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NOTE ON WMD

There are two issues:

- (1) Iraq and WMD; and
- (2) WMD as a threat, more generally.

(1) Iraq and WMD

We know Saddam had WMD. We know the ISG has not yet found weapons, though it has found evidence of programmes. The truth is that we anticipated finding the weapons during or shortly after the conflict. So to say we are surprised at the ISG's findings is no less than the truth.

The issue of US/UK good faith can be laid to rest. We received the intelligence. We honestly believed it.

The issue now is: was it right; and if it wasn't, what can we learn about the difficulties of gathering intelligence in these situations?

What we can say is this:

(a) there is no doubt Saddam had WMD. It was not just US/UK intelligence agencies that said so, it was many others round the world. In any event, Saddam used them. The UN when it left in 1998 found stockpiles unaccounted for. That is why UN Resolution 1441 unanimously described his weapons as a threat to world peace.

(b) we should exercise some caution in saying definitively no stockpiles now exist. In the 1990s, despite intensive investigation, the full extent of his programmes remained concealed for years. We know from the intelligence pre-war that he intended to conceal them. The ISG has found ample evidence of an intention to conceal. Look at what we know now Libya is co-operating, compared with what we could speculate on, on the basis of intelligence.

I don't concede there are no weapons. But I do concede we expected to find them sooner; and there is plainly a legitimate issue about the accuracy of the intelligence.

(c) let us get it clear what the ISG has found so far and what Dr Kay has said.

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The ISG has found:

- Evidence of efforts to maintain BW and nuclear capabilities including equipment, documents and organisms. Teams of scientists were retained to work on them.
- Planning and design work for missiles of up to 1000 km in range.
- Equipment and documentation being systematically destroyed, including during the period just before the conflict.
- Undeclared laboratories and facilities that have a potential for BW and CW production, that should have been declared to the UN.
- In 2002, Iraq successfully tested a UAV with a range of 500km.

All of these things are a breach of the UN Resolutions.

Therefore, though the ISG have not found evidence of actual weapons, they have found evidence of programmes. Any of this would have triggered a justification for conflict.

Dr Kay has said:

- He believes no major new production of weapons occurred post-1991.
- He speculates that Saddam may have been told tales about the programmes or that some stuff was moved to Syria.
- But some old stockpiles may well exist and the capabilities and determination remained intact.
- That Iraq was "a very dangerous place".
- That the conflict was justified, and
- That the US/UK did not interfere with the intelligence.

He makes a claim also that Saddam was trying to manufacture ricin up to the last minute, but UK services at least don't seem to know the provenance of this.

(d) however, in view of the fact that we certainly thought production of new weapons was continuing and it may be that it wasn't, it is sensible to learn the intelligence lessons.

Therefore, the US is going to have a Commission of Experts look into it.

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The UK will refer the issue back to the Intelligence and Security Committee that will have access to the raw intelligence and will co-operate closely with its US counterpart.

Meanwhile the ISG will continue its work on the ground since there are at least 26 million pages of documents and many unvisited sites still to follow up.

2. WMD in general

Whatever the intelligence lessons from Iraq, let us be in no doubt about the threat.

The threat of terrorism and proliferation of WMD continues. It would be disastrous if doubts about the strength of the intelligence in Iraq blinded us to the danger. We know Iran and North Korea are trying to develop nuclear weapons and it is only since Iraq that real pressure on them has started to pay off.

We now know that Libya was far closer than we thought to nuclear capability and on CW than we thought; and, since Iraq, they are working with us to eliminate it. We will soon outline what we know about the commercial trade in WMD.

If we have to accept that some of the Iraq intelligence was wrong, we will do so. But let us not either (a) lurch to the opposite extreme and start pretending Iraq had nothing; or (b) let any intelligence inaccuracy move us off confronting the WMD issue.

So we need:

To put ourselves in the right place on accepting some intelligence may have been wrong and letting that be looked into.

To get across what Kay and the ISG are actually saying.

To re-assert the importance of the WMD question.

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