



Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Written Evidence

Memorandum from Dr David Morrison

1. The purpose of this submission is to describe a number of instances when, in my opinion, the Government presented inaccurate or incomplete information to Parliament in the period leading up to military action in Iraq. These instances are primarily concerned with Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

ERRORS OF FACT IN SEPTEMBER DOSSIER

2. There are two errors of fact in the dossier *Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government* published on 24 September 2002. Both are in Part 2 of the dossier (History of UN Weapons Inspections).

3. First, on page 34, paragraph 5, on UNSCOM access to presidential sites:

"In December 1997 [the head of UNSCOM] Richard Butler reported to the UN Security Council that Iraq had created a new category of sites, 'Presidential' and 'sovereign', from which it claimed that UNSCOM inspectors would henceforth be barred. The terms of the ceasefire in 1991 foresaw no such limitation. However, Iraq consistently refused to allow UNSCOM inspectors access to any of these eight Presidential sites. [my emphasis] Many of these so-called 'palaces' are in fact large compounds, which are an integral part of Iraqi counter-measures designed to hide weapons material."

4. In document S/1998/326 on the UNSCOM website, there is a report by Charles Duelfer, which says:

"The initial entry to the eight presidential sites in Iraq . . . was performed by mission UNSCOM 243 during the period from 25 March to 4 April 1998. . .

"Co-operation from Iraqi counterparts was satisfactory. The presence of senior diplomatic observers worked out generally well. Of particular note was the constructive presence of [Iraqi] Presidential Secretary Mr Abid Hamoud and Lt General Amer Rashid, the Minister for Oil, during the visits."

5. In other words, contrary to what the dossier says, access was allowed to all 8 sites. This was confirmed by the Foreign Office in a written answer to Paul Flynn MP on 4 February:

"Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

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whether UNSCOM 243 entered Iraqi presidential palaces between March and April 1998. [94724]

"Mr. Mike O'Brien: Yes."

6. This error is of some importance, since the alleged exclusion of the inspectors from these sites gives credence to the view that Iraq was hiding something there that it didn't want inspectors to see. To reinforce this proposition, the next page of the dossier (p 35) contains a map of an unnamed presidential site with Buckingham Palace and its grounds superimposed on it to the same scale. The purpose of the map was, I presume, to convey the impression that there is more to this presidential site than just serving the needs of a head of state. And there are eight presidential sites in Iraq. Of course, had an outline of Balmoral been superimposed instead, the impression would have been entirely different.

7. The Government has known about this error at least since early January, when I wrote to the Foreign Secretary suggesting that a correction be published. A copy of my letter is in Annex A. I did not receive a reply and, to the best of my knowledge, the Government made no effort to publicise a correction.

8. Of itself, this error is not of great importance in the argument for or against war, but if the authors of the dossier did not manage to get known facts right it doesn't inspire confidence that they are expert at assessing intelligence.

9. The second error of fact is on page 39, paragraph 13. There the dossier speaks of "the effective ejection of UN inspectors" from Iraq in December 1998. The inspectors were not ejected by Iraq: they were withdrawn by Richard Butler at the request of the US Government because of the imminence of Desert Fox, the four-day US/UK bombing campaign on Iraq, as the following extract from his book *Saddam Defiant* shows:

"I received a telephone call from US Ambassador [to the UN] Peter Burleigh inviting me for a private conversation at the US mission. . . . Burleigh informed me that on instructions from Washington it would be prudent to take measures to ensure the safety and security of UNSCOM staff presently in Iraq.' . . . I told him that I would act on his advice and remove my staff from Iraq." (p 224)

10. This is one of the many instances in the lead up to war, in which the Government misrepresented what happened in December 1998 to cause the UN inspectors to leave Iraq. Another example was the Prime Minister's interview with Jeremy Paxman on *Newsnight* on 6 February 2002.

(Alistair Campbell stated categorically on Channel 4 News on 27 June that: "There were no errors of fact in the WMD dossier in September

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2002". Clearly, that was not an accurate statement.)

THE EVIDENCE OF GENERAL HUSSEIN KAMEL

11. The final UNSCOM report in January 1999 emphasises the importance to its work of the defection of General Hussein Kamel, the former director of Iraq's Military Industrialisation Corporation, in charge of Iraq's weapons programme. Referring to him it says:

"... the overall period of the Commission's disarmament work must be divided into two parts, separated by the events following the departure from Iraq, in August 1995, of Lt General Hussein Kamal. This resulted in the provision to the Commission of an extensive cache of documents on Iraq's prohibited programmes."

12. He was interviewed by a joint UNSCOM/IAEA team in Amman on 22 August 1995, but it was not until February 2003 that a transcript of the interview became public knowledge, thanks to Dr Glen Rangwala (see www.casi.org.uk/info/unscom950822.pdf).

13. In the interview, Kamel says:

"I ordered destruction of all chemical weapons. All weapons—biological, chemical, missile, nuclear were destroyed" (p 13).

Earlier (p 7), he described anthrax as the "main focus" of Iraq's biological programme and when asked "were weapons and agents destroyed?", he replied: "nothing remained".

Of missiles, he said: "not a single missile left but they had blueprints and molds [*sic*] for production. All missiles were destroyed." (p 8)

14. The Government's dossier mentions the importance of the defection of Hussein Kamel, but it does not mention that he told UN inspectors that, on his orders, all of Iraq's proscribed weapons were destroyed. In my opinion, the information presented by the Government on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction was therefore incomplete.

UNACCOUNTED FOR MATERIAL

15. Ministers rarely if ever made clear that weapons and weapons-related material, which UN inspectors could not account for, did not necessarily exist. As Hans Blix said to the Security Council on 5 June 2003:

"... it is not justified to jump to the conclusion that something exists just because it is unaccounted for."

16. For example, in his statement on the September dossier to the House of Commons on 24 September, the Prime Minister said:

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"As the dossier sets out, we estimate on the basis of the UN's work that there were up to 360 tonnes of bulk chemical warfare agents, including 1.5 tonnes of VX nerve agent; up to 3,000 tonnes of precursor chemicals; growth media sufficient to produce 26,000 litres of anthrax spores; and over 30,000 special munitions for delivery of chemical and biological agents. All of this was missing and unaccounted for."

17. In my opinion, most people reading that would conclude that we had it on UN authority that on 24 September 2002 Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons, plus material for making more, when all the UN inspectors have ever said is that such weapons and material have not been accounted for.

18. On 18 March, the Prime Minister told the House of Commons:

"When the inspectors left in 1998, they left unaccounted for 10,000 litres of anthrax; a far-reaching VX nerve agent programme; up to 6,500 chemical munitions; at least 80 tonnes of mustard gas, and possibly more than 10 times that amount; unquantifiable amounts of sarin, botulinum toxin and a host of other biological poisons; and an entire Scud missile programme. We are asked now seriously to accept that in the last few years—contrary to all history, contrary to all intelligence—Saddam decided unilaterally to destroy those weapons. I say that such a claim is palpably absurd."

19. Think about that: the Prime Minister is saying that Iraq must have proscribed weapons now, since it is palpably absurd to claim that Saddam Hussein destroyed them since 1998—even though according to the first sentence they were merely unaccounted for in 1998. Obviously, there is no distinction in the Prime Minister's mind between being unaccounted for and existing.

20. These are but two of the many examples in which Ministers gave the impression that UN inspectors had said that weapons and weapons-related material actually existed, when they had merely said they were unaccounted for.

21. I submit that, by failing to distinguish between weapons and weapons-related material being unaccounted for and actually existing, the information presented by the Government was at best incomplete, and at worst profoundly misleading.

22. It is difficult to work out whether the authors of the dossier itself made the jump that Hans Blix warned about—because the sources of the claims in it, and sometimes the claims themselves, are often obscure. This applies particularly to the core claims in paragraph 2 of the Executive Summary, which says:

"Much information about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction is already in the public domain from UN reports and from Iraqi defectors. This points clearly to Iraq's continuing possession, after 1991, of chemical and biological agents and weapons produced before the Gulf War. It shows that Iraq has refurbished sites

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formerly associated with the production of chemical and biological agents. And it indicates that Iraq remains able to manufacture these agents, and to use bombs, shells, artillery rockets and ballistic missiles to deliver them."

That paragraph is extraordinarily opaque.

23. The first sentence seems to place the same value on information from defectors as information from UN reports, which cannot be intended given the well-known unreliability of defectors.

24. The meaning of the second sentence is unfathomable. Is it saying that Iraq continued to possess these agents and weapons after 1991, which is a well-established fact attested to by UNSCOM? Or is it saying that it is well-established fact that Iraq continued to possess these agents and weapons right up to September 2002? Or is it merely an intelligence judgment that Iraq possessed these agents and weapons in September 2002? Likewise, are sentences 3 and 4 saying that it is a well-established fact that Iraq has reconstituted its production facilities, or merely an intelligence judgment?

25. To add to the confusion, in Part 3 of the dossier (Iraq under Saddam Hussein) page 46, paragraph 16, it says:

"Some twenty thousand Iranians were killed by mustard gas and the nerve agents tabun and sarin, all of which Iraq still possesses."

26. Is this categorical statement that Iraq possesses chemical agents a well-established fact, or is it based on intelligence judgment? Or perhaps the authors have jumped to the conclusion that Hans Blix warned against.

THE DEGRADATION OF AGENTS

27. All of Iraq's unaccounted for chemical and biological agents were manufactured before the Gulf War. The dossier said nothing about the possible degradation of these agents, despite much independent evidence that many of them would no longer be useful as warfare agents by now.

28. The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) published a report on Iraq's proscribed weapons on 9 September 2002, which the Government's dossier refers to approvingly in its Executive Summary as "an independent and well-researched overview".

29. It comments on the possible deterioration of nerve agents manufactured prior to the Gulf War. Here, we are talking about so-called G-agents (tabun, sarin and cyclosarin) and V-agents (VX). The IISS assessment is as follows:

"As a practical matter, any nerve agent from this period [pre-1991] would have

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deteriorated by now . . ." (p 51)

"Any VX produced by Iraq before 1991 is likely to have decomposed over the past decade . . ." (p 52)

"Any G-agent or V-agent stocks that Iraq concealed from UNSCOM inspections are likely to have deteriorated by now." (p 53).

30. And as regards botulinum toxin, the IISS dossier concluded:

"Any botulinum toxin produced in 1989-90 would no longer be useful" (p 40).

None of this was mentioned in the Government's dossier.

31. Before military action began, UNMOVIC published (on 6 March 2003) a 173-page document entitled "Unresolved Disarmament Issues". The Prime Minister quoted from it in the House of Commons on 18 March. In the course of that speech (see quote above), he spoke of sarin as a potential threat, but he did not mention the following UNMOVIC assessment about sarin:

"There is no evidence that any bulk Sarin-type agents remain in Iraq—gaps in accounting of these agents are related to Sarin-type agents weaponized in rocket warheads and aerial bombs. Based on the documentation found by UNSCOM during inspections in Iraq, Sarin-type agents produced by Iraq were largely of low quality and as such, degraded shortly after production. Therefore, with respect to the unaccounted for weaponized Sarin-type agents, it is unlikely that they would still be viable today." (Unresolved Disarmament Issues, p 73)

32. The Prime Minister mentioned VX as a potential threat on 18 March (again, see above). This VX was produced in 1990 by what UNMOVIC called "route B". According to UNMOVIC:

"VX produced through route B must be used relatively quickly after production (about one to eight weeks), which would probably be satisfactory for wartime requirements." (*ibid*, p 82)

33. The Prime Minister also mentioned botulinum toxin as a potential threat on 18 March (again, see above), but he did not mention the following UNMOVIC assessment on botulinum toxin:

"Any botulinum toxin that was produced and stored according to the methods described by Iraq and in the time period declared is unlikely to retain much, if any, of its potency. Therefore, any such stockpiles of botulinum toxin, whether in bulk storage or in weapons that remained in 1991, would not be active today." (*ibid*, p 101)

34. I submit that the Government's failure to present any information about the possible degradation of Iraq's chemical and biological agents meant that Parliament was given an incomplete and misleading picture of the state of Iraq's proscribed weapons.

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WHAT UN INSPECTORS FOUND

35. In the limited time they were allowed, the IAEA inspectors confirmed that Iraq had not revived its nuclear weapons programme, which had been dismantled by UNSCOM. They also went close to disproving all of the claims in the September dossier that Iraq was trying to revive it. The documentation from British sources "proving" that Iraq had recently tried to import uranium from Niger was easily identified as a forgery. And the inspectors accepted that the aluminium tubes, which Iraq was trying to import, were for rockets, not to build centrifuges for uranium enrichment, as was claimed.

36. The September dossier named about eight sites suspected of producing chemicals, which could be used for the production of proscribed chemical agents. Before the end of January, all these sites had been visited by UN inspectors and nothing suspect has been found. Replying to a question from Labour MP. Harry Cohen, in the House of Commons on 22 January, Foreign Office Minister, Mike O'Brien, was forced to admit:

"We understand from published information from UNMOVIC and the IAEA inspectors have visited all of the sites identified in the UK dossier. They have not reported uncovering any signs of weapons of mass destruction, or programmes for their production at the sites."

37. That doesn't entirely rule out that proscribed activity was going on at these sites last September as claimed in the dossier, but by January it was no longer going on.

38. The Government never attempted to draw to public attention any of this information, which modified the assessment in the September dossier. On the contrary, the Government constantly derided anything the inspectors discovered as unimportant.

THE FRENCH POSITION

39. In my opinion, the Government misrepresented the French position on military action against Iraq. For example, the Prime Minister told the House of Commons on 18 March:

"Last Monday [10 March], we were getting very close with it [the second resolution]. We very nearly had the majority agreement. If I might, I should particularly like to thank the President of Chile for the constructive way in which he approached this issue.

"Yes, there were debates about the length of the ultimatum, but the basic construct was gathering support. Then, on Monday night, France said that it would veto a second resolution, whatever the circumstances."

40. It is quite untrue to say that President Chirac ruled out military action in all circumstances on 10 March: on the contrary, he

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specifically ruled it in, if the inspectors reported that they couldn't do their job, as the following extract from his TV interview on 10 March shows:

"The inspectors have to tell us: 'we can continue and, at the end of a period which we think should be of a few months'—I'm saying a few months because that's what they have said—'we shall have completed our work and Iraq will be disarmed'. Or they will come and tell the Security Council: 'we are sorry but Iraq isn't cooperating, the progress isn't sufficient, we aren't in a position to achieve our goal, we won't be able to guarantee Iraq's disarmament'. In that case it will be for the Security Council and it alone to decide the right thing to do. But in that case, of course, regrettably, the war would become inevitable. It isn't today."

(see English translation of the interview at <http://special.diplomatie.gouv.fr/article—gb91.html>)

[For some of the above information I am indebted to Claims and evaluations of Iraq's proscribed weapons by Dr Glen Rangwala at middleeastreference.org.uk/iraqweapons.html]

Dr David Morrison

30 June 2003

Annex A

Letter from Dr David Morrison to the Foreign Secretary, January 2003

On 3 January the Guardian reported that:

"Foreign Office sources said that all the sites in the British dossier on Iraq had now been seen by UN weapons inspectors."

I assume that this refers to sites in Iraq, such as the Castor Oil Production Plant at Fallujah, which at the time the dossier was written the Government was concerned were being used for the production or storage of WMD.

Have all the sites of concern mentioned in the dossier been visited by UN inspectors?

If so, have your suspicions about these sites been allayed? In other words, are you now content that these sites are not being currently used to produce or store WMD?

If so, do you intend to publish an update to the dossier?

The dossier as it stands contains an error of fact: on page 34 it says:

"Iraq consistently refused to allow UNSCOM inspectors access to any of these eight Presidential sites."

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This is not true: all eight sites were visited between 25 March and 4 April 1998, under the arrangements in the Memorandum of Understanding negotiated between Kofi Annan and Tariq Aziz on 23 February 1998. I have read the reports in document S/1998/326 which is on the UNSCOM website. The report written by Charles Duelfer says:

"The initial entry to the eight presidential sites in Iraq . . . was performed by mission UNSCOM 243 during the period from 25 March to 4 April 1998

"Cooperation from Iraqi counterparts was satisfactory. The presence of senior diplomatic observers worked out generally well. Of particular note was the constructive presence of [Iraqi] Presidential Secretary Mr Abid Hamoud and Lt General Amer Rashid, the Minister for Oil, during the visits."

This error of fact should be corrected in any update to the dossier.

Dr David Morrison

January 2003

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Prepared 7 July 2003

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