

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

1. (E) Shanahan + me
2. Hugo (for inspired the)

P.A: S.T.
715

PA/012/022/02		
RECEIVED IN REGISTRY		
1		
DESCRIPTION	PA	REGISTRY
INDEX		Action Taken

From:

Date: 23 April 2002

CC PS/Mr Bradshaw
PS/PUS
Michael Williams, Sp. Adviser
Mr Wright
Mr Ricketts
Mr Ehrman
Mr Goulty
Heads: MED, WLD, Sec. Pol.
Dept., News Dept., PDD
PRDD
Mr Dodd, Cabinet Office
Dr Tanfield, MED
Mr Matthews, News Dept.
Mr Ronald, Assessments Staff

mt
24/4

Mr Dowse
PS

Agreed in draft. This will clear the way for release of the 'WMD dossier' - but whether and when to do that awaits a separate decision.

IRAQI WMD : PUBLIC DOSSIER

ISSUE

1. In preparing the JIC public lines document on Iraqi WMD capabilities, the Defence Intelligence Service (DIS) has revised our estimates for Iraqi holdings of precursor chemicals and special munitions unaccounted for by UNSCOM inspectors between 1991-98. Based on their research, they have advised us that changes are necessary. How should we handle this?

TIMING

2. Priority - the Cabinet Office will be submitting the JIC public lines paper to the Prime Minister by the end of the month.

CONFIDENTIAL

77

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

PREFERRED OPTION

3. That we (a) announce the new figures via an inspired PQ, and (b) incorporate them into the JIC public lines document. The Assessments Staff, MED and News Department agree.

BACKGROUND AND ARGUMENT

4. In publicising the Iraqi WMD threat, for the past 3 years Ministers have referred to large quantities of material which Iraq has concealed from UN weapons inspectors which could be used to produce and deploy chemical and biological weapons. In particular, we have said that UNSCOM inspectors were unable to account for:
 - 4,000 tonnes of precursor chemicals used in the production of chemical weapons;
 - 610 tonnes of precursor chemicals used in the production of VX;
 - and some 31,000 chemical weapons munitions.

These figures were based on Iraqi declarations made to UNSCOM inspectors between 1991-98 and data contained in an UNSCOM report published in 1999.

5. In compiling the paper on Iraqi WMD for public release, we asked the DIS to ensure that these figures were defensible in public. Given that the figures are based on a series of Iraqi declarations (some of which have altered over time) extrapolated from data in UNSCOM official records, DIS tell us that it is inherently difficult to arrive at precise figures (a point exemplified by the fact that there is no inter-Agency agreement in Washington on a definitive set of numbers). DIS has therefore produced revised estimates which it judges would be readily defensible in public. These are as follows (previous figures in brackets):

UNSCOM inspectors were unable to account for:

- up to 3,000 tonnes (previously 4,000) of precursor chemicals, approximately 300 (previously 610) tonnes of which, in the Iraqi CW programme, were unique to the production of VX nerve agent;
- up to 360 tonnes of bulk CW agent including 1.5 tonnes of VX (new figures);
- and over 30,000 (previously 31,000) special munitions for delivery of chemical and biological agents.
- large quantities of growth media acquired for use in the production of biological weapons - enough to produce over three times the amount of anthrax Iraq admits to having manufactured (unchanged).

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

I recommend that we announce the revised figures via an inspired PQ and incorporate them into the JIC public lines paper on Iraqi capabilities.

6. The alternative would be to move away from precise figures and use more general terms i.e. hundreds of tonnes of precursor chemicals, tens of thousands of munitions etc. on the grounds that precise figures are inherently unreliable (given the fact that they are based on Iraqi declarations). The Americans have been unable to agree an inter-Agency line on the quantities of CW materials and munitions unaccounted for by UNSCOM inspectors. The major downside to this approach is that the media will seize the more vague formulation to suggest that the Government has misled the public for the past 3 years in talking up the Iraqi WMD threat. This risk also exists for the approach of releasing slightly revised figures, but to a lesser extent. MED, News Department and the Assessments Staff agree therefore that we should deploy the new DIS figures, announcing them via an inspired PQ. I attach a draft.

A

PARLIAMENT AND MEDIA

7. The inspired PQ and simultaneous changes to our standard lines on Iraqi WMD will undoubtedly attract press and parliamentary comment. We will be pressed to explain the slight discrepancies between the new figures and the old. In defending the new figures, we might draw on the following lines:
- these revised figures represent our latest assessment;
 - this assessment is subject to continual review in the light of any updates from UNMOVIC or incoming intelligence reports;
 - some of the estimates (e.g growth media) are unchanged. The changes we have made do not alter our view on the scale of the Iraqi WMD threat;
 - indeed, they reinforce our judgement that Iraq's chemical and biological capabilities are substantial and a very real danger to the region and the wider world;
 - we shall be releasing further material about this threat in due course.

Head UNMOVIC and Regional Proliferation Section
Non-Proliferation Department

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

QUESTION: What assessment HMG has made of unaccounted for stocks of Iraqi precursor chemicals, chemical agent and special munitions based on the findings of the UN Special Commission?

Answer:

Our assessment of the quantities of material unaccounted for by UNSCOM inspectors which has potential applications in Iraq's chemical and biological weapons programmes is as follows:

- up to 3,000 tonnes of precursor chemicals, ~~including~~ approximately 300 tonnes of which, in the Iraqi CW programme, were unique to the production of VX nerve agent;
- up to 360 tonnes of bulk CW agent including 1.5 tonnes of VX;
- and over 30,000 special munitions for delivery of chemical and biological agents.
- large quantities of growth media acquired for use in the production of biological weapons - enough to produce over three times the amount of anthrax Iraq admits to having manufactured.

These figures represent our latest assessment. This assessment is subject to continual review in the light of any updates from UNMOVIC or incoming intelligence reports. Some of the estimates are unchanged. The changes we have made do not alter our view on the scale of the Iraqi WMD threat. Indeed, they reinforce our judgement that Iraq's chemical and biological capabilities are substantial and a very real danger to the region and the wider world. We shall be releasing further material about this threat in due course.

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED