

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

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS (IN ITALICS) FROM THE COMMITTEE. 19 JUNE 2003

Q1: On which dates since 11 September 2001 was Iraq on the Agenda for a meeting of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee?

A: The Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (DOP) last met on 28 June 2001. The "War Cabinet" (Ad Hoc Ministerial Committee on Iraq) had a slightly wider membership than DOP and met on 29 occasions between 19 March and 28 April 2003 inclusive. There had been a large number of other Ministerial meetings on Iraq chaired by the Prime Minister between July 2002, to date. A Ministerial Committee on Iraq Rehabilitation chaired by the Foreign Secretary has, with one exception, met weekly since 10 April 2003.

Q2: On which dates since 11 September 2001 was Iraq (a) on the Agenda of and (b) discussed at a meeting of the Cabinet?

A: Iraq has been on the agenda of the Cabinet since March 2002, when it was the subject of substantive discussion. There was a special meeting of the Cabinet on Monday 23 September 2002, in advance of the following day's Parliamentary debate on Iraq (for which both Houses had been recalled). This Cabinet was dominated by discussion on Iraq. Iraq was the subject of discussion at every Cabinet meeting thereafter—ie at 28 meetings between 23 September 2002 and 22 May 2002 (inclusive).

Q3: Is there any truth in the allegation in the Independent of 9 June that the March 2002 JIC paper on Iraq was "suppressed" after it was put up? Does the FCO have anything further to say about this paper?

A: No JIC assessments were suppressed. 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. This document was based upon JIC assessments at that time, but made only brief reference to intelligence material. The September document was much more detailed and included intelligence issued between March and

FA C/3/0265

September 2002.

Q4: Was the wording in the September Dossiers as a whole the same in substance as in the JIC assessments on which it was based? Please list any material differences between the two.

A: The dossiers accurately reflected the judgements from the classified JIC assessments. The draft dossier was circulated to JIC members for comment in advance of publication. The JIC Chairman approved its contents.

Q5: Is there any truth in the reports in the 15 June edition of the Independent on Sunday that chemical and biological weapons protection equipment was removed from Cyprus for use in the Gulf? If so, did this reflect a reassessment of the missile threat to Cyprus as set out in the September Dossier?

A: During preparations for operations in Iraq, stocks of Combopens and other equipment were moved between various sites used by UK forces, including both to and from Cyprus. Such movement is a normal part of the logistics process. At the outbreak of hostilities, there were sufficient Combopens in theatre for all UK forces, including those in Cyprus. There was no change to our assessment of the threat from Iraqi ballistic missiles, including to Cyprus.

Q6: I enclose a copy of comments received from Dr Tom Inch. The Committee would be grateful for the FCO's observations on each of the points he makes.

A: Answers to most of the questions raised by Dr Inch are attached [73]. We will seek to answer the remaining question as soon as possible.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS FROM DR THOMAS INCH

P17 para 2. Was there any evidence that the attempts at procurement were successful?

A: We are seeking an answer to this question.

P18 para 3. What was the evidence that mustard could be made in weeks and nerve agents in months? This statement suggests the intelligence source knew the facilities to be used and how the facilities would be used.

A: This was an assessment not based on specific intelligence but on such factors as the availability of precursors and the ease of production. We judged that it would take the Iraqis longer to start production of nerve agent because the process is generally more complicated. We did not know where production would take place.

FAC/3/0266

P19 para 5. It is important to find what the raw data actually said about 45 minutes.

A: The JIC assessment said that some CBW weapons could be delivered to units within 45 minutes of an order being issued. That is why the dossier said they could be "deployed" within 45 minutes.

P19 para 8. If it is known that Iraq continued to produce nerve agent then it should be known where that was when the intelligence was obtained. Post event chemical analysis of the site should be able to confirm the allegation.

A: P19 para 8 refers to chemical agent production, not just nerve agent production. But the intelligence did not identify specific sites where this had taken place. In general, we agree that post-event chemical analysis of sites may be able to confirm assessments, although it should be recognised that Iraq carried out a large campaign of site sanitation.

P20 para 8. Similarly analysis should reveal whether there was misuse of the precursor chemicals at Fallujah2.

A: There was no specific evidence of CW precursor or CW agent production at Fallujah after the 1991 Gulf War other than the production of chlorine and phenol which could support CW agent and precursor production. Inspection and chemical analysis could reveal evidence of further CW-related activity.

P20 para 9. More information should be sought on the suppliers of the illegal equipment and whether the Inspectors visited this complex on their return last year.

A: The UN inspectors did visit Ibn Sina Company at Tamriyah several times but they did not carry out extensive forensic examinations. The dossier said that Ibn Sina provided a capability that could be used, not that it had been used. The problem of dual-use facilities was highlighted on page 21 of the dossier.

P22 para 12. More information is required on whether Iraq has a legitimate castor oil industry. Also we need to know whether the plant construction would allow the easy production of ricin.

A: Iraq does have a legitimate castor oil industry, although we assess that the quantities produced are in excess of requirements and that for at least one of the uses, hydraulic fluid, castor oil could be more efficiently replaced by synthetic fluids. We assess that Iraq did have the capability to extract ricin from castor beans.

P22 para 14. I am puzzled by the importance given in the dossier to aflatoxins. The materials are not particularly acutely toxic and in

FAC/3/0267

solution may not have been weaponised in high concentration. For the sake of the overall credibility of the dossier some indication of the real significance of this information would be helpful.

A: The key point in this paragraph is that Iraq acknowledged that it had filled two types bombs and al Hussein warheads with aflatoxin as part of its BW programme. The rationale for Iraq's choice of agent was beyond the scope of the dossier. The longer term effects of aflatoxin as a carcinogen and its ability to cause liver damage are well documented.

P24 para 16. The summary groups anthrax, botulinum, aflatoxins and ricin together and suggests a common biological agent production capability. This seems odd since the biological agent anthrax is very different from the others which are chemical toxins. Also ricin is very different since it is not cultured but harvested from a cultivated crop.

A: They are grouped together based on their deviation from biological materials not on any particular production capability.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

24 June 2003

73 Dr Inch's questions are reproduced here in italics, and published with his memorandum, pp Ev. [Back](#)

[Previous](#)

[Contents](#)

[Next](#)

[Commons](#)

[Parliament](#)

[Lords](#)

[Search](#)

[Enquiries](#)

[Index](#)

© Parliamentary copyright 2003

Prepared 7 July 2003

FAC/3/0268