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CIC Ministerial Briefing

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IRAQ

The Latest

Recall of Parliament

There will be a Statement from the PM at 11.30 today 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 was published at 8am.

The Dossier

In the foreword to the dossier the **Prime Minister** states:

"In recent months, I have been increasingly alarmed by the evidence from inside Iraq that despite sanctions, despite the damage done to his capability in the past, despite the UN Security Council Resolutions expressly outlawing it, and despite his denials, Saddam Hussein is continuing to develop WMD, and with them the ability to inflict real damage upon the region, and the stability of the world."

"What I believe the assessed intelligence has established beyond doubt is that Saddam has continued to produce chemical and biological weapons, that he continues in his efforts to develop nuclear weapons, and that he has been able to extend the range of his ballistic missile programme."

"I also believe that, as stated in the document, Saddam will now do his utmost to try to conceal his weapons from UN inspectors."

"I am in no doubt that the threat is serious and current, that he has made progress on WMD, and that he has to be stopped. Saddam has used chemical weapons, not only against an enemy state, but against his own people. Intelligence reports make clear that he sees the building up of his WMD capability, and the belief overseas that he would use these weapons, as vital to his strategic interests, and in particular his goal of regional domination."

"I believe that faced with the information available to me, the UK Government has been right to support the demands that this issue be confronted and dealt with. We must ensure that he does not get to use the weapons he has, or get hold of the weapons he wants."

The key facts from the dossier are

As a result from intelligence the Government judges that Iraq has

- continued to produce chemical and biological agents.
- military plans for the use of chemical and biological weapons including against its own Shia population. Some of these weapons are deployable within 45 minutes of an order to use them.

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- command and control arrangements in respect of chemical and biological weapons. Authority ultimately resides with Saddam Hussein. (There is intelligence that he may have delegated this authority to his son Qusai);
- developed mobile laboratories for military use, corroborating earlier reports about the mobile production of biological warfare agents;
- pursued illegal programmes to procure controlled materials of potential use in the production of chemical and biological weapons programmes;
- tried covertly to acquire technology and materials which could be used in the production of nuclear weapons;
- sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa, despite having no active civil nuclear power programme that could require it;
- recalled specialists to work on its nuclear programme;
- illegally retained up to 20 al-Hussein missiles, with a range of 650km, capable of carrying chemical or biological warheads;
- started deploying its al-Samoud liquid propellant missile, and has used the absence of weapons inspectors to work on extending its range to at least 200km, which is beyond the limit of 150km imposed by the United Nations;
- started producing the solid-propellant Ababil-100, and is making efforts to extend its range to at least 200km, which is beyond the limit of 150km imposed by the United Nations;
- constructed a new engine test stand for the development of missiles capable of reaching the UK Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus and NATO members (Greece and Turkey), as well as all Iraq's Gulf neighbours and Israel;
- pursued illegal programmes to procure materials for use in its illegal development of long range missiles;
- learnt lessons from previous UN weapons inspections and has already begun to conceal sensitive equipment and documentation in advance of the return of inspectors.

Saddam Hussein pursues his own priorities not those of the Iraqi people.

Iraq's human rights record is appalling. Human rights violations include harassment of women, persecution on account of religious affiliation, torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment, extrajudicial killings and arbitrary executions, imposition of the death sentence for crimes not serious enough to justify it, persecution on account of political opinion and ethnicity, forced population transfers (Arabisation), arbitrary arrest and detention and lack of fair trial and due process.

Amnesty International's report of 15 August 2001 highlighted systematic torture of political prisoners in Iraq. Methods include knife cuts, sexual attacks, electric shocks, eye gouging, cigarette burns, pulling out of fingernails and mutilation of hands with electric drills.

Anyone found guilty of slandering the President is punished by having their tongue removed.

While Baghdad claims that "oil for food" cannot meet the health needs of the Iraqi people, it has submitted contracts to the UN for approval in recent weeks for

- over 2 billion cigarettes
- about 70,000 tons of cosmetics
- 1.5 million tons of perfume

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- 750,000 television sets
- 31,000 dishwashers

The UK, US and the international community remain committed to the long-term development of Afghanistan. The UK is part of a huge international effort to rebuild Afghanistan. That will continue. But that does not mean we should close our eyes to the threat that Saddam poses. Not an either/or.

Iraq has told the UN it is ready to readmit weapons inspectors "unconditionally".

The letter does not say Iraq would allow UNMOVIC into any location for inspection at any time, review any document and interview any scientist, technician or other individual and seize any prohibited items for destruction. These are conditions set down in UN Security Council resolution 687.

The onus is still on Saddam Hussein to comply with ALL UN Security Council Resolutions against him.

Dr. **Naji Sabri**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq made a statement at the UN's General Assembly last Thursday. In the statement he said:

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

"Iraq rejects any transgression by whosoever at the expense of its rights, sovereignty, security, and independence."

"Iraq demands that its inalienable rights stipulated in those very resolutions are met, including respect of its sovereignty and security, lifting the blockade imposed on it, and applying paragraph 14 (of Resolution 687) to the Zionist entity, as stipulated in the text in the same manner as it was applied to Iraq."

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