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IRAQ INQUIRY: WITNESS STATEMENT FROM PAUL ROPER

General Background

1. I think it would be useful if I made a couple of general points. Firstly I was appointed to the DIS post of Director Intelligence Scientific & Technical on 1st July 2002. This was my first posting within the DIS. After a week settling in the office and meeting key staff I departed on two weeks leave (long planned before my date for changing posts). I then spent just over a week in the office before departing on a long weekend leave. Hence my feet only began to settle under the table in the first week of August 2002 and the key events surrounding the dossier took place only a few weeks later. I was still on a steep learning curve particularly with regard to the intelligence processes.
2. My second point is that these events took place well over 8 years ago and 4 years after I retired from the DIST post (and indeed my MOD career). I was not asked to input into any of the other reviews/inquiries so am having to rely on my memory of distant events that I have not previously had to recollect. Some events/meetings I can remember with surprising clarity but others are more diffuse in either matters of detail or timing.

Q1: Purpose of the Dossier

3. Shortly after arriving in the DIST post I became aware that there had been an earlier attempt to draft a public dossier on Iraq WMD. It had not come to fruition largely because (I understood) that the intelligence evidence was insufficiently compelling. I learned this from my own staff. Very soon I learned that the work on the dossier was to resume. Since my staff had concerns I spoke to John Cunningham who as Director Intelligence Global Issues headed another directorate under DCDI. WMD work was at that time split between our two directorates with mine providing technical analysis on NBC and missile capabilities and John's included the WMD/missile programme analysts who examined the programmatic and infrastructure intelligence. The DIGI directorate also had a proliferation secretariat which tended to take the lead on interfacing with the Assessments Staff, particularly on the subsequent staffing of the dossier. However my own staff included some time served DIS stalwarts who were not reticent in expressing their views. The view I put to John Cunningham was that my staff were concerned that the dossier was likely to exaggerate the supporting intelligence evidence to make it more compelling. I was assured in this conversation, and at a subsequent one, that these views had been presented to the Assessments Staff but that the dossier was a document intended for public consumption and hence the caveats normally seen in intelligence assessments were missing- in other words the language had to be more "black & white". I don't recall having any profound insight into the precise purpose of the dossier but considered it to be part of educating the public in advance of deliberations in the UN.

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Q: Discussion with my Own Staff

4. You have not posed a question about the discussions I had with my own staff during the few weeks that the dossier was being drafted. I think it will help put into context the other questions you raise so I will deal with this now. I will cover the views of my missile, nuclear, biological and chemical weapon teams during this time. My recollection of the sequencing of these conversations is hazy.
5. My ballistic missile technical team had little intelligence to go on. They tended to focus on detailed evaluation of missile performance based upon observation of flight trials or rocket motor tests. There had been none. The other directorate's programme staff had more to go on- purchase of rocket motors, building of a new test stand and issues of whether 20 scud type longer range missiles remained concealed. Overall my staff considered that there were certainly ballistic missile programmes underway but since nothing had been tested there had to be a question mark over how advanced these programmes were. I do not recall that they raised any objection to the wording in the dossier.
6. My nuclear team were quite clear that there was no evidence that a nuclear programme had resumed. There was intelligence that some of the original technical teams had been brought together so you might interpret this that there was an intention to retain knowledge and perhaps resume a programme at some time. However there was no evidence that any work on the key infrastructure for making fissile material (all destroyed after the gulf war) had resumed. I recall (but vaguely) that representations were made about some of the wording in the draft dossier and I believe that changes were made sufficient to satisfy my team. The bit in the dossier about "if Iraq obtained fissile material and other essential components from foreign sources the timeline for production of a nuclear weapon would be shortened" was regarded with some amusement as a statement of the obvious since the most difficult aspect (and one that tended to have strong intelligence signatures) of a nuclear programme is the production of fissile material. Overall I believe my nuclear team were largely satisfied with the final wording on the understanding that it had to be black and white for public consumption.
7. I recall that my biological weapon team were the most positive of my WMD sections about the sentiments in the dossier. The team leader () had only just arrived in post. She was a Porton Down expert and I believe she had knowledge of the intelligence concerning the so called mobile BW production vans. The other key player was who had been holding the team leader post on a temporary basis prior to the arrival of . Both seemed convinced about this intelligence. Later, after the conflict, was involved in reviewing the intelligence that resulted in this conclusion and I recall she was distressed that she felt that she had been misled but this is probably not relevant to the questions you are posing.

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8. Before moving onto the chemical weapons issue I need as an aside to mention a key meeting of DIS staff. John Cunningham rang me late in the drafting process to suggest we had a meeting to make our minds up on the dossier and in order to advise DCDI. This occurred in my office (I can't recall the date). John brought his key staff who had been involved with the Assessments Staff and I had some of my experts there but I seem to recall a number of key ones were absent, probably on leave. I recall discussions on nuclear matters with some disquiet expressed by my expert about the tone of the wording. I also mentioned the overarching view of a number of my staff that the overall tone of the draft document implied much greater surety in the conclusions than seemed to be supported by the evidence. I was again assured that these points had been made to the Assessments Staff on several occasions. At the end of this meeting we all agreed to recommend to DCDI that the DIS should raise no further objections to the dossier wording. I assume John Cunningham, as the lead director, had a conversation with DCDI to this effect but cannot be sure.
9. I now need to cover two events that occurred subsequent to the meeting referred to in paragraph 8. The two key members of my staff involved were Dr Brian Jones, the head of my NBC technical branch; and [*] who worked for Brian as head of my chemical weapon technical section. Both of these were very experienced officers having been in their respective posts for many years. I think Brian had been on leave for a period in August so by the time he returned the drafting of the dossier was at an advanced stage. I don't recall that I had had much contact with [*] either in my early weeks in post so he may have had a period of leave also. The first event was the letter than Brian Jones sent which has been identified in previous inquiries. I was the recipient but it was copied to DCDI, Tony Cragg, amongst others. I recall vividly that it arrived just after 5pm on Thursday 19th September. Whether the subject line caught my attention I don't remember but I opened it immediately and having read its contents I rang Brian but no answer. I then walked round to his office and it was clear that he had departed for home. I tried to see him the following day but I subsequently found that he had taken a day's leave as his car was booked in for an MOT. Consequently it was Monday that I went round to Brian's office to discuss the letter with him. I cannot recall all that was discussed; I sensed he was annoyed that so much had been happening whilst he had been away. I do remember asking him a specific question along the lines of "are you telling me you do not believe there is WMD in Iraq?" His reply was along the lines "no I'm not saying that, on balance I believe there is WMD in Iraq but not with the degree of conviction implied in the draft dossier". At this I was relieved as these were points that had been made already. DCDI raised with me Brian's letter, possibly later that day, and was annoyed that it had been sent. I relayed the gist of my conversation with Brian and DCDI seemed content.
10. I was however more concerned by a second letter that I do not believe has been referred to in previous inquiries. This was sent by [*] to me with a number of copy addressees. I am advised this was sent on Friday 20th September but I don't

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believe I saw it until the following week. I can't recall any of the detail in this letter except that it referred to Brian's letter and also the latest (final) draft of the dossier. I went to see [*] to discuss it with him. He explained his understanding of the CW position in Iraq noting that there had been thousands of tons of chemical agent, much of it destroyed by UNSCOM, but he noted that he couldn't rule out the existence of a few hundred tons of unaccounted stock some of which could retain potency. However his key point was that he had seen no evidence that Iraq had resumed any production of chemical agent since the gulf war. He and I were aware of the existence of the new sensitive intelligence but neither of us had seen it. This is covered in my answer to question 2. The conversation with [*] was very late in the dossier production process and only minor editorial comments on the wording were being called for at this stage. I concluded the conversation with [*] suggesting that those responsible for forming the final judgements no doubt had access to this new intelligence and would take it into consideration. I took no further action.

Q2: The "New Source"

11. I was alerted to the existence of new sensitive material on CW production. I received a call on the secure phone from the SIS officer who dealt with the DIS on WMD and proliferation issues. I seem to recall it was a very short conversation but I believe he said it referred to evidence of resumption in CW production. I can't recall the precise date of this call (I did record it in my personal day book but I shredded all these in the week before my retirement). It was late in the process but definitely before my conversation with [*] referred to in para 11 and probably before my discussion with Brian Jones referred to in para 10.
12. The caller assured me that both CDI and DCDI had seen the document but did not say who else. I have never seen this report and do not know its content. I did not discuss its existence with CDI or DCDI and have not had discussions with anyone about it.

Q3: My Response to the New Source Material

13. I did not ask for this sensitive report to be made available to any of my staff. As already stated I was within my first few weeks in office and was uncertain about the protocols for dealing with particularly sensitive intelligence. Throughout my previous Whitehall appointments I received routine intelligence relevant to my responsibilities and on occasions senior officers would seek permission to show me particularly sensitive items of intelligence in order to seek my view on the relevance of the content. I therefore assumed that if others thought that the content of this intelligence contained technical content, or required interpretation from my technical specialists, then they as receivers or originators of the intelligence would request a wider distribution.

Q4: Concerns Raised By DIS Staff

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14. Paragraphs 4-10 cover material relevant to the questions you raise. I had no discussions with CDI during these few weeks leading to the issue of the dossier. I cannot recall discussing dossier issues with DCDI but may have done at one of his weekly meetings.
15. At this time I had not met Sir John Scarlett so could not have discussed any issues with him. I recall one meeting with the Assessments Staff at which I was introduced to Julian Miller. I cannot recall the context of this meeting or when it occurred.

Paul Roper

27th May 2011

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