme, and has a serious ongoing research programme into weapons production, all of it well funded.

In respect of biological weapons, again production of biological agents has continued, facilities formerly used for biological weapons have been rebuilt, equipment has been purchased for such a programme, and again Saddam has

retained the personnel who worked on it, pre 1991. In particular, the UN inspection regime discovered that Iraq was trying to acquire mobile biological weapons facilities which are easier to conceal. Present intelligence confirms they have now got such facilities. The biological agents we believe Iraq can produce include anthrax, botulinum, toxin, aflatoxin and ricin. All eventually result in excruciatingly painful death.

As for nuclear weapons, Saddam's previous nuclear weapons programme was shut down by the inspectors, following disclosure by defectors of the full, but hidden, nature of it. That programme was based on gas centrifuge uranium enrichment. The known remaining stocks of uranium are now held under supervision by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

But we now know the following. Since the departure of the inspectors in 1998, Saddam

BBC/30/0027