

[Select Committee on Foreign Affairs](#) [Written Evidence](#)**Further supplementary memorandum from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office****IRAQ'S WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**

1. The memorandum "Building a case against Iraq" described the British Government's diplomatic activity from the early months of 2002 up to 20 March 2003. The Committee has posed questions on matters relating to the dossier of 24 September 2002 on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and on the search for those weapons both before and since the conflict with Iraq. This memorandum describes how the September dossier was put together, answers questions about its reliability and elaborates on the search for the WMD.

How the September dossier was put together

2. In March 2002, a first draft of a paper for publication on Iraq's WMD was put together by the Cabinet Office Assessments Staff. The paper was based on JIC assessments at that time but made only brief reference to specific items of intelligence. It was decided that this was not the right moment to proceed with publication.

3. Following increased international and domestic interest in the issue, on 3 September the Prime Minister announced that the Government's assessment of Iraq's WMD capabilities, including intelligence-related information, would be made public in the next few weeks. It was decided the assessment should cover the history of the WMD programmes, the history of the inspection process, an account of current capabilities and an account of the nature of the regime including its record of severe human rights abuse. The purpose was to present a detailed account of Iraqi capabilities, placed in the wider context. Since the revised document would be making more open use of intelligence material, it was agreed that the JIC Chairman would be in charge of the process.

4. Drafting was co-ordinated by the Assessments Staff, working with representatives of Departments and Agencies. With the agreement of the Agencies, representatives from the No 10 and FCO Press Offices were present on at least one occasion. There were formal meetings, numerous exchanges of drafts and constant consultations between the experts concerned. The aim was to ensure that the public assessment

FAC/3/0278

was firmly based on the most recent classified assessment and that it deployed the intelligence effectively, taking account of the reliability of the information and demands of source protection.

5. It was recognised that the assessment of Iraq's capabilities should be handled separately from the historical and human rights chapters. Parts 2 and 3, which were not intelligence-based, were initially prepared by the FCO and subsequently edited by the Assessments Staff. Part 1 was the work of the Assessments Staff from the beginning.

6. During the drafting process JIC members were asked to consult Ministers as appropriate. The Foreign Secretary and Mr O'Brien offered comments. The Foreign Secretary made some brief comments on layout, for example he favoured more graphics. He also suggested including in the Prime Minister's foreword a reference to Saddam's defiance of the UN and unprecedented use of WMD. Mr O'Brien's comments included questions on setting out the context better by greater use of UNSCOM reports, more on the impact on Saddam's possession of WMD, and more references to the sources of the information. Not all comments were reflected in the final text. None of the comments suggested that references to specific pieces of intelligence should be reinterpreted or rewritten.

7. The draft dossier was discussed by the JIC on two occasions in September. A final draft was circulated to JIC members on 19 September and agreed by them out of committee. It was sent to No 10 on 20 September. The JIC Chairman remained in overall charge of the final publication arrangements, including the signing off of the printer's proof on 23 September.

8. The executive summary was drafted and co-ordinated by the same people in the Assessment Staff who were responsible for the main report. The foreword to the dossier was drafted in No 10 for the Prime Minister's signature. JIC members had an opportunity to comment on this draft.

9. Until the penultimate stage the document contained a conclusions section which summarised the main points in the overall document. This was dropped in the final draft because it was repetitive and superfluous.

Reliability of the dossier

10. The Government remain confident that the dossier accurately reflected the Government's best assessment at the time as recorded in the classified assessments. Several judgements in it have been borne out. These include:

— The illegal programme to extend the range of the al Samoud missile. This was

FAC | 3 | 0279

borne out by UNMOVIC findings. UNMOVIC subsequently instructed that the missiles should be destroyed.

— The illegal programme to produce even longer-range missiles. UNMOVIC required Iraq to destroy refurbished casting chambers previously rendered unusable by UNSCOM because they could be used for long-range missile motors. It also acknowledged the excessive size of Iraq's engine test stand.

— Concealment of documents at the homes of personnel associated with WMD programmes.

— Undeclared UAV capabilities. A UAV with a range far in excess of that permitted by UNMOVIC was found.

— Investigations continue into the role of the suspect mobile trailers found in Iraq.

11. Much attention has focussed on the "45 minutes" and "uranium from Africa" issues.

12. The Government have no reason to doubt the reliability of the source of the intelligence on the 45 minutes issue. The information came from an established, reliable, and long-standing line of reporting. The information was consistent with the JIC's judgement that command, control and logistics arrangements for Iraq's chemical weapons were in place. The information was incorporated into a classified JIC assessment in early September and following this, was included in the dossier. The description of the intelligence in the dossier accurately reflected the description contained within the classified assessment. There were no further caveats used in the classified assessment. As the Foreign Secretary has made clear, this intelligence was included and cleared by the JIC and not at the behest of Ministers or Special Advisers.

13. Mr Gilligan, quoting his own source, repeatedly asserted, during his evidence session, that the source of the intelligence report, in referring to 45 minutes, confused the deployment time for a conventional missile with the deployment time for a CBW missile. But in fact the source, in referring to 45 minutes, did not refer to missiles at all. Mr Gilligan's information is not correct.

14. The assessment on uranium from Africa drew on intelligence reporting from a number of sources. The IAEA has confirmed that their forged documents did not come from a British source. It is public knowledge that Niger supplied Iraq with yellowcake in the 1980s.

15. The Government have no reason to doubt the thoroughness of their intelligence assessments of Iraq's nuclear programme. As the dossier described, there was additional evidence of Iraqi efforts to restart their covert nuclear programme, such as the recall of Iraqi nuclear scientists. Great care was taken, as a matter of course, in the interpretation of this intelligence as with other intelligence reports. As

FAC/3/0280

an indication of how much caution was exercised in this case, the dossier stated clearly, in relation to the aluminium tubes, that there was no definitive intelligence that these were destined for a nuclear programme.

16. It has been claimed that the Government was close to closing the nuclear dossier in the late 1990s. No such decision was taken. The IAEA report of 27 January 2003 identified key outstanding questions concerning progress by the Iraqis in weapons design and centrifuge development prompted by a lack of relevant documentation; the extent of external assistance from which Iraq benefited; and the lack of evidence that Iraq had abandoned definitively its nuclear programme. While the IAEA Director General indicated to the Security Council that with full Iraqi cooperation these issues could be resolved quite quickly, that co-operation was patently not forthcoming. Even in April 2003 the IAEA said that, although they had found no evidence to suggest that Iraq had re-started a weapons programme, these outstanding questions remained.

17. It has also been claimed that the Government was close to closing the missile dossier in the late 1990s. Again, no such decision was taken. As noted in the September 2002 dossier, in mid-2001 the JIC noted a "step-change" in progress on the Iraqi missile programme over the previous two years. The dossier also stated that in early 2002 the JIC concluded that Iraq had begun to develop missiles with a range of over 1,000 kms.

18. Ministers were briefed on Iraq's WMD programmes by intelligence staff. The briefings that were given to Ministers were consistent with classified JIC assessments and with the September dossier.

19. Questions have been asked about whether the dossier simply extrapolated from what the inspectors knew in 1998, or whether we retested our analysis and drew on new intelligence. Chapters 2 and 3 of Part 1 of the dossier make clear that the Government drew heavily on recent intelligence about Iraqi efforts to develop their programmes and capabilities since 1998. Specific reference is made in those chapters to recent intelligence on attempts to reverse-engineer the SCUD engine prior to the Gulf War; to intelligence which complemented and added to what was previously known on the important role which chemical and biological weapons played in Iraqi military thinking, on Iraqi attempts to retain its banned weapons systems and on Saddam's willingness to use chemical and biological weapons. Recent intelligence was also drawn on in relation to mobile facilities.

20. Questions have been asked about the distribution of JIC assessments. Distribution depends on the subject of the JIC

FAC/3/0281

assessment. Cabinet Ministers are sent papers of relevance to them but can always request others if they wish. The Prime Minister and other Ministers who are members of the Committee on Security and Intelligence see all JIC papers. Special Advisers who are appropriately cleared, and have a requirement to see them, are sent JIC assessments.

The search for WMD

21. UNMOVIC and the IAEA gave regular reports to the Security Council before the conflict. Questions have been raised about whether intelligence was passed to UNMOVIC and IAEA by British Agencies. Both organisations were regularly briefed by the UK. SIS were co-operating fully with the inspectors and British assistance to Dr Blix played a key part in the few successes UNMOVIC had.

22. The first priority after the conflict was to ensure security and to make a start on rehabilitation. Teams were however also deployed to search for WMD. As of 21 June, 159 sites out of a total of on a US "Master List" of 578 had been examined. A number of these sites have thrown up several more previously unknown ones. 83 of these have been visited. Most if not all of the sites on the "Master List" were also known to the UN, as the Iraqis were aware. They are thus not necessarily the places which are the most likely to yield information.

23. The Iraq Survey Group is now deploying to Iraq. Amongst other tasks such as the search for the former regime's leadership, it will be responsible for the search for Iraq's WMD programmes. Approximately 1,300 people will deploy, of whom around 100 will be British including the Deputy Commander, Brigadier Deverall.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

July 2003

[Previous](#)

[Contents](#)

[Next](#)

[Commons](#)

[Parliament](#)

[Lords](#)

[Search](#)

[Enquiries](#)

[Index](#)

FAC/3/0282