

[Select Committee on Foreign Affairs](#) [Written Evidence](#)**Memorandum from Richard Heller**

LETTER TO THE CHAIRMAN FROM RICHARD HELLER

I was glad to hear that the Select Committee is to hold an inquiry into the pre-war assessments of the threat from Saddam Hussein and their public presentation. I hope you will not mind a few suggestions for lines of questioning. I hope that they do not go wide of the Committee's terms of reference.

(1) When did the Prime Minister first commit Britain, in principle, to participate in an armed attack on Iraq? What discussion did he have with the Americans on the justification for such an attack?

(2) What conditions, if any, did he set for the actual engagement of our forces (eg did he say "with the support of a UN resolution" or "on internationally accepted proof that Saddam was in possession of weapons of mass destruction")?

(3) Arising from (2) did the Prime Minister hold out to the American administration any kind of promise, or express a high degree of confidence, that the UN would in fact authorize war to enforce the resolutions on WMD?

(4) Did the Prime Minister consider the possibility that the allies had already secured effective control over Saddam Hussein by the return of the UN weapons inspectors and the threat of war? Did he ever present the case for maintenance of this containment policy to the American administration (if necessary by presenting it as a great victory for American determination)?

(5) Was there any discussion by the allies of a making a humanitarian case for military action against Saddam Hussein, as an alternative to WMD? They took no action to enforce UN resolution 57/2332 on human rights in Iraq before the war and it was not mentioned in the Attorney General's legal defence of the war. The humanitarian case has been developed after the war: it is of course incompatible with the case based on weapons of mass destruction.

(6) Was the Attorney General invited to review the quality of the intelligence assessments before they were published as dossiers, given

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that they might be needed as evidence to justify war?

(7) What provision did the allies make for the capture, secure and investigation of alleged sites of weapons of mass destruction in the planning of the war itself, and the presentation of any discoveries to the United Nations and international opinion?

There are two more fundamental questions to be answered about the war.

First, did the government ever consider a policy of "reasoned opposition" to the American plans for war in Iraq, and how to communicate it to the American people and Congress? Such opposition could have enjoyed widespread support in the United States given Tony Blair's high reputation as an ally after September 11 and the Afghan war. He might have said "We understand the administration's case but we still think it better that the allies continue to fight directly against Osama Bin Laden and other terrorist groups, and to complete the unfinished business in Afghanistan." Did he consider alternative uses for British forces, in support of American and Western objectives, in other theatres beside Iraq? (This is a particularly interesting question in view of Sir Michael Boyce's statement that after Iraq the British army is incapable of fighting another major war for two years).

Second, what benefit for Britain did the Prime Minister seek, and actually obtain, from our participation in the war? *The Americans would have fought the war without us.* All its declared benefits—ending the threat from Saddam, liberating the Iraqi people—would have happened without us. What difference did Britain make to the outcome of the war?

Richard Heller

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