

MEMORANDUM TO THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Much of the debate on the issues under investigation by the Committee concerns two documents presented by the Government on Iraq.

It is important to separate out these two documents. They are not comparable in terms of their scale, breadth or intended impact. The first was vital in explaining the reasons for the Government's concern about Iraq, the WMD programmes and its persistent refusal to accept UN obligations. The second was not.

The first, the dossier entitled "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction, the Assessment of the British Government", was a very substantial document which was presented to a recalled House of Commons by the Prime Minister in September 2002. It involved detailed planning and preparation over many months. Initially, the FCO was in the lead on this project. However, once the decision was taken that intelligence should form the basis of the dossier, the Joint Intelligence Committee took the lead on it and its Chairman took responsibility for drawing up the contents which were regularly reviewed as the document evolved. The Prime Minister's officials, and senior FCO officials were involved with the Chairman of the JIC in discussions upon the content, the planning of the document, and its presentation. That has never been an issue. I had several discussions with the Chairman of the JIC on presentational issues arising from the dossier and, in common with other officials, made drafting suggestions as the document evolved. I also submitted to him suggestions made by the Prime Minister on a draft which he read. The Prime Minister's suggestions, and mine, were for the JIC Chairman to accept or reject as he saw fit. It was the Chairman of the JIC who signed off the final version of the dossier.

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