

FCO's representative on the JIC, who told us that the original source of the claim had referred not to missiles, but to weapons.<sup>108</sup>

67. Dr Inch played down the significance of the claim:

If you have your shells, bombs or missiles filled with chemical and they are ready for release, it does not seem to me to make any difference whether it is a chemical weapon or conventional artillery. It is ready to be fired. ... I do not understand why it was put in. I cannot see the significance of it other than saying that it is a terrible situation. If you are at war, all weapons have to be deployable fairly quickly—unless they were suggesting at that stage that the chemicals were stored way back and that they had to be brought up.<sup>109</sup>

68. Writing in the *Times*, Bronwen Maddox argued that “it was simply stupid of Blair” to have included the claim in the dossier, adding that

In one sense, the allegation is simply a banal military estimate of the length of time for a launch command to pass down the chain. It is plausible that the Intelligence services made such a claim. But it is hard to imagine that any Intelligence agent would have intended that calculation to be presented as flamboyantly as it was in the dossier, dominating the short foreword with its drama to justify the claim of imminent threat.<sup>110</sup>

69. Jack Straw told us

I do not happen to regard the 45 minute statement having the significance which has been attached to it, neither does anybody else, indeed nobody round this table, if I say so with respect. It was scarcely mentioned in any of the very large number of debates that took place in the House, evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, all of the times I was questioned on the radio and television, scarcely mentioned at all.<sup>111</sup>

This answer begs the question why the 45 minutes claim was highlighted by the Prime Minister when he presented the dossier to the House, and why it was given such prominence in the dossier itself, being mentioned no fewer than four times, including in the Prime Minister's foreword and in the executive summary? We have not seen a satisfactory answer to that question. We have been told that the entire document, including the executive summary, was prepared by the Chairman of the JIC, except for the foreword, which he approved.<sup>112</sup> We note with disappointment that we were unable to find out why Mr Scarlett chose to give the 45 minutes claim such prominence, as we have been prevented from questioning him.

<sup>108</sup> Qq 1281–1284

<sup>109</sup> Qq 259, 262

<sup>110</sup> Honesty or judgement Blair fails on one or the other, *The Times*, 5 June 2003

<sup>111</sup> Q 737

<sup>112</sup> Qq 732, 775, 1187

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