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Labour Party Briefing

Iraq

20 September 2002

Key messages

- Whilst Iraq has told the UN that it is ready to readmit weapons inspectors, people are bound to be sceptical of this offer coming only four days after Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister ruled this out.
- It is clear that this offer has only come about as a result of the Government's strategy and the determination of the international community to stand firm against the threat posed by Saddam. It is important to ensure that pressure is maintained on the regime until the WMD programme is destroyed.
- We must be aware that Saddam has a long history of playing games. Only yesterday his Foreign Minister made an extraordinary declaration to the UN that Iraq did not have nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.
- Saddam continues to defy the UN and international law. He is still in breach of at least 23 of the 27 UN obligations imposed on Iraq. The onus is still on Saddam to comply immediately with all existing UN Security Council resolutions - and we are pressing for a new resolution to ensure proper compliance on weapons inspections.
- Saddam has accelerated his efforts to develop a biological, chemical and nuclear weapons capability since the expulsion of weapons inspectors in 1998, and the means to deliver them. He is a uniquely dangerous dictator: the only one to have used WMD against his own people and neighbours.

Briefing update

Recall of Parliament and publication of the dossier

The PM has requested a recall of Parliament to which the Speaker has agreed. This will take place on Tuesday 24 September from 11.30 to 22.00. There will be a Statement from the PM followed by a debate on the adjournment opened by the Foreign Secretary. The House of Lords will also sit from 11.30.

The dossier on Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction will be available to MPs on the day from 8am. It will be available in hard copy from the Vote Office and the Printed Papers Office. It will be on the internet on four sites:

www.pm.gov.uk;

www.fco.gov.uk;

www.mod.gov.uk;

www.official-documents.co.uk

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Latest developments

Iraq has told the UN it is ready to readmit weapons inspectors. However, Saddam has a long history of playing games. People are bound to be sceptical of this offer coming just four days after Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister ruled this out. The onus is still on Saddam to comply with all UN Security Council Resolutions against him.

On 17 September UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) held preliminary talks with representatives of the Iraqi government about practical arrangements related to the resumption of inspections.

UN Security Council resolution 687 sets out the terms under which inspectors should be able to operate. Iraq must allow UNMOVIC (which has replaced UNSCOM as the UN weapons inspection body) into **any location** for inspection at **any time**, review **any document**, interview **any scientist, technician or other individual** and **seize any prohibited items** for destruction.

It is unclear from the preliminary talks with UNMOVIC whether Iraq accepts these conditions. The Iraqi side said that it needed some time to study these proposals. Further talks are due to take place in the week beginning 30 September.

The Prime Minister has called on the international community to keep up the pressure on Iraq:

"Nobody should be in any doubt. This is not because Saddam wants to let the inspectors back in. He has played around for years. We have got to keep up the pressure to make sure the weapons inspectors actually go in – not just that he says they can go in but that they actually go in and that they can do their job."

The threat

Iraq poses a very serious threat to the security of the Gulf region and the rest of the world. Saddam has accelerated his efforts to develop a biological, chemical and nuclear weapons capability since the expulsion of weapons inspectors in 1998, and the means to deliver them.

Saddam is a uniquely dangerous dictator: the only one to have used WMD against his own people (at Halabja in 1988) and neighbours (against Iran during the Iran/Iraq war).

Saddam also has an appalling human rights record, which includes abuses such as torture, rape and murder of innocent civilians, political dissidents and ethnic minorities under his regime. Amnesty estimate he murdered about 100,000 Kurds during the late 1980's Iraqi government-led campaign to eliminate Kurds in Northern Iraq.

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He has failed to comply with at least 23 of the 27 UN obligations imposed on Iraq. He is refusing to co-operate with the UN's efforts to help the Iraqi people. Vast amounts of chemical and biological weapons stocks are unaccounted for.

While the UN inspectors operated in Iraq, finding and destroying Saddam's WMD stocks, and preventing Saddam's pursuit of a WMD programme, the policy of containment worked. But this check on Saddam was lost when he kicked out the inspectors four years ago.

In an extraordinary statement to the United Nations Naji Sabri, Foreign Minister of Iraq said yesterday:

"I hereby declare before you that Iraq is clear of all nuclear, chemical and biological weapons"

Yet a good deal of information remains that Saddam has been working hard to rebuild his WMD capability. The Government believes that Iraq has made continued progress with its ballistic missile programme, and that research on a nuclear weapons programme has restarted. Further details of this activity will be outlined in the dossier.

Iraq's defiance of the United Nations

Iraq is in a league of its own when it comes to flouting the authority of the United Nations and international law. The Iraqi regime is the only member of the UN since 1945 to have annexed another member state, and it is the only state to have been condemned by the UN for breaching the Geneva Convention on the use of chemical weapons, a convention in place since 1925.

Since 1990, at least nine separate UN Security Council resolutions have been imposed on Iraq. Yet Saddam Hussein is in full compliance with none of them. Of the 27 separate obligations imposed on the regime, 23 have been ignored or flouted (see table below).

Foremost among the obligations on Iraq are those dealing with its stock of weapons of mass destruction. Under the terms of UNSCR 707, passed in August 1991, Iraq is obliged to:

- provide full, final and complete disclosure of its WMD programmes;
- give UNSCOM (UN Special Commission) and the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) unconditional and unrestricted access;
- cease any concealment or movement of its WMD;
- respond fully to questions or requests from IAEA/UNSCOM;
- allow IAEA/UNSCOM flights without interference;
- halt all nuclear activities other than legitimate use of its isotopes;
- provide IAEA/UNSCOM with any necessary logistical support.

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Yet the UN weapons inspectors left in 1998, following concerted Iraqi efforts over many years at deception and intimidation. Indeed, from the moment that inspectors arrived in Iraq in 1991 it quickly became clear that the regime would resort to any measure to prevent them from fulfilling their mandates. Denying access to specific sites was a feature of the seven-year period of inspections, including:

- firing warning shots in the air to prevent IAEA inspectors from intercepting nuclear related equipment in June 1991;
- keeping IAEA inspectors in a car park for four days in September 1991 and refusing to allow them to leave with incriminating documents on Iraq's nuclear weapons programme;
- announcing that UN monitoring and verification plans were "unlawful" in October 1991;
- refusing UNSCOM inspectors access to the Ministry of Agriculture despite the fact that there was reliable evidence that the site contained archives related to proscribed activities;
- refusing to allow UNSCOM the use of its own aircraft to fly into Iraq, and objecting to it using its own helicopters and choosing its own flight plans;
- refusing to allow UNSCOM to install remote-controlled monitoring cameras at two key missile sites in the summer of 1993;
- destroying documentary evidence of WMD programmes in September 1997.

In December 1997, Iraq created a new category of sites – 'presidential and sovereign' – from which it claimed authority to bar the inspectors.

Nowhere was Iraqi obstruction of UN inspectors more blatant than in the field of biological weapons. At sites in Al-Hakam and Daura, which Iraq had said served as a factory to produce animal feed, inspectors subsequently discovered had been used to produce anthrax spores and botulinum toxin for weapons. It was only in July 1995, after intense pressure, that Iraq acknowledged its significant biological weapons programme even existed.

In the period since 1998, following the departure of weapons inspectors, Baghdad has consistently refused to allow them to return in line with UN Security Council resolutions. Indeed, Iraq's latest offer to the UN Secretary General on 16th September to allow inspections to restart "without conditions" came only four days after being ruled out by Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister.

Iraq has played games with the UN about weapons inspectors for years. The international community and the United Nations is therefore right to remain sceptical about its intentions now.

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The Iraqi Regime's Record on implementing UNSC resolutions

REQUIREMENT	IS IRAQ COMPLYING?
UNSCR 661, 6 August 1990 Trade embargo on Iraq, except food and medicine	No
UNSCR 686, 2 March 1991 Iraq must return all stolen Kuwaiti property	No
UNSCR 687, 3 April 1991 Iraq must respect the border with Kuwait agreed in 1963	Partial
Iraq must accept destruction, removal or rendering harmless of its WMD	No
Iraq must declare the elements of its WMD programmes	No
Iraq must co-operate with UNMOVIC and IAEA inspections	No
Iraq must accept all responsibility for direct damage due to its invasion of Kuwait	No
Iraq must co-operate in accounting for missing Kuwaitis and others missing since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait	No
Iraq must not commit or support international terrorism	No
UNSCR 688, 5 April 1991 Iraq must end repression of its civilian population	No
Iraq must allow access to international humanitarian organisations	Partial
Iraq must co-operate with UN Secretary General on needs of Iraqi civilians	Partial
UNSCR 707, 15 August 1991 Iraq must complete full, final and complete disclosure of its WMD programmes	No
Iraq must give UNMOVIC and IAEA unconditional and unrestricted access	No
Iraq must cease any concealment or movement of its WMD	No
Iraq must fully respond to questions or requests from IAEA/UNMOVIC	No
Iraq must allow UNMOVIC/IAEA flights without interference	No
Iraq must halt all nuclear activities other than legitimate use of its isotopes	No
Iraq must provide IAEA/UNMOVIC with any necessary logistical support	No
UNSCR 715, 11 October 1991 Iraq must co-operate with UNMOVIC/IAEA monitoring	No
Iraq must enact penal laws to secure enforcement against WMD in Iraq	No
UNSCR 949, 15 October 1994 Iraq must not use force to threaten its neighbours or UN operations	No
Iraq must not enhance its military capability in southern Iraq	No
UNSCR 1051, 17 December 1999 Iraq must report to IAEA/UNMOVIC shipment of dual-use WMD items	No
UNSCR 1284, 17 December 1999 Iraq must co-operate with UNMOVIC	No
Iraq must co-operate with the Tripartite Commission	No
Iraq must co-operate with the 'Oil for Food' programme	Partial

The response

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The Prime Minister set out the need to respond to the threat posed by Saddam's regime in his speech at the TUC. He outlined the lessons to be learnt from 11 September and in dealing with threats before they materialise:

"suppose I had come last year on the same day as this year - 10 September. Suppose I had said to you: there is a terrorist network called Al Qa'ida. It operates out of Afghanistan. It has carried out several attacks and we believe it is planning more. It has been condemned by the UN in the strongest terms. Unless it is stopped, the threat will grow. And so I want to take action to prevent that. Your response and probably that of most people would have been very similar to the response of some of you yesterday on Iraq. There would have been few takers for dealing with it and probably none for taking military action of any description."

The PM has made it clear that how we deal with the threat is still under discussion, But the UN resolutions are there for a purpose. Because Saddam is in breach of UN resolutions, the UN has to be the route to deal with this issue. But the UN must be the way to resolve the threat from Saddam, not to avoid it. Those who believe passionately in international law and justice have a responsibility to recognise that to do nothing on Iraq is not an option. It is the credibility of the UN that is at stake.

There is no doubt that effective international pressure has forced Iraq to abandon its previous stated position on weapons inspections. But the international community cannot allow Iraq to play games with the UN, as it has done before.

The Government is therefore working for a new UN Security Council resolution which makes it unmistakably clear to Iraq what its obligations are to the UN and the international community. This would establish a tough inspection regime which sets out clearly Baghdad's obligations and would allow for an early test of whether Iraq's offer is genuine.

If Saddam is serious about accepting the return of weapons inspectors without conditions, he should have no problem with a new UN Security Council resolution clearly setting out his obligations, and nor should anyone else.

Yesterday Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said:

"What is crucial is that the international community, through the Security Council, makes it clear to Iraq that weapons inspections must take place without conditions, without delays, without games."

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Regime change

The Iraqi people and the rest of the world would be better off without Saddam. But the issue here is WMD and the defiance of the UN. Either the regime has to stop being a threat, or the regime has to change.

Our quarrel is with Saddam, not the Iraqi people. They deserve better. Iraq is a country with a talented population, a country that is potentially very successful. We want to welcome it back into the international community. We want the people to be free to live fulfilling lives without the oppression and terror of Saddam.

There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the people of Iraq would be far better off without Saddam and would like to be rid of him.

Humanitarian relief

Saddam has abused the Oil for Food programme that is meant to help the Iraqi people. Over \$2.5 billion allocated by the UN for humanitarian goods is left unspent by Iraq and a further \$1 billion of goods already approved by the UN are blocked by Iraqi bureaucracy.

The UK is also trying to improve the humanitarian situation in Iraq. In November 2001, the UK played a leading role in securing agreement on a new UN Security Council resolution 1382, which introduced targeted controls on imports of military goods and weapons of mass destruction and lifted blanket sanctions. Aside from our role at the UN, UK aid to Iraq continues both bilaterally and through the EU. Since the Gulf War, British assistance has amounted to more than 100 million pounds, making us one of the largest donors.

International Agenda

The Prime Minister has made it clear in his TUC speech that Iraq is not the only international issue that must be dealt with. The continuing violence in the Middle East over the past year makes the case for a renewed attempt to restart the peace process. There has never been a greater need for international involvement.

The Government is therefore committed to working with partners in the EU, US and Russia, together with the United Nations and other nations in the region, to help ensure there is a lasting and peaceful settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, in line with UN Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 1397.

UN Security Council resolution 1397, approved in March 2002 was a significant moment. For the first time, the international community made clear its wish to see two co-existing states of Israel and Palestine living side by side within secure and recognised borders.

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The UK Government has long called for a two-state solution as the basis for a lasting settlement. Both sides need to resume meaningful negotiations to implement the Tenet plan and Mitchell Report as a first step towards a lasting settlement. We have consistently called for a halt to all acts of violence and an ending of settlement activity.

Other international issues also require action too. The UK played a key role with others in helping to avert an all-out conflict between India and Pakistan in May over Kashmir, and we are continuing our efforts to help ensure that these two nuclear powers reach a long term settlement over the issue.

Speaking at the TUC, the PM said:

"The key characteristic of today's world is interdependence. Your problem becomes my problem. They have to be tackled collectively. All these problems threaten the ability of the world to make progress in an orderly and stable way. Climate change threatens our environment. Africa, if left to decline, will become a breeding ground for extremism. Terrorism and weapons of mass destruction combine modern technology with political or religious fanaticism. If unchecked they will, as September 11 showed, explode into disorder and chaos."

Internationalism is no longer a utopian cry of the Left; it is practical statesmanship."

Background briefing: Saddam's regime

Iraq has been a republic since 1958 following the overthrow of the independent kingdom established in 1932. Saddam Hussein seized power in a coup d'etat on 16 July 1979 proclaiming himself President, Secretary-General of the ruling Ba'ath party and Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council. The following day he promoted himself Field Marshal. In May 1994 Saddam also appointed himself Prime Minister. In other words Saddam is head of state, head of government, leader of Iraq's only political party and head of the armed forces.

This concentration of power in the hands of one man is almost unparalleled in the modern world. It says much about the nature of Iraq's political regime, which is characterised by one party rule, the suppression of civil society, brutal human rights violations including widespread use of torture, suppression of minorities like the Kurds and Shiites and complete control by the state of the media. Internet use is also totally controlled by the government. The Ba'ath Party rules Iraq through the Revolutionary Command Council which enacts legislation by decree.

It relies extensively on the systematic use of terror to intimidate its people in a manner that has few, if any, comparisons in the modern world. Its direct antecedents are the dictatorships of the 1930s, Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union.

The Government's security apparatus includes militias attached to the President, the ruling Baath Party, and the Interior Ministry. The military and security forces play a

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central role in maintaining the environment of intimidation and fear on which government power rests. The Government makes no attempt to acknowledge, investigate, or punish officials or members of the military or security forces accused of human rights abuses. Military and security forces commit widespread, serious, and systematic human rights abuses.

The Ba'ath Party controls the government and is the only recognised political party. Recent elections allowed for only Ba'ath Party authorised candidates, resulting in the election, for example, of the President's son, Uday Saddam Hussein, to the National Assembly with 99.99% of the vote.

The government and the Ba'ath Party tightly control and own all print, news agency and broadcast media. The media do not report opposing points of view expressed either domestically or abroad. Their sole mission is to relay state propaganda.

Uday Hussein, heads an extensive media empire, including the most popular of the three television channels, Shebab, or Youth TV, and more than a dozen weeklies and dailies. Uday is also head of the national press union, which has named him "journalist of the century" for his "innovative role, his efficient contribution in the service of Iraq's media family ... and his defence of honest and committed speech".

The NGO Human Rights Watch noted in its last annual report "The Iraqi government of President Saddam Hussein perpetrated widespread and gross human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests of suspected political opponents and their relatives, routine torture and ill-treatment of detainees, summary execution of military personnel and political detainees as part of a "prison cleansing" campaign, and forced expulsions of Kurds and Turkmen from Kirkuk and other regions."

In its 2002 report Amnesty International recorded scores of people, including possible prisoners of conscience and armed forces officers suspected of planning to overthrow the government, were executed. Scores of suspected anti-government opponents, including people suspected of having contacts with opposition groups in exile, were arrested. The fate and whereabouts of most of those arrested, including those detained in previous years, remained unknown. Several people were given lengthy prison terms after grossly unfair trials before special courts. Torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners and detainees was systematic.

In October 2000 Amnesty reported the execution by beheading of dozens of women for "prostitution". The victims were executed in front of their homes by a militia created by Saddam's son, Uday. Amongst those executed for "prostitution" was Dr Najat Mohammad Haydar, an obstetrician in Baghdad's leading hospital who was reportedly critical of corruption in the health services.

A preliminary survey carried out in northern Iraq by the UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) estimated the number of internally displaced persons at 805,000 by the end of October 2000, comprising 23 percent of the population. On December 4 that year, the executive director of the UN Office of the Iraq Program (OIP) told the

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Security Council he was "greatly concerned with the increasing number of internally displaced persons," whose living conditions in some cases were "abominable". A major factor in the rising number of internally displaced persons was the government's continued expulsion of Kurds and Turkmen from their homes in Kirkuk, Tuz Khormatu, Khaniqin, and other districts as part of its "Arabization" program. Most were expelled to areas controlled by Kurdish opposition forces and a smaller number to central and southern Iraq.