

**Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Written Evidence****Memorandum from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS (IN ITALICS) FROM THE COMMITTEE, 16 JUNE  
2003

SECTION ONE: WITH REFERENCE TO THE DOCUMENT IRAQ'S WEAPONS OF  
MASS DESTRUCTION:

Q: *Who was the author?*

A: The drafting was co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office Assessments Staff working with representatives of other departments, including the intelligence agencies, DIS and FCO. The final draft was approved by the JIC.

Q: *When was the document received in draft by officials in FCO?*

A: The draft had a long history. The Assessments Staff, in coordination with the intelligence agencies, DIS and policy departments, including the FCO, prepared a paper in March on WMD in Iraq intended for possible publication. The draft was kept under review during the summer but there was no decision on whether or when to proceed with publication. On 3 September the Prime Minister announced that the Government's assessment of Iraq's WMD capabilities would be published.

The FCO led the drafting of Parts two and three of the final dossier, and began this work in spring 2002. There was an ongoing drafting process until the document was published in September.

Q: *At what dates were drafts put to Ministers?*

A: During the drafting process, departments represented on the JIC were asked to consult their Departmental Ministers as appropriate. The Foreign Secretary and Mike O'Brien offered comments as did No 10. At no stage was there any attempt from No 10 or elsewhere to overrule the JIC Chairman's judgement on the intelligence.

Q: *How many drafts did the document go through?*

A: As noted previously, there was an ongoing drafting process until the document was published in September.

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Q: *Did (a) Ministers or (b) Special Advisers ask for amendments to the document before it was published?*

A: As noted, Ministers and Special Advisers offered comments during the drafting process in the normal way. See above question on FS/Mr O'Brien's comments.

Q: *Did the "45 minutes" evidence come from a single source, or from mutually corroborating multiple sources? Was there any corroboration at all for this claim? Did the US accept that the claim was sound?*

A: The information came from an established, reliable and longstanding line of reporting. The specific information about 45 minutes came from one source, but it fitted with the broad picture of command and control arrangements for Saddam's WMD, as supplied by other sources over a period of time. Its inclusion in the document was approved by the JIC. It was not inserted under pressure from No 10.

Q: *Was the wording of the "45 minutes" claim given on p 19 of the document Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction, exactly the same as it was in the intelligence assessment supplied to the Government? If not, was it accompanied in the intelligence assessment by qualifications not included in the public document?*

A: The same report was reflected in almost identical terms in the JIC's classified work. There were no further caveats used.

Q: *What has the US Government said publicly about the "45 minutes" claim?*

A: We are not aware of any public comments from the US.

Q: *Did the "significant quantities of uranium" evidence come from a single source, or from mutually corroborating multiple sources? Was there any corroboration at all for this claim? (Did the US accept that the claim was sound?) Are you satisfied that documents on this are genuine?*

A: The document stated on p 25 that "there is intelligence that Iraq has sought the supply of significant quantities of uranium from Africa." This reference drew on intelligence reporting from more than one source. We understand that the IAEA acquired documents on this subject in February 2003. At no stage prior to the publication of the dossier did the UK possess or have sight of these documents. The IAEA have confirmed that the documents were not provided by the UK, contrary to some media reporting. Since the publication of the dossier, we have had the opportunity to examine the documents. Some of these documents are forgeries, others are still under consideration.

Q: *Was the wording of the "significant quantities of uranium" claim*

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*given on p 25 of the document Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction, exactly the same as it was in the intelligence assessment supplied to the Government? If so, was it accompanied in the intelligence assessment by qualifications not included in the public document?*

A: The reporting post dated the last JIC assessment of Saddam's nuclear programme. But the language used in the document was approved by the JIC.

*Q: What has the US Government said publicly about the "significant quantities of uranium" claim?*

A: In his State of the Union address earlier this year, President Bush said that the British Government had learned that Saddam had recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa. Condoleeza Rice referred to the claim and to the existence of falsified documents, which were not, as implied, of British origin, during press interviews on 8 June.

*Q: How was the original evidence in support of the "significant quantities of uranium" claim tested? When did Ministers conclude that some of the evidence was unreliable? Does there remain any reliable evidence for this claim?*

A: See above. The information about the forged documents first emerged in February 2003 when the IAEA declared documents it had received concerning the Iraq/uranium/Niger issue were fabricated. We cannot comment on the origin or history of these documents. As noted above, the statement in the dossier drew on intelligence reporting from more than one source. This intelligence remains under review.

SECTION TWO: WITH REFERENCE TO THE DOCUMENT IRAQ—ITS INFRASTRUCTURE OF CONCEALMENT, DECEPTION AND INTIMIDATION:

*Q: Who compiled the document?*

A: The Communications and Information Centre (which later became the Coalition Information Centre during the military operation). The CIC was a cross-government information team, originally established in the wake of 11 September, which reported to the Prime Minister's Director of Communications. It was based in the FCO.

*Q: When was the document received in draft by officials in the FCO?*

A: The document evolved through a number of stages. In its earliest draft it drew on open source material which had originally been sent to the CIC by the FCO in preparation for a possible press background paper on the Iraqi security apparatus. Additional material was subsequently included, much of it based on documents provided by the FCO and MOD. A final draft, bringing together material from a number

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of sources, was sent to FCO officials with a short deadline for comment on Thursday 30 January. No decision had been taken at that stage on whether or how to publish the document. The document was published on 3 February by the Prime Minister's Office.

Lessons have been learned from the way the paper was handled. Attribution to external sources will be explicit in any future documents. The document was not cleared by the JIC. Systems are now in place to ensure that any intelligence material which is made available publicly will first be authorised by the JIC Chairman.

Q: *At what dates were drafts put to Ministers?*

A: No Ministers were consulted in the preparation of the document.

Q: *How many drafts did the document go through?*

A: The document was a collation of material from various sources and went through a series of drafting changes—in particular as the focus and structure of the paper evolved.

Q: *Did (a) Ministers and (b) Special Advisers ask for amendments to the document before it was published?*

A: No FCO Ministers, neither FCO Special Advisers, were consulted on the document. No 10 officials including Special Advisers asked for some editorial changes which did not affect the overall judgement in the document, nor the intelligence-related material.

Q: *What has the US Government said publicly about this document?*

A: At the UN Security Council on 5 February, Colin Powell drew attention to the document which he said "describes in exquisite detail Iraqi deception activities".

### SECTION THREE: GENERAL QUESTIONS:

Q: *Are Ministers entirely satisfied with the completeness and accuracy of all their evidence to the FAC and of each of their statements in the House on Iraq and WMD to date? Is there anything which they would now wish to amend in, clarify in or add to those statements?*

A: FCO Ministers are entirely satisfied.

Q: *What steps is the FCO taking to ensure objectivity and accuracy in the search for WMD? Will UNMOVIC or other third parties be involved, either on the ground or in a testing/verification role?*

A: We recognise the need for credible, independent validation of any

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discoveries by the Coalition. We are engaged in discussions on how best to ensure this. We have, for example, been in touch with a number of governments about the possibility of using internationally accredited laboratories for the analysis of chemical and biological samples.

UNSCR1483 explicitly tasks the Security Council to review the mandates of the inspectors. We have made clear that we are ready to see the Council take this forward, and that meanwhile UNMOVIC should maintain its ability to deploy.

UNMOVIC and the IAEA would be one option to provide such validation. If they were to return to Iraq, their tasks would have changed: the focus would be on monitoring and verification rather than detection. That would call for different skills: some restructuring of their operations would be needed.

*Q: What is the degree of involvement of FCO personnel in the teams established to find WMD or evidence of production or destruction of WMD in Iraq?*

*A: There are no FCO personnel involved in the physical search for WMD in Iraq. FCO staff participate in inter-departmental co-ordinating groups in Whitehall.*

Parliamentary Relations and Devolution Department

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

16 June 2003

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