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Iraqi WMD: Public Dossier

The Foreign Secretary was grateful for your minute of 23 April and for Mr Dowse's manuscript comment. He has approved the approach proposed and has amended the PQ answer (see attached), which you should complete as he has requested. He would also like press notice to be issued immediately after the PQ is answered so that no-one can accuse us of concealing this.

[Handwritten signature]

30 April 2002

(Mark Sedwill)

cc: PS
PS/Mr Bradshaw
PS/PUS
Stephen Wright
Peter Ricketts
William Ehrman
Alan Goulty
Heads: MED
WLD
Sec Pol Department
• News Department
PRDD
~~PRDD~~
Dr Tanfield, MED
Mr Matthews, News Department
Michael Williams, Special Adviser

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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:

In answer to questions on [date] I said [quote] [ref].

This information was the best available at the time, and was based on Iraqi declarations to UNSCOM inspectors between 1991-98 and data contained in an UNSCOM report published in 1999.

Since I gave this answer, Her Majesty's Government has carried out a more detailed study. This latest 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, 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.

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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:

In answer to questions on 12 March I said that weapons inspectors were unable to account for 4,000 tonnes of so-called precursor chemicals used in the production of weapons; 610 tonnes of precursor chemicals used in the production of nerve gas; and 31,000 chemical weapons munitions (Official Report col 744).

This information was the best available at the time, and was based on Iraqi declarations to UNSCOM inspectors between 1991-98 and data contained in an UNSCOM report published in 1999.

Since I gave this answer, Her Majesty's Government has carried out a more detailed study. This latest 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, 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.

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