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Jp139

PRIME MINISTER

SEPTEMBER 2002 IRAQ DOSSIER

1. I have decided to write to explain the process by which the document, published on 24 September 2002 as "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction - The Assessment of the British Government", was compiled. This letter has been seen by my colleagues on the JIC.

February-March 2002

2. In mid-February Overseas and Defence (OD) Secretariat commissioned a number of papers for your visit to President Bush after Easter. They included a paper for public consumption on WMD capabilities worldwide. In the event, the first draft, produced by Assessments Staff, covered Iraq, Iran, Libya and North Korea. In mid-March it was decided to limit the paper to Iraq. A draft of this paper, prepared by Assessments Staff in co-ordination with the Agencies, was sent to David Manning on 21 March. It was decided that the moment was not right to proceed with the exercise and the paper was not released.

3. This March draft incorporated judgements made in the JIC Assessment on "The Status of Iraqi WMD Programmes" issued on 15 March.

April-August 2002

4. OD Secretariat monitored developments throughout April, May and June. In mid-June they sent various revised drafts to David Manning covering Iraq

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WMD capabilities, the history of UN inspections in Iraq, and other papers. As of late July/early August whether and when to proceed with publication of any of these drafts remained undecided.

September 2002

5. On 3 September you announced that the Government's assessment of Iraq's WMD capabilities would be made public in the next few weeks. Over the next few days discussions took place between David Manning, Alastair Campbell, myself and our respective teams about the appropriate structure for the dossier. At meetings on 5 and 9 September (attendance list for 5 September meeting at Flag A) it was agreed that this should cover the history of Iraq's WMD programmes, the history of the inspection process, an account of current capabilities and an account of the nature of the regime to include its record of severe human rights abuse. The purpose was to present a more detailed account of Iraqi capabilities to be placed in the wider context. Unlike the previous drafts, it would refer specifically to intelligence material. It was agreed that since this would now be an intelligence-based document I, as JIC Chairman, rather than OD Secretariat would be in charge of the process. These agreements were set out in detail in Alastair's note to me of 9 September (Flag B).

6. The drafting of the revised document was co-ordinated by Julian Miller working with representatives of Departments, including DIS, SIS, GCHQ, and FCO. There were two meetings of two to three hours each, numerous exchanges of drafts and constant consultations between the experts concerned. With the agreement of the Agencies, representatives from the No 10 (Danny Pruce) and FCO Press Offices (John Williams, and James Paver) were involved. The aim was to ensure that the public assessment deployed the intelligence effectively, taking account of the reliability of the information and the demands of

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source protection. As is natural in the JIC drafting process, there was debate about a number of the issues in the dossier, but agreement was reached on the final text, including the use of the intelligence about the deployability of CBW within 45 minutes. This intelligence came from a line of reporting judged to be reliable and was consistent with standing JIC judgements. It was included by the drafters and approved by the JIC. Its inclusion was not suggested by No 10. The report was highlighted in the same terms in a JIC Assessment of 9 September. This 9 September Assessment also reflected other recently received intelligence which was recorded in the dossier under that heading, "Recent Intelligence".

7. The assessment of Iraq's current capabilities was handled separately from the historical and human rights chapters. Parts 2 and 3, which were not intelligence based, were initially prepared by the FCO and subsequently edited by Assessments Staff. The work on Part 1 was led by the Assessments Staff from the beginning.

8. JIC members were asked to consult Ministers during the drafting process as appropriate. Comments were received from Ministers and from No 10.

9. The Foreword was drafted by you. I, and some JIC members, commented on your draft before it was finalised.

10. The JIC agreed that all intelligence-based sections in the document would be submitted to it before they were finalised. The draft assessment was discussed at the JIC on 11 and 18 September. The final draft was circulated to JIC members on 19 September and subsequently agreed by them. It was sent by me to Alastair Campbell on 20 September (Flag C). I regarded this as the formal moment at which I was taking responsibility for the contents. I noted to Alastair that the draft

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Conclusion (Flag D), which had been drafted by me and formed part of earlier versions of the document, had been dropped. I regarded it as superfluous.

11. To avoid subsequent misunderstanding about the handling of the text, I and my staff remained in overall charge of the final publication arrangements, including signing off the printer's proof on 23 September.

12. At no stage in the drafting process set out above was there an attempt, from No 10 or elsewhere, to overrule the judgements of the JIC or my judgement as the person in charge.



JOHN SCARLETT

4 June 2003

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