

Dossier foreword by TB

The document published today is the work of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which is made up of the heads of the UK's three Intelligence and Security Agencies, the Chief of Defence Intelligence, and senior officials from those government departments. The JIC provides regular assessments to me on a wide range of foreign policy and international security issues.

Its work, like the material it ?, is largely secret. It is unprecedented for them to publish this kind of document, but in light of the debate about Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), I wanted to share with the British public the reasons why I believe this issue to be a current and serious threat to the UK's national interests.

In recent months, I have been increasingly alarmed by the evidence from inside Iraq that despite sanctions, despite the damage done to his capability in the past, and despite the UNSCR's expressly outlawing it, Saddam Hussein is continuing to develop WMD, and the ability to inflict real damage upon the region, and the stability of the world.

Gathering intelligence inside Iraq is not easy. Saddam's is one of the most secretive and dictatorial regimes in the world. So I believe people will understand if the agencies cannot be specific about the sources, human and technical, which have formed the judgements in this document. I and other ministers have been briefed in detail on the sources, and are satisfied as to their authority, and the authority of the information they have disclosed.

What I believe they established beyond doubt is that Saddam has continued to produce chemical and biological weapons that he continues in his efforts to develop nuclear weapons, and to extend the range of his ballistic missile programme.

This picture is every month has become more not less worrying. Faced with the picture put before me on seeing a succession of JIC papers on the subject, as Prime Minister I have a choice: do I ignore this evidence; or do I act to address the threat?

I am in no doubt that the threat is serious, and current; that he has made progress on WMD and that he has to be stopped.

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