

LINES TO TAKE

- Basis for claim that some chemical and biological weapons could be used in 45 minutes?

An established and reliable source – not a defector – who had been reporting to us secretly for some years. The specific information on the 45 minutes readiness of some CBW weapons came from a well-placed senior military officer. Intelligence from other sources had already indicated that Iraq possessed such weapons and had command and control arrangements in place for their use.

- 45 minute claim inserted at last minute on orders from No 10?

Quite untrue. The intelligence only became available at the end of August. It was discussed by the JIC in the first week of September, included straightaway in classified JIC assessments, and incorporated thereafter in the government's public assessment.

- Intelligence experts said the 45 minute claim was unsound and should not be used?

Members of the UK intelligence community discussed this particular point and the JIC used it in its classified work. It was subsequently drawn on in preparing the government's public assessment. The final text of the public assessment was also approved by the JIC.

- Why use an uncorroborated report?

Because it came from a reliable and established source, quoting a well-placed senior officer. The same standard was used for the public and classified assessments. Against the background of other reporting at the time, the reporting was assessed as credible.

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