

60. We conclude that it is very odd indeed that the Government asserts that it was not relying on the evidence which has since been shown to have been forged, but that eight months later it is still reviewing the other evidence. The assertion "... that Iraq sought the supply of significant amounts of uranium from Africa ..." should have been qualified to reflect the uncertainty. We recommend that the Government explain on what evidence it relied for its judgment in September 2002 that Iraq had recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa. We further recommend that in its response to this Report the Government set out whether it still considers the September dossier to be accurate in what it states about Iraq's attempts to procure uranium from Africa, in the light of subsequent events.

### *The 45 minutes claim*

61. The Committee has for some time been conducting a major, ongoing inquiry into Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism, in which it has included discussion of the legal and moral case for military action against the Iraqi regime.<sup>93</sup> A further Report of that inquiry will be published shortly. This separate inquiry into The Decision to go to War in Iraq was prompted by specific concerns that Parliament had been misled by the Government when being asked to approve military action against the Iraqi regime in March 2003. Allegations to that effect received wide coverage in the print and broadcast media in early June 2003, including a claim by BBC reporter Andrew Gilligan that a source within the intelligence community had told him that the September dossier had been changed in the week before publication, by the insertion of the suggestion that Iraqi forces were able to deploy chemical or biological weapons within 45 minutes of receiving an order to do so. We consider this and Mr Gilligan's other allegations below.<sup>94</sup> In this section, we focus on the credibility of the 45 minutes claim, as it was made in the dossier.

62. The FCO told us that the intelligence on which the claim was based came from "an established, reliable and longstanding line of reporting."<sup>95</sup> The raw intelligence was received by the Secret Intelligence Service in August 2002, and was assessed by the JIC in early September.<sup>96</sup> It was included in the first draft of the dossier after responsibility for preparing that document had passed from the FCO to the JIC Chairman, dated 10 September.<sup>97</sup>

63. It is known that the claim rested on a single source.<sup>98</sup> It appears that no evidence was found which corroborated the information supplied by the source, although it was consistent with a pattern of evidence of Iraq's military capability over time.<sup>99</sup> Neither are we aware that there was any corroborating evidence from allies through the intelligence-sharing machinery.<sup>100</sup> It is also significant that the US did not refer to the claim publicly.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Seventh Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 2001-02, *Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism*, HC 384, and Second Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 2002-03, *Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism*, HC 196

<sup>94</sup> See paras 72 to 86

<sup>95</sup> Ev 10

<sup>96</sup> HC Deb, 4 June 2003, col 193

<sup>97</sup> Ev 10

<sup>98</sup> Ev 61

<sup>99</sup> Ev 61

<sup>100</sup> Q 736 (Jack Straw)