

## SECTION 3.4

# DEVELOPMENT OF UK STRATEGY AND OPTIONS, LATE JULY TO 14 SEPTEMBER 2002

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## Introduction and key findings

1. This Section addresses the development of UK policy on Iraq and the UK's discussions with the US between the end of July and President Bush's speech to the UN General Assembly on 12 September 2002, in which he challenged the UN to act to address Iraq's failure to meet the obligations imposed by the Security Council since Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iraq in August 1990.
2. The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) Assessment of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons and potential scenarios for their use, of 9 September 2002, is addressed in Section 4.2. That Section also addresses the FCO briefing on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the production of the Iraq dossier, which was published on 24 September 2002 and debated in both Houses of Parliament.
3. The development of options for a possible UK contribution to a US-led military invasion of Iraq is addressed in Section 6.1.
4. By late July 2002, the arrangements for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq had been identified as a crucial element for success in the event of regime change in Iraq, however that occurred. UK planning for that is addressed in Section 6.4.

### Key findings

- In discussions with the US over the summer of 2002, Mr Blair and Mr Straw sought to persuade the US Administration to secure multilateral support before taking action on Iraq; and to do so through the UN. They proposed a strategy in which the first objective was to offer Iraq the opportunity and "last chance" to comply with its obligations to disarm.
- If Iraq did not take that opportunity and military action was required, the UK was seeking to establish conditions whereby such action would command multilateral support and be taken with the authority of the Security Council.
- Mr Blair also decided to publish an explanation of why action was needed to deal with Iraq; and to recall Parliament to debate the issue.
- The UK made a significant contribution to President Bush's decision, announced on 12 September, to take the issue of Iraq back to the UN.
- Statements made by China, France and Russia after President Bush's speech highlighted the different positions of the five Permanent Members of the Security Council, in particular about the role of the Council in deciding whether military action was justified. As a result, the negotiation of resolution 1441 was complex and difficult.

## Advice for Mr Blair following his meeting of 23 July 2002

### MOD advice on the military options, 26 July 2002

**5.** In response to the request following the meeting on 23 July for full details of the proposed military campaign and possible UK contributions, the MOD advised No.10 on 26 July:

- US military planning was still evolving and the Chiefs of Staff were not yet able to judge whether the US had a winning concept.
- Three possible options for a UK contribution were identified but no recommendation was made about which option should be selected.

The advice was sent to Mr Blair on 31 July, as one of several background papers he had commissioned at his meeting on 23 July for summer reading.

**6.** Mr Blair was advised that no decision was needed at that stage.

**7.** The three options identified by the MOD remained the broad framework for discussions until the end of 2002.

**8.** The record of Mr Blair's meeting on 23 July stated that the UK should work on the assumption that it would take part in any military action against Iraq and that Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), could tell the US that the UK was considering a range of options.<sup>1</sup>

**9.** Adm Boyce was asked to send Mr Blair full details of the proposed military campaign, and options for a UK contribution, by 30 July or earlier if they were available.<sup>2</sup>

**10.** The MOD advice on options for a UK contribution to US-led military operations in Iraq was provided in a letter to Mr Matthew Rycroft, Mr Blair's Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, on 26 July.<sup>3</sup>

**11.** The MOD advised that US military planning was "in full swing but it was still evolving". The concept was for an attack launched by forces deployed in Kuwait and from other Gulf States and from ships in the Gulf and elsewhere. The plan was "neither fully developed nor finalised". The Chiefs of Staff were "not yet able to judge whether this is a winning concept". Greater clarity would be needed "before any UK option could be recommended".

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<sup>1</sup> [Minute Rycroft to Manning, 23 July 2002, 'Iraq: Prime Minister's Meeting, 23 July'](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 23 July 2002, 'Iraq Prime Minister's Meeting, 23 July: Follow Up'](#).

<sup>3</sup> [Letter Watkins to Rycroft, 26 July 2002, 'Iraq'](#).

**12.** The MOD stated that it was “clear that the US plan of attack from the South” did not “need British land forces”:

“... in the time available there is very little scope for the preparation and integration of British land forces into the US order of battle; moreover the logistic space available in Kuwait, with five divisions worth of equipment and logistics support entering through only one airhead and a single port would already be confined ...”

**13.** Adm Boyce recommended three options:

- **Package 1:** an “in-place support package” using forces already in the region and US use of UK bases.
- **Package 2:** an “enhanced support package” comprising Package 1 and additional air and maritime forces. That package could include forces that would be “of particular interest to the US because of their own deficiencies, e.g. mine clearance vessels and air-to-air refuellers for their carrier-based aircraft”. While no conventional land forces could meet the timescales for the deployment of maritime and air forces: “Special Forces could be deployed very rapidly to match US timescales and priorities. This is likely to be very attractive to US planners, and their contribution to success would be significant.”
- **Package 3:** a “discrete UK package” based on deployment of an armoured division which the MOD envisaged would be used in northern Iraq, in addition to the forces in Packages 1 and 2. The MOD stated that a force that was “credible” would be required: “Even to create uncertainty in the mind of Saddam”, and the contribution of a division “would probably require command and control at Corps level. The UK might consider providing an armoured division either as part of a US-led Corps or as part of a larger coalition force possibly led by the UK using the framework of the NATO Allied Rapid Reaction Corps [ARRC].”

**14.** The MOD highlighted problems with:

- the concept of a “Running Start”;
- the fragility of the logistic chains; and
- vulnerability to chemical or biological weapons.

**15.** The MOD stated that “thinking about dealing with the aftermath of a successful attack remains sketchy”.

**16.** Finally, the MOD drew attention to the funding which would be required once a decision in principle was made to participate in military activity.

**17.** Mr Geoff Hoon, the Defence Secretary, attached “two large caveats” to all three options.

- First, the timescales were “best planning estimates” and made “sweeping assumptions” about basing, transit routes, and overflights. They also assumed

that funding would be available to improve sustainability and implement Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs).

- Secondly, if the Armed Forces were required to provide 18,000-20,000 people for an emergency fire service in the event of a nationwide firefighters' strike (Operation FRESCO), and the US started military action in winter 2002/3, only the in-place support package and Special Forces would be available.

**18.** Mr Hoon had commissioned further work with a view to expediting what would need to be done once a decision in principle had been taken. UK representatives at a US Central Command (CENTCOM) planning meeting the following week would be instructed "to set our options positively but without committing us to any specific ones". The MOD would write again as soon as there was "greater clarity about the US plan, such that the Chiefs can update their assessment of it (and the risks involved) and the Defence Secretary can make recommendations about the best option to pursue".

**19.** Copies of the letter were sent to the Private Offices of Mr Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, and the Cabinet Secretary, and to Mr John Scarlett, Chairman of the JIC.

**20.** The MOD advice and subsequent developments in its contingency planning during August are addressed in Section 6.1.

**21.** Mr Rycroft submitted the letter to Mr Blair on 31 July, as one of several "background papers you commissioned at the Iraq meeting last week" for "summer reading".<sup>4</sup>

**22.** Mr Rycroft commented to Mr Blair:

"The military are not yet ready to make a recommendation on which if any of the three options to go for. They are continuing to work with the US military. Nor can they yet judge whether the US have a winning concept. You do not need to take decisions yet."

**23.** Sir David Manning told the Inquiry that Mr Blair had said:

"... he didn't want to take any decision or accept any of these options. I think in retrospect ... this was because ... this was the time ... when we were pressing for the Americans to consider the UN route. I think he didn't want to give any signal that he was keen to think about a military alternative ..."<sup>5</sup>

**24.** The other background papers sent to Mr Blair included advice from the FCO on the attitudes of allies, the history of weapons inspection, and from Mr Scarlett on the cohesion of the Iraqi regime.<sup>6</sup> Those are addressed later in this Section.

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<sup>4</sup> Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 31 July 2002, 'Iraq: Background Papers'.

<sup>5</sup> Public hearing, 30 November 2009, page 36.

<sup>6</sup> Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 31 July 2002, 'Iraq: Background Papers'.

**25.** A manuscript note records that the papers were seen by Mr Blair.<sup>7</sup>

### **The attitudes of allies**

**26.** The FCO advised that achieving an EU consensus on Iraq would be difficult.

**27.** Sir John Holmes advised that it would be difficult to persuade France to support military action but “not totally impossible”.

**28.** There was a striking congruence between the conditions Mr Blair had raised in his discussions with President Bush and the conditions identified by France and other allies to help secure support – UN legitimacy; public presentation of credible evidence on WMD; consultation, including on “day after” questions; and a visible attempt to revive the MEPP.

**29.** Following the meeting on 23 July, Mr Straw was asked to provide advice on the positions of countries in the region and the background on UN inspections.<sup>8</sup>

**30.** The FCO provided advice on the attitudes of EU partners to military action against on 30 July.<sup>9</sup> It stated that the JIC would be producing an Assessment of the attitudes of regional governments.

**31.** In relation to EU partners, a short paper was provided based on the advice of FCO posts. The UK had deliberately tried to keep Iraq off the EU agenda because “debate would be futile and would merely expose differences”. That restraint was “increasingly hard to sustain” because of speculation about military action. Achieving an EU consensus on military action would be “difficult”, but a number of factors might help. These included:

- “achieving some sort of UN legitimacy, preferably ... a new resolution; a real effort to get the inspectors in and public presentation of credible WMD evidence”;
- “genuine consultation” by the US “before ... action starts”. That would “need to cover the day-after questions”; and
- “a visible effort by the US to revive the MEPP”.

**32.** As part of the preparation of that advice, Sir John Holmes, British Ambassador to France, addressed the attitude of the new French Government led by President Jacques Chirac.

**33.** In a telegram about France-US relations on 24 July, Sir John advised that the French Government wanted a better dialogue with the US and that “for EU and

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<sup>7</sup> Manuscript comment Rycroft on Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 31 July 2002, ‘Iraq: Background Papers’.

<sup>8</sup> [Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 23 July 2002, ‘Iraq Prime Minister’s Meeting, 23 July: Follow Up’](#).

<sup>9</sup> Letter Davies to Rycroft, 30 July 2002, ‘Iraq: Attitudes of Regional States and EU Partners’ attaching Paper ‘Military Action against Iraq: Attitudes of EU Countries’.

transatlantic reasons we have a strong interest in encouraging the French down this road”.<sup>10</sup> France was worried that the US wished to “free itself of external constraints and its readiness to consider short-term and military solutions do not add up to a coherent and sustainable approach to international problems”. It particularly feared “the consequences of an attack on Iraq”.

**34.** Subsequently on 26 July, Sir John advised that France would be “difficult to bring on board for action against Iraq” for the reasons he had set out in his telegram of 19 February (see Section 3.2).<sup>11</sup> But “despite opposition in the French media and public”, there was:

“... a better chance with [President] Chirac and his new team in place – particularly if certain conditions can be met (credible plan; answers to the day after questions; prospect of international support and legal cover; consultation with France in advance). Neutrality in the event of action is certainly possible. Participation unlikely but not totally impossible – the French want to have a say in what happens afterwards.”

**35.** Sir John added that the new French Government would be “more inclined to keep their doubts private and to engage with the Americans”. The UK needed to “encourage” and “to talk to the French ourselves”.

**36.** The key elements of Sir John’s analysis were:

- The new French Government had said nothing in public, in the lead up to the election and subsequently, about possible US military action against Iraq. They had “stuck rigidly to the need for Iraq to accept the unconditional return of inspectors”. That was “partly driven” by their desire “to avoid public disagreement with the US” but also reflected “their belief that the UN track represents the best hope of averting a military solution, and that P5 [the five Permanent Members of the Security Council] consensus is essential to getting the inspectors back in”.
- “Privately” the Quai d’Orsay (the French Foreign Ministry) accepted that the chances of avoiding military action were “more or less gone”, and it was “deeply concerned about the implications of an attack on Iraq”, which one senior official had described as “highly unwise”.
- President Chirac had more freedom of movement after the election “should he choose to use it”; but he would have his “work seriously cut out in shifting press and public opinion in favour of military action” if that was what he wanted to do.
- France was not encouraged by the absence of progress since February.
- UN backing was “particularly important ... not just because of the Quai’s approach to international law, but because they also see it as critical to winning

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<sup>10</sup> Telegram 461 Paris to FCO London, 24 July 2002, ‘France-US Relations’.

<sup>11</sup> [Telegram 467 Paris to FCO London, 26 July 2002, ‘Iraq: Attitudes of EU Partners’.](#)



the support of enough of the Arab world. The French would be prepared to go a long way to secure UN support for a military operation, which they believe might just be obtainable if (a very big if) the Americans want it enough ... [O]n past precedent, formal UN authorisation is not an absolute requirement ... But what would be indispensable would be a Security Council statement (not necessarily in the form of a SCR [Security Council resolution]) that Iraq was in breach of its obligations and a warning making clear to Iraq the consequences of continued violation.”

- The new Government had been “careful not to rule out the possibility of French participation in an operation with UN backing ... They know that ... French interests in the region will be tied to the success or failure of US action. The French will certainly not want to be excluded from what happens afterwards. This will increase the pressure on them to acquiesce in any action ...”

**37.** Sir John’s view was that France shared the UK’s desire to avoid “a great European split”. He advocated engagement “seriously and early ... at every level, including Chirac”. That:

“... should not just be, or seem to be, as a catspaw for the Americans, when our minds are already made up and decisions taken, but as a genuine open-ended and open-minded consultation. They will respond well if they think we are serious.”

**38.** Information on Iraq’s WMD was “a particularly urgent priority”. France accepted “in principle that after 11 September we cannot watch while WMD threats develop”, but was “not yet convinced that Iraq presents an imminent, severe danger, and certainly not one that justifies the wider risks of a military operation”.

**39.** Mr Rycroft sent Sir John Holmes’ telegram of 26 July with the FCO advice of 30 July to Mr Blair on 31 July.<sup>12</sup>

## UN inspections

**40.** The FCO response to Mr Blair’s request for a background paper on UN inspections was to provide a copy of the relevant section from the draft dossier prepared for publication.

**41.** In response to Mr Blair’s request for background on UN inspections, Mr Straw’s Private Secretary advised that the “best available assessment” was in the “Cabinet Office document now awaiting a decision on publication”.<sup>13</sup> He provided the section on the ‘History of UN Inspections in Iraq’ dated 20 June (see Section 4.1), which described

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<sup>12</sup> Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 31 July 2002, ‘Iraq: Background Papers’.

<sup>13</sup> Letter Davies to Rycroft, 29 July 2002, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Meeting 22 [sic] July’.

the activities of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Iraq before their withdrawal in December 1998, stating:

- “The history of UN weapons inspections in Iraq has been characterised by persistent Iraqi efforts to frustrate, deceive and intimidate inspectors.”
- Despite that, UNSCOM and the IAEA had “a valuable record of achievement in discovering and destroying biological and chemical weapons stocks, missiles and the infrastructure for Iraq’s nuclear weapons programme”.
- By the end of 1998, “significant uncertainties about the disposition of Iraq’s prohibited programmes” remained when “A series of confrontations and the systematic refusal of Iraq to co-operate, left UNSCOM unable to perform its disarmament mandate and the inspectors withdrew on 13 December 1998.”
- Since December 1998, Iraq had “refused absolutely to comply with its UN disarmament and monitoring obligations and allow access to weapons inspectors”.
- The UK judged that Iraq had “used the intervening 40-month period to rebuild significant aspects of its chemical, biological, nuclear and ballistic missile programmes”.
- Those actions “not only” presented “a direct challenge to the authority of the United Nations”, they also breached “Iraq’s commitments under two key international arms control agreements”, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention<sup>14</sup> and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.<sup>15</sup>

**42.** The document described the UN’s inspections mandate in Iraq, recorded “some instances of Iraqi obstruction” and focused on “one of the most egregious examples on non-compliance”, its denial of a biological weapons programme.

**43.** The document concluded with a “summary of developments” since December 1998 and the steps Iraq needed to take “if the international community was ever to have any assurance that Saddam Hussein’s ambitions to develop ... WMD have finally been thwarted”. That summary referred to the report to the Security Council by the UNSCOM Chairman in 1999 as a “damning account of Iraqi deceit”; and to the establishment of a UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC). It described “full co-operation with UN inspectors, including unconditional, immediate and unrestricted access to any and all sites” as a “key measure” of Iraqi compliance. It ended with a statement that:

“In the interests of regional and global security, the international community cannot allow this stand off to continue indefinitely.”

**44.** Resolution 1284, adopted by the UN Security Council in December 1999 after considerable debate and disagreement, is addressed in Section 1.1.

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<sup>14</sup> “which bans the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition or retention of biological weapons”.

<sup>15</sup> “which prohibits Iraq from manufacturing or otherwise acquiring nuclear weapons”.

## Iraqi regime cohesion

**45. Mr Scarlett advised on 31 July that Iraq considered a US attack to be likely.**

**46. There was no intelligence of serious rifts within the regime and the perception that senior members would be targeted by the US gave them no incentive to work directly against Saddam Hussein.**

**47. Some key members of Saddam Hussein's regime were reported to favour allowing inspectors to return.**

**48. Popular uprisings would only be possible if there was a credible coalition attack "with the clear intention of finishing off the regime".**

**49.** On 31 July, Mr Scarlett provided a note "examining the weaknesses and sources of friction within the regime", in response to a request from Sir David Manning, Mr Blair's Foreign Policy Adviser and Head of the Overseas and Defence Secretariat (OD Sec), for more work on the cohesion of the Iraqi regime.<sup>16</sup> As well as internal regime tensions, which had been examined in the JIC Assessment of 4 July, 'Iraq: Regime Cohesion', and discussed in Mr Blair's meeting of 23 July (see Section 3.3), Mr Scarlett addressed military preparations and the attitudes of the Iraqi populace.

**50.** Mr Scarlett wrote that the Iraqi regime considered a US attack to be "likely"; and it saw the "greatest threat in the short term as coming from an 'Afghanistan' scenario of air strikes and Special Forces supporting an internal uprising". But Saddam Hussein was "beginning to realise that a much larger US military operation" was "now possible".

**51.** The UK had no "intelligence suggesting any serious rifts within the senior members of the regime". There were differences within the Iraqi regime over permitting the return of UN inspectors. Mr Tariq Aziz, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr al-Hadithi, the Foreign Minister, Mr Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, the Vice Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, and Mr Uday Hussein, Saddam Hussein's son, were "reportedly ... more in favour". Mr Scarlett judged that policy differences were "unlikely to be a serious concern" for Saddam Hussein: he totally dominated the regime and "despite any damage to his prestige from allowing the return of inspectors" there was "little risk to him personally from making sharp changes in policy". He had "done so in the past" and his deputies disagreed "at their peril". It was "likely that senior members of the regime" judged that "the US threat to topple the regime" would "include them". There was "little or no incentive for them to work directly against Saddam".

**52.** Conditions inside Iraq were better than they were "immediately before the start of the Oil-for-Food (OFF) programme in late 1996"; but the "greatest losers under sanctions" had been the middle classes. There was "no reliable information on public opinion inside Iraq", but a belief that the Iraqi population was "cowed by Saddam's security apparatus".

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<sup>16</sup> [Minute Scarlett to Manning, 31 July 2002, 'The Iraqi Regime: Risks and Threats'](#).

**53.** The Kurds were “content with the status quo”. They had “a significant degree of independence and, as the Kurds did not contribute to compensation payments from OFF revenue to Kuwait, they had done “disproportionately well from OFF”. Their goal was “significant **autonomy** in a federal Iraq”. They remained “wary of backing US military action too openly”.

**54.** The Iraqi regime was “relatively sanguine about the risk of opposition” in the South, and deemed the “main threat” to be “from **SCIRI** [Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq] and its military wing, the **Badr Corps**”. The UK lacked “reliable intelligence on the size and attitudes of particular tribes in southern Iraq”.

**55.** Mr Scarlett concluded:

“... until the regime’s military and security forces have been significantly weakened by external attack, neither SCIRI nor these tribal insurgents can present a significant threat to regime control. Once the regime’s security and military apparatus begins to crack, however, a more general uprising is quite possible, as in 1991. Only a credible coalition attack with the clear intention of finishing off the regime will overcome the local population’s natural sense of caution. After all, the precedent of 1991 showed that the regime was allowed brutally to re-establish its control without significant interference from coalition forces.”

**56.** In response to a request from Mr Jonathan Powell, Mr Blair’s Chief of Staff, Mr Scarlett also sent Mr Blair “classified reading material on Iraq” produced by the US, and the following documents produced by the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS):

- ‘Removing Saddam’, an evaluation of options for removing Saddam produced in March 2002 (see Section 6.1);
- ‘The Iraqi Defence Profile’, an overview of Iraq focusing particularly on Iraq’s military and security organisations, produced in 1999;
- ‘Proliferation Study of Iraq’, an in-depth study of each of Iraq’s programmes to develop weapons of mass destruction, produced in August 2002;
- an ‘aide memoire on WMD and Proliferation’, including Iraq, produced in June 2002;
- ‘Profile: Saddam Hussein’, produced in April 2001;
- ‘The Iraqi Tribes: Their Identity and Role in Internal Security’, produced in June 2002;
- ‘The Iraqi Ba’ath Party’, produced in February 2002;
- ‘The Iraqi Opposition’, produced in June 2002; and
- ‘Infrastructure Briefing Memorandum’, produced in January 2002.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Minute Scarlett to Powell, 1 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Classified Reading Material’.

**57.** It is clear from the documents on the No.10 files that Mr Blair had read them.

**58.** When No.10 asked for reading material for Mr Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Scarlett provided the same documents.<sup>18</sup>

**59.** Further information from the DIS 'Proliferation Study of Iraq' and its 'aide memoire on WMD and Proliferation' can be found in Section 4.2.

### **JIC Assessment, 5 August 2002: 'Iraq: Regional Attitudes and Impact of Military Action'**

**60.** On 5 August, the JIC provided further advice on the attitudes of regional states to military action against Iraq, which it described as a "key issue" facing Ministers.

**61.** The judgements in the Assessment reflected the conditions which had already been identified in policy papers and discussions.

**62.** The Assessment identified that the US must continue to convince regional governments of its determination and ability to remove Saddam Hussein quickly and offer credible plans for the aftermath.

**63.** At the request of the MOD, the JIC reconsidered the judgements in its Assessment of 19 April (see Section 3.3), 'Iraq: Regional Attitudes', on regional attitudes to military action and how much support or opposition they might offer.<sup>19</sup> It also assessed the impact of military action on the internal stability of regional states.

**64.** In its discussion of the draft Assessment on 31 July the JIC identified Iraq as:

"... an immensely important issue for Ministers and the paper would therefore be read widely and with great interest. It looked specifically at the implications of military options but needed to spell out more, the huge ambiguities and doubts in the region about the timing of any US attack, as well as the likely aftermath ... The success of any US action would also depend partly on whether the objective was for the West to have control over Iraq in the longer term ... The overview ... was rather negative but in fact governments in the region would rather like to be rid of Saddam;

"the key issue facing Ministers now was gauging what Iraq's neighbours would say ... the draft Assessment was a little too conventional on this point and did not really get beneath the surface ... Iran's reactions were the most difficult to gauge but would be crucial and would merit fuller treatment in a separate paper."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Minute Scarlett to Rycroft, 5 September 2002, 'Iraq: Classified Reading Material'.

<sup>19</sup> JIC Assessment, 5 August 2002, 'Iraq: Regional Attitudes and Impact of Military Action'.

<sup>20</sup> Minutes, 31 July 2002, JIC meeting.

65. In its Key Judgements, which were very similar to those of 19 April, the JIC concluded:

- “No regional state, including Iran and Syria, would give Iraq significant practical support against a US-led attack.”
- “Turkey would be willing to provide basing for a US-led attack on Iraq. Provided there were no worsening of the security situation in Palestine, Kuwait [...] would provide basing or staging support [...]”
- “Saudi Arabia would be very unlikely to provide basing. It might approve some over-flights, but possibly only for non-offensive operations. It would distance itself from US-led military action, [...]”
- “Arab governments’ support would be badly damaged if Israel used a US-led attack on Iraq [...]. Their support might also be reduced if any military campaign is prolonged or causes many civilian casualties.”
- “A US-led attack on Iraq would spark large-scale protests across the Arab world. Security forces would probably be able to maintain control, at least initially, [...] Anti-Western sentiment in the region would not dissipate quickly and could boost popular sympathy for extremist causes, including Al Qaida.”<sup>21</sup>

66. In the Assessment itself, the JIC stated that Iraq had “no real allies” but regional States were influenced by a long list of factors which made “winning any support [for military action] an uphill struggle”. Those factors were:

- There was a “deep Arab concern” that they were “being called on to support an attack on a fellow Muslim country.”
- Events in Israel/Palestine remained “a primary focus” for Arab States: “No Arab State is persuaded that Saddam should be dealt with before there is a substantial movement towards resolution of the Palestinian problem.”
- For Arab States, “concerns about military action” owed “more to fears about potential internal instability than to any affection for Saddam”.
- There was “uncertainty over US resolve”. Regional support might “firm up when a credible plan” was “on the table” and preparations had begun: “**A quick build up and a rapid and decisive victory**, with low civilian casualties, would minimise popular discontent, especially if the Iraqi people welcomed Saddam’s overthrow”.
- “A UN Security Council resolution justifying force would make it easier for regional governments to justify publicly their acquiescence to US military action. Otherwise, regional States would want stronger evidence of Iraq’s continued pursuit of WMD and that the return of weapons inspectors had been visibly pursued and exhausted.”

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<sup>21</sup> JIC Assessment, 5 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Regional Attitudes and Impact of Military Action’.

- “Most regional governments would be happy to see Saddam’s demise. But they would be likely to have profound misgivings about a campaign without a well-constructed plan for a new Iraq. All agree that Iraq’s territorial integrity must be maintained. But there are differing regional concerns about the place of the Kurds and Shia in any new regime, the type of government and its relationship with the West. Arab States want Iraq to remain a counter-balance to Iran.”
- There were “**economic** concerns about the effect of lost trade”.

67. In addition, the Assessment included the following points:

- The “volatility in Israel/Palestine” continued to “dominate the Arab World’s attention. The pro-Western Arab States may accept a military build up in the region, even in the absence of more concrete progress on Palestine. But we assess that in the run up to an Iraq campaign, **Arab governments’ support could be withdrawn with any worsening of the Israel/Palestine security situation.**”
- “As the originator of the Arab peace initiative, Crown Prince Abdullah [of Saudi Arabia]” remained “focused on Palestine”. If there was “little progress there” or the US was “perceived as resistant to Saudi pressure” that would be “damaging to his domestic credibility”. Anti-US sentiment remained “strong” and the JIC judged that “for the next few months at least”, there was “no prospect of Saudi Arabia agreeing to provide basing for US military action ... even if the prospects for the return of inspectors” remained “slim”.
- Iran feared “eventually being targeted by the US” and was “seriously alarmed at the prospect of greater encirclement by the US if a pro-Western regime were installed in Baghdad”. Once a US attack began, the JIC assessed that Iran “would probably boost its support for Shia groups working against Saddam, with the aim of increasing its own influence in Iraq”. The JIC judged that the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) “would be likely to work directly to undermine US influence, e.g. by manipulating Iraqi groups through propaganda and the selective provision of money and arms, although it would not undertake anything that would provoke US military retaliation”.
- “In the build up to an attack ... Saddam would seek to speak direct to the ‘Arab street to incite unrest ... Saddam may also begin a campaign of **terrorism and sabotage**, possibly even before an attack began. Iraq has consistently failed in previous attempts to conduct successful attacks, either through its own agents or by proxy ... But there is a risk that once Saddam was convinced a regime threatening attack was inevitable he could become more willing to adopt extreme, unpredictable and unorthodox courses of action.”

68. The implication of the Assessment was that the US “must continue to convince regional governments of its determination and ability to remove Saddam quickly and offer credible plans for the aftermath”.

## Discussions with the US, August 2002

### Developments in the US, early August 2002

**69. Debate about the strategy towards Iraq continued in Washington during August.**

**70. The MOD reported on 12 August that President Bush had authorised preparatory military activities.**

**71.** A meeting of the US National Security Council chaired by President Bush was held on 5 August to review what Vice President Dick Cheney described as “the latest iteration of the war plan”.<sup>22</sup>

**72.** In his memoir, General Tommy Franks, Commander in Chief CENTCOM, described his strategic objective as regime change and his operational objectives as securing the oil fields and water infrastructure, while preventing Iraq’s use of long-range missiles and WMD.<sup>23</sup> He wrote that he had told the meeting that, “In a month”, the US would have the lead elements for a “Running Start” force in place. In response to a question from Mr Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, Gen Franks confirmed that would not take the US beyond a point of no return.

**73.** Mr George Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence, was reported to have replied to a question from President Bush about the Iraqi people’s reaction to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein: “Most Iraqis will rejoice when Saddam is gone.”<sup>24</sup>

**74.** In his book published in 2012 Mr Colin Powell, US Secretary of State, wrote that he and President Bush had met on the evening of 5 August “to discuss the pros and cons of the Iraq crisis. Momentum within the administration was building towards military action and the President was inclined in that direction.”<sup>25</sup> In Secretary Powell’s view “not enough attention had been given either to non-military options or to the aftermath of a military conquest”. He was concerned about the unpredictable consequences and had told President Bush: “if you break it, you own it”.

**75.** Secretary Powell wrote that, after listening carefully to the presentation, President Bush had asked for recommendations and that he [Powell] had replied:

“We should take the problem to the United Nations ... Iraq is in violation of multiple UN resolutions. The UN is the aggrieved party. Let’s see if there might be a diplomatic solution to the WMD issue. If not, and war becomes necessary, you will be in a better position to solicit the help of other nations to form a coalition.”

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<sup>22</sup> Cheney D & Cheney L. *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Franks T & McConnell M. *American Soldier*. HarperCollins, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Cheney D & Cheney L. *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Powell C with Koltz T. *It Worked for Me: In Life and Leadership*. Harper Perennial, 2012.



**76.** Secretary Powell wrote that President Bush had added:

“... if the UN certifies to our satisfaction that there are no weapons of mass destruction ... that problem would be solved, but Saddam would still be in power. Is his elimination worth a war?”

**77.** On 12 August, the MOD reported that President Bush had authorised preparatory military activities and that the inter-agency process in Washington had been launched.<sup>26</sup>

**78.** An article published on 15 August by General Brent Scowcroft, the former National Security Advisor to President George H Bush, argued that the US should not attack Saddam Hussein; it should be pressing the United Nations Security Council to insist on an effective no-notice inspection regime for Iraq.<sup>27</sup>

**79.** Mr John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister, had also told President Bush that “a UN resolution was essential to win public support”.<sup>28</sup>

### Iraq's position

On 1 August, Dr Naji Sabri, the Iraqi Foreign Minister wrote to Mr Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General proposing a further round of technical talks in Baghdad between Iraqi technical experts and UNMOVIC:

“... to review what was accomplished in disarmament issues between May 1991 until December 1998, to look into the remaining issues ... included in the report of Ambassador Amorim to the Security Council on 30 March 1999, and to study and assess their importance and decide upon measures to resolve them when the inspection team returns to Iraq.”<sup>29</sup>

Dr Sabri wrote that the aim to reach “common ground on the scientific and practical criteria that will be adopted to treat and resolve what UNMOVIC might see as pending issues”.

That would be part of the process “to progress towards a comprehensive solution and concurrent implementation of all the requirements of relevant Security Council resolutions”.

On 12 August, Mr Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, the Iraqi Information Minister was reported to have rejected calls for weapons inspectors to return to Iraq on the grounds that their work had been completed.<sup>30</sup> Mr Sahhaf was also reported to have said that it was “a ‘lie’ that Iraq still had weapons of mass destruction”.

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<sup>26</sup> Letter Davies to Wechsberg, 12 August 2002, ‘Iraq: US Contingency Planning’.

<sup>27</sup> *Wall Street Journal*, 15 August 2002, *Don't Attack Saddam*.

<sup>28</sup> Bush GW. *Decision Points*. Virgin Books, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> *BBC News*, 2 August 2002, *Iraq's letter to the United Nations*.

<sup>30</sup> *BBC News*, 12 August 2002, *Iraqi Minister rejects inspections*.

On 15 August, Dr Sabri sent a further letter to Mr Annan, repeating the offer of technical discussions and asking for answers to questions to the questions it had presented to the Security Council in March 2002.<sup>31</sup>

## Mr Straw's meeting with Secretary Powell, 20 August 2002

**80. The British Embassy Washington warned that many in the US Administration were talking about “when” military action would be taken, not “if”; and that the views of Vice President Cheney and Secretary Rumsfeld were likely to prevail over those of Secretary Powell.**

**81.** Following their discussion on 26 July (see Section 3.3), Mr Straw had agreed with Secretary Powell that he should make an unpublicised visit to the USA on 20 August.

**82.** Mr Tony Brenton, Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy Washington, wrote to Mr Straw's Private Office on 15 August to provide “a snapshot of the public mood and what we are hearing from contacts on Iraq”.<sup>32</sup> He wrote:

“Despite repeated affirmations that no decisions have yet been taken, there is a general assumption that the [US] Administration is moving towards military action to remove Saddam ... The private language of the ... majority of those to whom we speak is ‘when rather than if’. There have been a string of ... leaks from the Pentagon about the feasibility and means of doing this ... the President held a carefully publicised meeting with Franks at the start of this month to look at military options. Over the past few days we have begun to hear a consistent line from the Administration ... on why Saddam should be removed (BW [biological weapons/ warfare], links to terrorism, threat to neighbouring states, brutal oppressor). And [John] Bolton [US Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security] told me yesterday that the US is planning to run a roadshow in the Autumn about the threat of Iraq's WMD.

“This does not mean the matter is yet settled. The debate on military tactics has died down and is now focusing on some other very big problems. These include widely publicised fears about possible use by Saddam of his WMD and the risk of Israel being drawn in to a war ... and the need to build more international support for US actions.”

**83.** Mr Brenton advised that the US felt a:

“... strong diplomatic and presentational need for the support, and perhaps involvement, of a few key allies – with the UK close to the top of the list. They of

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<sup>31</sup> UN Security Council, 15 August 2002, ‘Letter dated 15 August 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General’ attaching ‘Letter Sabri to Annan, 15 August 2002’, (S/2002/939).

<sup>32</sup> [Letter Brenton to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 15 August 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

course recognise that allied support would be much easier to achieve if they could get Security Council endorsement for military action. They are already playing the inspections issue in the Council with a view to putting Saddam clearly in the wrong. But they claim they ... have sufficient legal justification for military action in Saddam's breach of earlier UNSC [UN Security Council] resolutions. It is highly unlikely that they would go to the Council for further endorsement unless they were 100 percent sure they would get it. A number of Administration hawks ... have made it clear that in their view the case for regime change would not be affected if Saddam accepted inspectors, on whatever terms."

**84.** Mr Brenton wrote that President Bush had "recently tried to calm the press frenzy by talking about a 'patient and deliberate' approach". American domestic and political opinion would be more important to the US Administration than the UN. So far the public debate had run "rather against the Administration" with a number of Republican heavyweights, including General Scowcroft, "lining up to question the wisdom of military action". Opinion polls showed strong support for action. Congressional hearings would resume on 16 September and Mr Brenton reported that there were indications that Administration testimony would "start to make the case for military action".

**85.** Mr Brenton described what to do on the "day after" as the "most vexed" issue. A senior State Department official had said that they were "increasingly thinking in terms of some form of democracy, but recognised that it would need to be propped up by a long term international, (i.e. almost certainly US) security presence". In a recent conference the Iraqi opposition had made it clear there should not be a "foreign invasion"; they wanted to be in charge.

**86.** Mr Brenton concluded:

"Finally, as the key operational issues come to be addressed (including whether to go ahead at all), there is the balance of power within the Administration. The arch hawks are Rumsfeld and Cheney both of whom firmly support military action and are undeterred by the possible effect on the already inflammable Middle East (indeed they believe the successful US action in Iraq would have a salutary effect on other troublesome entities in the region). The instincts of the President himself (and therefore Rice [Dr Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's National Security Advisor]) are likely to be closer to their side than to that of Powell, who is plausibly reported to be more cautiously [sic]. There is also the political dimension. The Administration will not want to get into a vote losing quagmire – but will also be wary of failing to meet the strong expectations they have now created. The key point about this not unfamiliar pattern ... is that (eg as on the MEPP) it is normally the Rumsfeld/Cheney faction that prevails."

**87.** Mr Brenton's letter was seen by Mr Blair before a telephone call with Mr Straw on 19 August in preparation for the latter's meeting with Secretary Powell.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> [Manuscript comment Wechsberg, 19 August 2002, on Letter Brenton to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 15 August 2002, 'Iraq'](#).

**88. The meeting of the National Security Council on 16 August decided that the US strategy should be launched at the UN; but not what that strategy should be.**

**89.** Dr Rice wrote in her memoir that, in the National Security Council on 16 August, “There was unanimous agreement that our new strategy should be launched at the United Nations, but we did not decide the question of what the President would say.”<sup>34</sup>

**90. When Mr Straw met Secretary Powell during an unpublicised visit to the US on 20 August, he was informed that Mr Blair’s Note to President Bush of 28 July had been very timely; and that President Bush was keen to hear the outcome of their talks.**

**91. Mr Straw informed Secretary Powell that:**

- Mr Blair had been irritated to find himself in the position, where the US and UK had been “outed” before they had been able to make the case with the public for action against Iraq.
- The UK’s draft dossier on Iraq did not in his view lead inexorably to the conclusion that military action was the only way to deal with Saddam Hussein.
- A better case for action could be made.

**92. Mr Straw argued that the case for an international coalition was overwhelming and UN “involvement” was essential. Military action would be easier for the UK if there was a UN resolution.**

**93. Mr Blair wanted a “hard-edged ultimatum” issued by the UN with a clear link to military action. He would stand by the US, but he was worried. The “UN was the way through”; it was “an opportunity not an obstacle”.**

**94. If Saddam Hussein accepted inspectors on US and UK terms, the UK view was that the case for military action would be ended “for the time being”.**

**95. Mr Straw and Secretary Powell agreed that a key question was whether they could live with a Saddam Hussein who had fulfilled the UN mandate.**

**96. Lord Williams of Baglan, Special Adviser to Mr Straw from 2001 to 2005, told the Inquiry that:**

“As the summer months approached I felt increasingly that the war was becoming unavoidable and the Bush Administration had made up its mind on this course of action. The only question remaining was whether the UK would join in the military assault.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Rice C. *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Statement, 9 January 2011, pages 6-7.

**97.** Lord Williams added that he had used the summer to write a long note for Mr Straw on US military actions since the Second World War, the position taken by the UK Government on those actions, and the relevance to an invasion of Iraq, concluding with the suggestion that, “if war in Iraq was to involve the UK it would be strategic and political folly without UN authorisation”.

**98.** The FCO was unable to find a copy of the document for Lord Williams before he gave evidence.

**99.** Lord Williams had advised Mr Straw that “while containment had successfully boxed in would be aggressors, it has done nothing to stem the spread of weapons of mass destruction”.<sup>36</sup> That had been addressed through arms control treaties: it had been in the mutual interest of both the US and the Soviet Union to reach such agreements. It had been “less successful in dealing with ‘rogue states’ and ... WMD” where there were “no mutual interests between rogue states and the US”. Containment was “by definition” an “acceptance of the status quo” and it was questionable whether that was “acceptable with regard to WMD”. In his view, the “experience of North Korea” had taught the Bush Administration “a bitter lesson it does not want to repeat with Iraq”.

**100.** The lessons for Iraq to be drawn from history which Lord Williams had offered Mr Straw were:

“With the exception of Vietnam, the United States has always fought alongside substantial Allied Forces. On most occasions since 1945 ... it has done so under a UN mandate. It is not unthinkable that the US could do so ... against Iraq. A UN mandate may not be so unattainable ...

“The advantage for the US of a UN mandate would be twofold. Firstly, substantial Allied support would be likely ... Secondly, most importantly, a UN mandate will be essential for post war Iraq. It will simply not be possible for the US to do this alone ... Experience elsewhere ... has underlined the necessity of UN involvement as the mechanism indispensable for the marshalling of global, political and economic support in the context of post war [re]construction.

“... ‘regime change’ per se has seldom been a declared war aim. Nevertheless, it was the declared war aim of the Allies from 1942 ...

“In more recent cases involving the UK, the defeat of Argentina in ... 1982 ... led to the ousting of the junta ... while the defeat of Serbia in ... Kosovo ... led to the overthrow of Milošević within twelve months. Despicable though both regimes were, neither were as brutal and totalitarian as ... Saddam Hussein who survived military defeat in 1991 only through the exercise of extreme political coercion domestically. This ... made it unlikely short of Saddam’s death that his regime could change

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<sup>36</sup> [Minute Williams to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 19 August 2002, ‘The United States and Iraq: Historical Parallels’.](#)

without external intervention. In this regard, Iraq is different from either North Korea or Iran and its involvement in weapons of mass destruction that much more deadly.”

**101.** A copy of the minute, which was sent to Mr Straw on 19 August, was sent to Sir David Manning on 21 August.<sup>37</sup>

**102.** When Mr Straw and Secretary Powell met on 20 August, they discussed Mr Blair’s Note to President Bush of 28 July and its impact on thinking in the US.<sup>38</sup>

**103.** Mr Simon McDonald, Mr Straw’s Principal Private Secretary, reported that Secretary Powell had “spoken frankly”. He told Mr Straw that Mr Blair’s “letter [the Note of 28 July]” to President Bush had been “very timely”. The “case for doing something straight away was being pressed hard”. Secretary Powell was “putting the case for a longer haul”, including during a private dinner with President Bush at which Dr Rice was been the only other person present.

**104.** Secretary Powell told Mr Straw that what happened next would depend on what US “Principals” heard in their meeting 10 days later, “in particular about the status of the military plan”. President Bush was keen to hear the outcome of the discussion with Mr Straw. Dossiers on the “case for action” were being prepared: “True believers would see a smoking gun no matter what. But most of the stuff Iraq was importing was dual-use. It was not clear that the situation was any more serious this year than last.”

**105.** Mr Straw handed over a copy of the UK’s draft dossier on Iraq: “Although it made clear that Saddam was a very bad man, the contents did not lead inexorably to the conclusion that the only way to deal with him was by military action.” Secretary Powell agreed that “containment had worked”.

**106.** Mr Straw told Secretary Powell that he had discussed the position with Mr Blair the previous day. Mr Blair was concerned and had:

“... asked him to stress that the problem was that we had been ‘outed’ long before we had been able to make the case with the public for action ... [Mr Blair] was also signed up to the importance of the relationship with the US, and had moved mountains to ensure that the EU stayed in line with the US. Nonetheless, he had been irritated to find himself in his present position because of US hawks ... The key issue ... was whether the US wanted an international coalition or not. The US could go it alone; if they wanted that, they had only to tell us.”

**107.** Mr Straw’s view was that:

“... the case for an international coalition was overwhelming: first for basing and access and then for what would happen after getting rid of Saddam. But also,

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<sup>37</sup> Manuscript comment McDonald to Manning, 21 August 2002, on [Minute Williams to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 19 August 2002, ‘The United States and Iraq: Historical Parallels’](#).

<sup>38</sup> [Letter McDonald to Manning, 21 August 2002, ‘Foreign Secretary’s Visit to the US, 20 August 2002’](#).

especially, if things went wrong. In such circumstances the US would need the international community at the scene of the crime ... A solo US effort that ended in failure would give those who saw the EU as an alternative power to the US the chance they had been waiting for.

“If the US answer to a coalition was ‘yes’, then UN involvement was essential. The Prime Minister’s letter [the Note of 28 July] had been a little ambiguous on who should issue the ultimatum; yesterday he [Mr Blair] had been clear that the ultimatum should issue from the UN. He wanted a hard-edged ultimatum with a clear link to military action – but recognised that achieving such a text would be difficult. If Saddam ... accepted inspectors on our terms, the Prime Minister thought that would end the case for military action for the time being. But he thought Saddam unlikely to give in.”

**108.** Mr Straw said that he had a slightly different opinion: “Saddam was a busker and survivor”. Mr Straw added that: “it would be harder to make the case for military action if he [Saddam Hussein] had been disarmed – and, eventually, Saddam would go”.

**109.** Mr Straw told Secretary Powell that Mr Blair’s view was that building a coalition “meant working through the UN”; and that in the Middle East it meant doing something on the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP). Mr Blair would be “willing to spend time and political capital” on the latter “including holding a peace conference”. Secretary Powell responded that although he had been the principal advocate of a conference, there were not “enough elements to get it together”.

**110.** Addressing the “public case”, Mr Straw said that the UK dossier:

“... needed a compelling last chapter. We could make a better case than the one we had made so far. Traditional Cold War-style containment did not work for WMD. Rogue states did not have as much at stake as the Soviet bloc.”

**111.** Mr Straw said that he had told Mr Blair about Secretary Powell’s “more sceptical view of Russia’s likely support” but Mr Blair “was convinced that securing Russia depended on the price”.

**112.** Mr Straw asked whether military action would work. Secretary Powell explained that US thinking had developed since the end of July; the “standing start” needed an Iraqi trigger, so the US enthusiasm for it had waned. The focus was now on the “generated case”.

**113.** Mr Straw told Secretary Powell that “if there were action tomorrow the Prime Minister would be in difficulties”. It was “not just the usual suspects causing trouble”; respected retired officials were “publicly raising doubts” and the “lawyers were saying in terms that there were not sufficient grounds ... to support regime change”. On “military action more generally” the lawyers “had not definitively opined but had said it would be easier if there were an SCR”. Mr Straw drew Secretary Powell’s attention to the passage

in Mr Blair's Note of 28 July that "in Britain, right now, I couldn't be sure of support from Parliament, Party, public or even some of the Cabinet". In Mr Straw's view, if Cabinet held a secret ballot, it was unlikely that Mr Blair would win.

**114.** On the "day after", Mr Straw said that Iraq had been "the artificial creation of the UK in 1921. The country had no experience of democracy and democracy could pull it apart."

**115.** Secretary Powell had said he "took it" that Mr Blair:

"... wanted some kind of UN resolution. Some of his colleagues did not want UN involvement in any shape: it might frustrate their purpose. But he did not think the evil/moral case worked: there were lots of evil people we did not go after.

"At the (video) meeting last week, he had made the argument that the US was isolated and had slipped badly in the Arab world ... and must make the case in the international community, otherwise the US would be accused of the biggest act of unilateralism ... So the US should start making the case in the President's 12 September speech [to the UN General Assembly]. The Vice President had come on board but added the line that we could not allow the UN to stop us if we did not like the way things were going. Importantly, the President had repeated that the objective of regime change was getting rid of WMD. Others in the (virtual) meeting had not, he thought, appreciated the importance of what the President was saying; but, for Powell, the logic of the President's position meant that, if WMD were dealt with, regime change would no longer be required."

**116.** Secretary Powell said that "the hawks had not made the terrorism case against Iraq" and Iraq had not threatened the US; "Saddam was a 'regional bastard'. So the US might find itself taking action for the benefit of regional friends who were not keen on that action."

**117.** Secretary Powell was "still alone in the Administration, except for the President". In response to Mr Straw's question about what the UK could do to help, Secretary Powell said that "if his strategy was OK'd by the President, the US would need to share" with the UK "what they had planned at UNGA [UN General Assembly]" and would need the UK "to back them up in the Security Council".

**118.** Summarising their discussion, Secretary Powell said that he and Mr Straw:

"... were agreed that we had to do something with our public and with the international community. We had to think about the 'ultimatum sentence' and recognise that if Saddam accepted inspectors, military action would be on hold. A key question then was whether we could live with a Saddam who had fulfilled the UN mandate."



**119.** Secretary Powell said that:

“... war in Iraq would define the first term. He poured scorn on the hawks’ beliefs: that a quick triumph was inevitable because Iraqis were waiting to be liberated; and that victory in Iraq would help the MEPP and spread democracy in the region. What would the Syrians and Iranians make of the US action – where next?”

**120.** Asked where Mr Blair stood, Mr Straw replied:

“... if he had a free choice, the PM wanted to get rid of Saddam. But the more he thought about it the more difficult it looked to the PM. He would stand by the US but he was worried. The UN was the way through. An effort now could be a dry run for later if military action were required. As the PM had said to him, the UN should be seen as an opportunity, not an obstacle.”

**121.** The record of the discussion was to be seen only by Sir David Manning and Mr Blair.

**122.** In his memoir, Mr Straw wrote:

“Not for the first time, and certainly not for the last, Colin opened up to me about his intense frustration with parts of the Administration; in particular Dick Cheney and Don Rumsfeld ... I left the Hamptons pleased that Colin and I were in agreement and hopeful that although it was going to take a great effort, we might be able to get the Bush Administration to go to the UN.”<sup>39</sup>

## The position at the end of August 2002

### The legal view

**123.** During August 2002, Mr Michael Wood, FCO Legal Adviser, continued to express concerns about assumptions that, in the absence of an identified legal basis, the UK would participate if military action was taken by the US.

**124.** Lord Goldsmith remained concerned to address the issues.

**125.** Mr Wood wrote to Mr Stephen Wright, FCO Deputy Under Secretary Defence and Intelligence, and other senior colleagues on 15 August expressing concern that, while he appreciated that no decision had been taken, “there appears to be an assumption that if military action were taken by the US, we would not only support but participate”.<sup>40</sup>

**126.** Mr Wood wrote that while it was “ultimately for the Attorney General to advise HMG on matters of this importance”, he thought it would “be helpful” to colleagues to briefly restate the legal position. He was “not, at present, aware of facts which would provide a respectable legal basis for military action, though further action by the Security Council

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<sup>39</sup> Straw J. *Last Man Standing: Memoirs of a Political Survivor*. Macmillan, 2012.

<sup>40</sup> [Minute Wood to Wright, 15 August 2002, 'Iraq: Legality of Use of Force'](#).

could provide such a basis.” Unless there was “a proper legal basis for military action, individual members of the Armed Forces and civilian officials ... would also be potentially liable to charges of murder.”

**127.** Mr Wood warned that: “To advocate the use of force without a proper legal basis is to advocate the commission of the crime of aggression, one of the most serious offences under international law.” He also referred to the importance that: “HMG act in accordance with international law, and not only because this is required by the Ministerial Code.”<sup>41</sup>

**128.** Mr Wright responded:

“... I work on the premise that if a question of military action arises, the Attorney General’s opinion will be sought, in the light of the facts of the case ... I can see no other basis for current policy.”<sup>42</sup>

**129.** On 20 August Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General, wrote to Mr Powell reminding him that they had talked about having a further conversation in September (see Section 3.3).<sup>43</sup> He would be away on an official visit until 8 September and it would be helpful if they could start now to identify what timing Mr Powell had in mind.

**130.** Lord Goldsmith also saw Mr Wood’s minute and noted that his advice on whether force was justifiable or not would be an issue.<sup>44</sup>

**131.** On 23 August, Mr McDonald wrote to Mr Wood stating that the Foreign Secretary thought that this was “very serious” and would arrange to see the Attorney General.<sup>45</sup>

**132.** Lord Goldsmith and Mr Straw discussed the legal issues on 23 September (see Section 3.5).

**133.** There is no indication that Lord Goldsmith and Mr Blair discussed Iraq before 22 October.

## **JIC Assessment, 21 August 2002**

**134. A JIC Assessment of 21 August re-affirmed that Saddam Hussein would permit the return of inspectors if he believed that the threat of large-scale military action was imminent, but he would seek to frustrate their activities.**

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<sup>41</sup> The Ministerial Code 2001 included the duty to comply with the law, including international law and treaty obligations, to uphold the administration of justice and to protect the integrity of public life.

<sup>42</sup> Manuscript comment Wright to Wood and all copy addressees, 15 August 2002, on [Minute Wood to Wright, 15 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Legality of use of Force’](#).

<sup>43</sup> Letter Goldsmith to Powell, 20 August 2002, [untitled].

<sup>44</sup> Manuscript comment Goldsmith to Brummell, 23 August 2002 on Minute Brummell to Attorney General, 22 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Legality of the Use of Force’.

<sup>45</sup> Minute McDonald to Legal Advisers [FCO], 23 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Legality of Use of Force’.

**135.** The JIC also concluded that in a conflict Saddam Hussein would order missile strikes and the use of CBW against coalition forces, supporting regional states and Israel.

**136.** The JIC had little intelligence on Iraq's CBW and little insight into how it would fight. Its conclusions reflected the Committee's own judgements.

**137.** At the request of the MOD, the JIC issued an Assessment on 21 August considering "what diplomatic options Saddam has to deter, avert or limit the scope of a US-led attack".<sup>46</sup> It also considered his "military options for facing a US-led attack" and how his analysis about each course of action might "change as an attack becomes increasingly imminent".

**138.** During the JIC discussion of the draft Assessment, it was suggested that Saddam was "likely to exploit options on weapons inspectors as a stalling tactic. An offer of unconditional access for weapons inspectors would attract international approval, and allow Saddam breathing space."<sup>47</sup>

**139.** The JIC examined Iraq's options for the short term, whether Saddam Hussein might seize the initiative, how Iraq might respond to a US military build-up, Saddam's options in "war" – including the use of missiles and WMD and "alternative scenarios and at the death".<sup>48</sup>

**140.** WMD options were considered "only briefly" as the JIC would assess those in early September.

**141.** The JIC's Key Judgements and the relevant supporting text are set out in the Box below.

**142.** The basis for the Assessment, and that the Key Judgements conveyed a much greater sense of certainty that Saddam Hussein had chemical and biological weapons and would act than the detailed text of the Assessment itself supported, are addressed in Section 4.2.

### **JIC Assessment, 21 August 2002: 'Iraq: Saddam's Diplomatic and Military Options'**

**Saddam Hussein's aim would be "to remain in power. He will use all options to achieve this. He remains innovative and capable of surprising us."**

- Saddam's choices would "depend on his perceptions of the likelihood, credibility and imminence of ... a US-led attack".

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<sup>46</sup> [JIC Assessment, 21 August 2002, 'Iraq: Saddam's Diplomatic and Military Options'](#).

<sup>47</sup> Minutes, 21 August 2002, JIC meeting.

<sup>48</sup> [JIC Assessment, 21 August 2002, 'Iraq: Saddam's Diplomatic and Military Options'](#).

**Saddam Hussein was “likely to pursue continued talks with the UN on the return of weapons inspectors as a means to delay a US attack. He would permit their return if he believed that the threat of large-scale military action was imminent.”**

- Saddam would “play for time”, avoiding “giving the US a pretext to attack”.
- By mid-July 2002 Saddam had “started to believe that a US-led attack was inevitable and would threaten his regime”.
- An Iraqi “statement that inspectors would be allowed to return unconditionally would attract considerable international approval” and “reinforce regional concerns about the military option, even before Iraqi willingness to implement the agreement had been put to the test”.
- The JIC judged that “until US military action seemed imminent” Iraq would make “incremental improvements” to its “offer on inspectors that fell short of accepting the ... requirements of the UN”.
- If inspectors did return, the JIC repeated its judgement of 27 February that Iraq would “embark on a renewed policy of frustration, involving denial, deception, obstruction and delay”.

**Saddam Hussein would “try a mix of charm, bribery and threats with his neighbours”. Iraq’s influence was “limited, although Saddam” was “adept at manipulating popular Arab opinion”.**

- Saddam would seek to deter the US “and/or potential regional allies” and use diplomacy to persuade or coerce his neighbours not to provide bases.
- Iraq was “likely to pursue every opportunity to split the ... Security Council and particularly the P5”.
- It would also seek to “exert economic leverage”.
- Iraq could “play on regional fears” that a military attack “would have unacceptable outcomes” such as threatening Iraq’s integrity, encircling Iran or emboldening the US to attack other countries.
- Iraq’s ability to influence neighbouring governments was “strictly limited”.
- Saddam was “likely to try to do all he can to exploit the Israel/Palestinian crisis”. The JIC pointed out that, “Practical support to Palestinian rejectionists groups” was “limited”; and there was “little scope for Iraq to improve its position” as the most effective groups were “closer to Iran”.
- Saddam was “adept at manipulating popular Arab opinion”.

**“Much as Saddam would like to seize the initiative before a US attack, his options remain limited.” He was “likely to be cautious about using force early. But the closer and more credible an attack seemed, the more risks he will be willing to take, perhaps including deniable terrorist attacks, most likely in the Gulf region – though we cannot exclude a threat to the UK.”**

- A “concerted attempt” to bring down an aircraft in one of the No-Fly Zones was “a possibility”.
- A pre-emptive attack on the Kurds or Kuwait was judged “unlikely”.
- An attempt to destabilise the two main Kurdish parties “to complicate coalition planning” was “more likely”.

- Saddam “would probably ... order preparations for a campaign of **terrorism and sabotage** in the region”.
- “... we know that Iraqi Special Forces and other organisations, such as the ‘Saddam Fedayeen’, also possess the capability to conduct sabotage or terrorist attacks.”
- Palestinian groups “could be reluctant to carry out attacks which did not further their own objectives”.
- It was “possible that Iraqi terrorist attacks could be conducted against other [non-military] interests or the leadership and economic (e.g. oil industry) targets of regional States”.
- The JIC did not “know enough about Iraqi capabilities to discount the threat outside the region, including within the UK, though previously Iraqi attempts to mount terrorist attacks, or engage proxies to do so on their behalf, have been largely ineffective”.

**“Early on in any conflict, Saddam would order missile attacks on Israel, coalition forces and regional states providing the US with bases.”**

- “Saddam would probably order missile attacks ...”
- The JIC judged that attacks on Israel would be “an attempt to attract Israeli retaliation and thus widen the war, split the coalition and arouse popular opinion in the Arab States”.
- Missiles “could be armed with chemical or biological warfare (CBW) agents”.
- “Saddam might be deterred at least initially by the threat of Israeli nuclear retaliation.”
- Iraq had a “limited number of long range missiles ... available”; the JIC assessed “12-20 650km range Al Hussein missiles”.
- Iraq had produced more than 50 Al Samoud missiles with a range of 150km.
- Attacks on coalition forces in Kuwait would require Iraq to deploy short-range missiles into the “No Drive Zone”.<sup>49</sup>
- A pre-emptive missile attack on Israel was “less likely because it would show Iraq had been lying about its retention of long range missiles”.

**“Saddam would order the use of CBW against coalition forces at some point, probably after a coalition attack had begun. Once Saddam was convinced that his fate was sealed, he would order the unrestrained use of CBW against coalition forces, supporting regional states and Israel.”**

- Although it had “little intelligence on Iraq’s CBW doctrine” and knew “little about Iraq’s CBW work since late 1998”, the JIC judged it “likely that Saddam would order the use of CBW against coalition forces at some point, probably after coalition attacks had begun”.
- Iraqi CBW use “would become increasingly likely the closer coalition forces came to Baghdad. Military targets might include troop concentrations or important fixed targets in rear areas such as ports and airfields.”

<sup>49</sup> Resolution 949 (1994) imposed a “No Drive Zone” in Iraq south of the 32nd parallel.

- Saddam Hussein “might pursue an extreme course of action at an earlier stage” if he judged it to be “worth the risk of providing the US with overt justification to attack”.
- Unorthodox options might include “the early or pre-emptive use of **CBW**”; “**CBW terrorism**: although Saddam probably lacks the capability to deploy a sophisticated device, he could cause widespread panic”.
- “Should he feel his fate is sealed, Saddam’s judgement might change to ‘bring the temple down’ on his enemies no matter what the cost ...” At that stage, “Saddam would order the unrestrained use of CBW against coalition forces, supporting regional states and Israel, although he would face practical problems of command and control, the loyalty of his commanders, logistics problems and the availability of chemical and biological agents in sufficient quantities to be effective and the means to deliver them.”

**“Iraq would probably try to ride out air strikes while conserving its ground forces. Iraq’s likely strategy for a ground war would be to make any coalition advance as slow and costly as possible, trying to force the coalition to fight in urban areas.”**

- The JIC had “little insight into how the Iraqi military might plan to fight any ground war ... At present we have little evidence to judge whether Iraq sees urban or guerrilla warfare as feasible options. Iraqi effectiveness would be mitigated by problems of command and control, inadequate training and poor morale. We doubt that guerrilla activity would be very effective; urban warfare is more plausible ...”

**“There is a significant potential for Saddam to miscalculate, either by escalating a crisis at an early stage, or by making concessions too late in the day to avert an attack.”**

## Dr Blix’s interview, 25 August 2002

**143.** In an interview on *NBC’s Meet the Press* programme on 25 August, Dr Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC, stated that there had been “discussion and dialogue under the auspices of the [UN] Secretary-General” since the early part of 2002, in which Iraq had “shown a greater interest in inspections”; but he could not say that they had “moved closer to an invitation to the inspectors”.<sup>50</sup>

**144.** Dr Blix added that Iraq did not see inspections as an isolated issue, it should be addressed in conjunction with and concurrently with other outstanding issues.

**145.** Asked whether Iraq possessed biological, chemical or nuclear weapons, Dr Blix responded that there were “many open questions” but the inspectors did not have proof that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

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<sup>50</sup> *NBC*, 25 August 2002, *Meet the Press*.

**146.** Dr Blix stated that, to be effective, inspectors needed “immediate, unrestricted and unconditional” access to sites; they needed information; and they needed skill. Under the previous inspections regime there were relatively few problematic inspections where access was denied. The burden of proof did not lie with the inspectors to prove that Iraq was guilty. It was “for Iraq to restore confidence in the world that they do not have weapons of mass destruction”.

**147.** Dr Blix pointed out that “an absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence”.

### **FCO advice, 27 August 2002**

**148.** The FCO’s further advice on the possible text of a draft resolution judged that an ultimatum calling for the re-admission of inspectors would be “difficult to secure” but was “not out of reach”.

**149.** If the talks between Iraq and the UN about the return of inspectors petered out or “better” broke down, that could provide a “trigger” for such a resolution.

**150.** The objective was for a resolution which would provide legal cover for military action, in the event of a refusal to comply with an ultimatum, without the need for further action in the Security Council.

**151.** Mr Straw suggested that the UK dossier might be published via the UN.

**152.** Mr Rycroft had commissioned further advice from the FCO on what a UN ultimatum would look like, and how it would be achieved, for Mr Blair’s return to work in late August (see Section 3.3).<sup>51</sup>

**153.** The FCO advised No.10 on 27 August that it had “now done further work on the possibility of a Security Council ultimatum to Iraq”, and that “President Bush’s speech to the UN General Assembly on 12 September could be an important curtain-raiser.”<sup>52</sup> An ultimatum would be “difficult to secure” but it was “not out of reach”. It would “need a carefully managed campaign during the early autumn” and “a great deal of work in P5 capitals”.

**154.** Considering tactics in the Security Council, the FCO advised that the UN/Iraq “talks petering out, or, better, a definite breakdown due to Iraqi intransigence” could provide a “trigger” for a resolution. If inspectors were allowed back into Iraq, “the trigger could be a report by Blix on Iraqi non-co-operation”.

**155.** The text of a resolution would be “conditioned to some extent by the wider context”. There might be “some political attractions ... in tabling hard language” but, “unless there

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<sup>51</sup> Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 31 July 2002, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Phone Call with President Bush, 31 July’.

<sup>52</sup> [Letter McDonald to Manning, 27 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Ultimatum’](#).

is a serious Iraqi outrage, the harder the language, the more difficult it will be to get the resolution through”.

**156.** The FCO had produced a “more developed reworking” of the draft elements for a resolution setting out an ultimatum it had offered on 26 July. The key options identified were:

- A choice between describing Iraq’s refusal to accept the return of weapons inspectors as a “material breach” of resolution 687 (1991) (the cease-fire resolution) or a “flagrant violation”. The former would be clearer and send a very direct message, but “might be difficult for some Council members to accept”. The latter might be “a little easier to sell” and was an “obvious fact”.
- Whether to include an explicit operative paragraph setting a date for Iraq to allow UNMOVIC and the IAEA “immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access ... so that they may discharge their mandates”, after which it would be deemed that Iraq had no intention of complying with its obligations. Such a paragraph was seen to have “political and presentational” advantages although it might “not be indispensable” if a date were to be included in an earlier operative paragraph which demanded that Iraq immediately reverse its non-co-operation with UNMOVIC and the IAEA.

**157.** The FCO advised that, subject to Lord Goldsmith’s views, a resolution “(particularly with ‘material breach’ language) would still give cover for military action, and that in legal terms no further Council decisions would be required”.

**158.** The FCO warned that, in the absence of clear language on a demand that Iraq reverse its non-co-operation within a specified time, the opponents of military action would argue that Iraq “should be given still more time to comply”. It would be “important” that the draft resolution provided “legal cover for military action without further Council action”. The Attorney General’s advice would be needed on that point.

**159.** Mr Straw considered that the UK should try to persuade President Bush to state that the aim of regime change was to ensure the disarmament of Iraq. The most appropriate occasion might be the President’s speech to the UN General Assembly in September, as part of a wider challenge to the UN to demonstrate that it could tackle the problem of WMD in the hands of rogue states. That could open the way for a discussion in the Security Council on an “ultimatum resolution”. Mr Straw also suggested that discussion might provide “a peg for publishing via the UN the long-awaited ‘Iraq Dossier’”.

**160.** The FCO advice was sent to the Private Offices of Mr Hoon and Lord Goldsmith, and to Sir Jeremy Greenstock, UK Permanent Representative to the UN in New York.



## The US perspective, late August 2002

**161. The debate on Iraq in the US continued throughout August.**

**162. A speech by Vice President Cheney on 26 August fuelled that debate.**

**163.** In a press conference with Secretary Rumsfeld at Crawford on 21 August, about security and defence issues, President Bush was asked whether the US had the capacity to “go to war with Saddam” alone; and whether, given remarks by General Franks that he was drawing up war plans to provide credible options, the American people should conclude that a decision was imminent.<sup>53</sup>

**164.** In response to the first question, Secretary Rumsfeld described the intense speculation about Iraq as “frenzy”; President Bush said that he would be consulting allies and Congress about how to secure peace. In response to the second question, President Bush said only that the US had to be prepared to use its military and other assets to “keep the peace” in the face of an unstable world and a global terrorist network that might strike anywhere; and that General Franks’ job was to prepare for contingencies.

**165.** In an article in the *New York Times* on 25 August, Mr James Baker, former US Secretary of State, called for “a simple and straightforward resolution requiring that Iraq submit to intrusive inspections anytime, anywhere, with no exceptions, and authorizing all necessary means to enforce it”.<sup>54</sup>

**166.** In his memoir, Vice President Cheney wrote that the White House had been talking about the idea of an “aggressive” inspection regime, advanced by Dr Rice, which was so intrusive it might result in toppling Saddam Hussein.<sup>55</sup> It had been discussed by the President and Mr Blair, but he (Vice President Cheney) “didn’t buy it”. He had therefore decided to press the issue in his speech on the threat from terrorism to a National Conference of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on 26 August.

**167.** In the speech, Vice President Cheney stated that Saddam Hussein had “made a science out of deceiving the international community”. Vice President Cheney stated that there was no doubt that Saddam Hussein had WMD and Iraq was enhancing its capabilities. He concluded: “the risk of inaction is far greater than the risk of action”. There was “no assurance whatsoever” that inspections would produce compliance with UN resolutions; on the contrary there was “a great danger that it would provide false comfort”.<sup>56</sup>

**168.** In her memoir, Dr Rice wrote that President Bush asked her to call Vice President Cheney after his speech to say that the President hadn’t yet made a decision. She had

<sup>53</sup> The White House, 21 August 2002, *President discusses security and defence issues*.

<sup>54</sup> *New York Times*, 25 August 2002, *The Right Way to Change a Regime* (James A Baker III).

<sup>55</sup> Cheney D & Cheney L. *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> The White House, 26 August 2002, *Vice President Speaks at VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] 103rd National Convention*.

told the Vice President that President Bush was “concerned that your speech is being read as a decision to skip the UN and challenge Saddam unilaterally”.<sup>57</sup>

**169.** Sir David Manning was contacted by Dr Rice on 28 August.<sup>58</sup> She stressed that, despite the statements and articles over the previous few days, the US position had not changed. President Bush was “determined to build international support for action on Iraq” and believed it was possible:

“He was working on the ‘UN route’, and planned to use his UNGA speech to challenge the international community to deal with the Saddam threat. He was thinking of proposing that the UN should pass a further tough resolution demanding wide-ranging disarmament measures from Saddam. If he accepted them (which she thought unlikely) Saddam would be forced to run Iraq in a completely different way.”

**170.** Sir David told Dr Rice that Mr Blair “too, remained in the same place”, and that the UK “well understood the recent difficulties”. They “pointed to the need for a core script we could all stick to”. Dr Rice had agreed.

**171.** Sir David also said that a “clear line of action” was needed. Challenging and encouraging the international community to deal with Iraq through the UN “sounded exactly the right course”. If the context was right, “action would become much easier”. He added:

“Action through the UN would do much to change the profile of the problem. If the UN route succeeded, well and good. If it did not, we would at least have tried to work with the international community. And anyone who blocked effective action in the UN would not only have to explain why, but ... what they would do instead.”

**172.** Dr Rice agreed; President Bush wanted to speak to Mr Blair the next day. Sir David and Dr Rice also discussed a meeting, possibly on 11 September.

**173.** Sir David commented to Mr Blair that the discussion:

“... was encouraging. The signs are that Bush is now thinking of opting for a coalition strategy that takes account of the UN (though probably on pretty tough terms). I was particularly struck by Condi’s remark that Saddam would have to run Iraq in a different way if he signed up to proper disarmament measures. The fact that the Administration is now conceptualising this thought, rather than reiterating its commitment to regime change irrespective of Saddam’s behaviour, is significant.

“... My sense is that he [President Bush] will be keen to know that he still has your support; and keen to know that you approve of his plans to work through the UN. I am sure you should encourage him strongly.

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<sup>57</sup> Rice C. *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.

<sup>58</sup> [Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 28 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’](#).

“If Bush takes this route, it will transform the way we can approach and handle the Iraq issue.”

**174.** The record of that discussion was sent only to Mr Straw outside No.10.

**175.** The British Embassy Washington reported that in a further speech in San Antonio, Texas, on 29 August, Vice President Cheney had “toned down the line on the return of UN inspectors”; describing them as “not an end in themselves”.<sup>59</sup> He had “called more clearly for Iraq to comply with UNSCRs [UN Security Council resolutions] by disarming fully”, but had “underlined concerns that Saddam would nonetheless continue to plot to develop WMD”.

### US national security document on Iraq, 29 August 2002

On 29 August 2002, President Bush signed the national security document, ‘Iraq: Goals, Objectives, Strategy’.<sup>60</sup>

The stated goal of the US was to free Iraq in order to:

- eliminate WMD;
- end Iraqi threats to its neighbours;
- stop the Iraqi government tyrannising its own people;
- cut Iraqi links to terrorism; and
- “Liberate the Iraqi people from tyranny and assist them in creating a society based on moderation, pluralism and democracy.”<sup>61</sup>

The document stated that “the United States is prepared to play a sustained role in the reconstruction of post-Saddam Iraq with contribution from and participation of the international community”, and that it would work closely with the Iraqi opposition to liberate and build a new Iraq.<sup>62</sup>

**176.** In his memoir, President Bush wrote that the possibility of war was “an all-consuming” news story in Washington and recalled that he had spent much of August 2002 in Crawford, reflecting on the “next decision” he faced:

“... how to move forward on the diplomatic track. One option was to seek a UN resolution calling on Saddam to readmit weapons inspectors. The other was to issue an ultimatum demanding that he disarm – and rally a coalition to remove him if he did not comply.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Telegram 1104 Washington to FCO, 29 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Visit by Stephen Wright, DUS, to Washington, 29 August’.

<sup>60</sup> Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Feith DJ. *War and Decision*. Harper, 2008.

<sup>62</sup> Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Bush GW. *Decision Points*. Virgin Books, 2010.

**177.** President Bush added that Vice President Cheney and Mr Rumsfeld “believed that going to the UN would trigger a long bureaucratic process that would leave Saddam even more dangerous”. But Secretary Powell had told him that “a UN resolution was the only way to get any support from the rest of the world”; and that, “if we did take out Saddam the military strike would be the easy part. Then ... America would ‘own’ Iraq.”

#### MR BLAIR’S DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT BUSH, 29 AUGUST 2002

**178.** President Bush and Mr Blair discussed the need to make clear that Iraq was the UN’s problem on 29 August. The issue had to be disarmament, not just the return of the inspectors, with a tough and unconditional resolution so that if Iraq complied it would change the way the regime operated.

**179.** Mr Blair’s view was that conflict was “inevitable” because he did not think that Saddam Hussein would comply with the UN’s demands; “but the choice was Saddam’s”.

**180.** Mr Blair and President Bush spoke on 29 August.<sup>64</sup>

**181.** Mr Rycroft recorded that Mr Blair and President Bush had discussed the implications of speculation in August and Mr Blair’s view that the US and UK had been “outed before being fully ready to make the case” against Saddam Hussein.

**182.** Mr Blair and President Bush had also discussed the need to make clear that Iraq was the UN’s problem and that the issue was total disarmament of Iraq’s WMD and associated systems not just the reintroduction of inspectors. The next phase should be to go to the Security Council with a resolution which put the burden on Iraq. That would put the US and the UK on the front foot and the challenge was for the international community and the UN. Mr Blair:

“... wanted the UN to meet that challenge, but if it could not we would have to act. So we should remake the case, put together the evidence against Saddam, and work up a UNSCR ... [It] needed to be tough and unconditional so that – if Iraq complied – it would change the way the regime operated. It was right to issue not an ultimatum to the UN but a challenge to the international community.”

**183.** Mr Blair also said that, before that, what was needed was “a line to take” so that “we were all answering the difficult questions in the same way”, including timing, the nature of the challenge to the UN, and whether conflict was inevitable. He said that the UN route “if pursued carefully was an opportunity, not an obstacle”.

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<sup>64</sup> Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 29 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Phone Call with President Bush, 29 August’.

**184.** Mr Blair concluded:

“... we were in the same place as the US. September should be the month to sort out the strategy. We should be clear within two weeks how the UN route should work. We were determined to deal with the WMD issue. September 11 had taught us the importance of dealing pre-emptively with these types of threats.”

**185.** Copies of Mr Rycroft’s minute were sent to the Private Offices of Mr Straw, Mr Hoon and the Cabinet Secretary, and to Sir Richard Dearlove (Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS)), Sir Francis Richards (Director of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ)), Sir Christopher Meyer (British Ambassador to the US), Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Mr Scarlett, and Mr Tom McKane (Deputy Head of OD Sec).

**186.** A fuller record was circulated within No.10 and to Mr Straw on a strictly personal basis.<sup>65</sup> It included references to the advice which had already been offered to the US and to the planned meeting between Mr Blair and President Bush in early September. It also stated that Mr Blair’s view was that conflict was “inevitable”: he did not think Saddam would comply with the UN demands, “but the choice was Saddam’s”.

**187. Dr Rice told Sir David Manning that President Bush had worked carefully through the ideas in Mr Blair’s Note of 28 July and concluded the best way forward was the “UN route”.**

**188. Sir David Manning told Dr Rice that the UK would share its ideas on a resolution “shortly”.**

**189. Dr Rice and Sir David also discussed the need to launch an effective public relations campaign to coincide with the decision to go back to the UN.**

**190.** Dr Rice and Sir David Manning spoke later that day to follow up the discussion between Mr Blair and President Bush.<sup>66</sup>

**191.** Dr Rice told Sir David Manning that President Bush had given “a great deal of thought to Iraq during his summer vacation at the Crawford ranch”. He had worked carefully through the ideas in Mr Blair’s Note of 28 July and had concluded the best way forward was the UN route.

**192.** Sir David and Dr Rice discussed how an approach to secure UN action might best be pursued and agreed that it would be useful for Mr Alastair Campbell, Mr Blair’s Director of Communications and Strategy) and Ms Karen Armstrong,<sup>67</sup> to talk: “We needed to mount a really effective public relations campaign to coincide with the

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<sup>65</sup> Minute Rycroft to Manning, 29 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Phone Call with President Bush, 29 August’.

<sup>66</sup> Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 29 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

<sup>67</sup> The context suggests that the record should have referred to Karen Hughes, Counsellor to President Bush from 2001 to 2002.

decision to go back to the UN.” That should include addressing the nature of Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi regime.

**193.** The possible timetable for launching the initiative in the UN and the contents of a UN resolution were also explored.

**194.** The options for a UN resolution included a very short resolution along the lines of the ultimatum to Iraq in 1990 or a fuller resolution which spelt out:

- the extent to which Saddam was in violation of previous resolutions;
- the steps he must take if Iraq was to be welcomed back into the international community; and
- the need for a “real” deadline, possibly 1 November.

**195.** The possibility of “very invasive” measures, which would involve troops being deployed inside Iraq, e.g. to protect the inspectors or in northern Iraq to prevent attacks on the Kurds, and which would change the way Saddam Hussein could rule Iraq, were also raised.

**196.** Sir David told Dr Rice that a deadline “must be right if we were to avoid endless prevarication and evasion”. He referred to the model which had been used “successfully” the previous year in dealing with the Taliban, and said that the UK had done some thinking on a resolution. That would be shared with Dr Rice “shortly”.

**197.** Sir David sent Mr Straw a personal copy of his minute to Mr Blair.<sup>68</sup>

**198.** Visiting Washington for talks with officials in the US State Department and National Security Council (NSC) on 29 August, Mr Wright explained the “difficult domestic political management problems” on Iraq faced by the Government in the UK.<sup>69</sup> He “stressed” the importance of ensuring that there was “no daylight” between the US and UK in their public presentations and the need “in particular to focus on the WMD threat and how best to address it”. That meant:

“... we needed to use the UN track. This was the best way to pursue control of WMD. It would help to build international support. And if Iraq rejected a robust inspection regime, it would strengthen the case for other action.”

**199.** The discussions acknowledged that much of the intelligence on Iraq’s WMD was “inferential” and that the “aim” should be to present the case “in terms of [Iraqi] failure to comply with the international community’s demands since 1991”.

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<sup>68</sup> Manuscript comment Manning, 29 August 2002, on Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 29 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

<sup>69</sup> Telegram 1104 Washington to FCO, 29 August 2002, ‘Iraq: Visit by Stephen Wright, DUS, to Washington, 29 August’.

**200.** The discussions also covered the scale of the military operations being examined by the US and arrangements for inter-agency co-ordination in Washington. Mr Wright stressed the need for “close UK involvement in the work”.

#### THE BRITISH EMBASSY WASHINGTON'S VIEW, 30 AUGUST 2002

**201.** **The British Embassy Washington reported that it would be very difficult for President Bush to do nothing, but it was clear to the main players that they would have to make a convincing case before going ahead with any action.**

**202.** Mr Brenton wrote to Mr Edward Chaplin, FCO Director Middle East and North Africa, to provide a “snapshot of the situation as it now looks here” for a meeting on Iraq to be held on 30 August by Sir Michael Jay, FCO Permanent Under Secretary (PUS).<sup>70</sup>

**203.** Mr Brenton advised:

“The public debate ... is now firmly engaged. We have seen contributions from practically every prominent Republican ... With the signal exceptions of Scowcroft ... and Zinni [General Anthony Zinni, former Commander in Chief CENTCOM and US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace], virtually all have endorsed the idea of military action, subject to various preliminaries (such as going through the UN) to maximise international support. Cheney’s speech ... has further raised expectations of an early decision leading to military action.”

**204.** Mr Brenton described the key points under discussion as:

- a) **Whether to do it at all:** President Bush’s public position was that he would “proceed ‘cautiously and deliberately’ with full consultations of Congress and allies, and that a range of options remained open”.
- b) **UN inspections:** Mr James Baker and others had “argued that the US must go the UN route – demanding unfettered inspections (with the expectation, but not certainty, that Saddam will refuse), and the right to take action to enforce compliance, to maximise international support”.
- c) **Consulting Congress:** The White House had “made it clear” that it saw “no legal need to get Congressional support for military action ... But, they have also been briefing that there will be ‘full consultation’ and have not ruled out seeking formal support ... if the Administration made an effective case, Congress was likely to support action.”

**205.** Mr Brenton suggested that a number of other considerations continued to weigh heavily in the debate. Those were:

- the “day after” question;

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<sup>70</sup> [Letter Brenton to Chaplin, 29 August 2002, ‘Iraq’.](#)

- the impact on the oil market; and
- Saddam Hussein's possible use of WMD.

**206.** Mr Brenton wrote that the relevance of the MEPP had not been as prominent as might have been expected: "The hawks' argument here, which has gained some resonance, is that to postpone action until Arab/Israel improves is to postpone it for ever."

**207.** Mr Brenton also wrote that US public opinion was "lukewarmly supportive of action ... Commentators believe that if a public case begins to be made that support will firm up."

**208.** Mr Brenton concluded:

"... the hard questions are now ... on the table and it is clear to the main players that they are going to have to make a convincing case before going ahead with any action. So far the absence of a political green light has hindered them in making that case ... The expectations that have now been generated will make it very difficult for the President to do nothing (though this ... does not mean that military action is inevitable) ... Even if concrete action ... is still some way off, the Republicans would far prefer an Autumn in which the press is dominated by Iraq headlines than one where the economy is the lead story."

**209.** Copies of the letter were sent to a number of addressees, including Sir David Manning.

## **Mr Blair's decision to set out a public script on Iraq**

**210.** When Mr Blair returned to No.10 after his holiday, he set out his concerns about the public debate, and that he and President Bush had been "outed" as having decided on military action when no decisions had been taken.

**211.** Mr Blair stated that the "strategy" should be aimed at answering the questions of those who might support military action and, in doing so, set Iraq in a bigger context.

**212.** Mr Blair set out a series of steps to achieve that, including working for a new UN Security Council resolution which would effectively become an ultimatum.

**213.** Conflict would depend on the regime's response, but Mr Blair did not think it would be long before Saddam's true intention was clear.

**214.** As part of a wider note to No.10 officials on 30 August, Mr Blair set out his position on Iraq:

"I don't need any convincing as to where we are on this. The state of opinion, the difficulties. The problems are compounded by the fact that [President] Bush and myself have been 'outed' as having decided for war, come what may, when actually



no decisions have been taken. So the arguments are all being made against any action, when we are not yet in a position to make the arguments for it. But all this can be turned round in time, with the right strategy.

“My basic view on Iraq is clear and hard. The policy of containment ... has worked up to a point, but can't continue indefinitely; there is no doubt that, uncontained, Iraq is a threat; they are trying to acquire nuclear weapons capability; they are developing ballistic missile capability for biological and chemical weapons of a longer range; they retain substantial WMD stocks; the regime is deeply repugnant, corrupt and repressive ... The region, the world, the Iraqi people would be better off without Saddam.

“Opinion against action divides into two: those always opposed and the usual anti-American lobby; and those, a large number, who ask entirely sensible questions, but who might support action if the questions were answered.”<sup>71</sup>

**215.** Mr Blair stated: “The basic strategy should be to answer these questions and, in doing so, set ... Iraq in a bigger context.” The steps to do that were:

- Raising the whole issue of WMD up the agenda with a separate strategy for each country developing WMD, “in particular [those] acquiring nuclear technology in secret”.
- Setting out the “unique danger posed by Iraq ... an inherently violent and unstable regime, with a track record of external aggression, unmitigated by any moderate elements unlike other WMD countries”.
- Exposing and highlighting the “limits of the policy of containment”.
- A strategy which “should be to work towards a new UN resolution on weapons inspections, effectively becoming an ultimatum to Saddam. But it must be unconditional access and change to the way the regime operates viz its military capability. It will be clear that refusal or non-compliance will not be a subject of negotiation but action. We need to begin the diplomatic work on this now. Russia and my visit to Putin [Russian President, Mr Vladimir Putin] in October will be crucial. Obviously – and this is the legitimate US worry – if we go the UN route, Saddam may yield, agree and then play about. We need to be very clear we won't let that happen. But it does mean that conflict is dependent on the regime's response, not inevitable, though I don't think it will be long before his true intention is clear.”
- Building EU and Arab support for action “if the UN route does not deliver, ie we say ... we will try the UN route; but doing nothing is not an option”.
- Working “strenuously to put together a new MEPP process. This is the key to Arab opinion ...”

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<sup>71</sup> [Note Blair \[to No.10 officials\], 30 August 2002, \[extract 'Iraq'\]](#).

- Working on a post-Saddam Iraqi regime: “The conundrum is: if it is merely changing Saddam for another military dictator, that hardly elicits support from the rest of Iraq, especially the Shia majority, and is in any event, not in line with our principles; on the other hand, if the whole nature of the regime changes, the Sunni minority in power may be less tempted to fold and acquiesce in Saddam’s removal. But there are ways through this.”
- “[N]aturally” getting “detailed working on the military plan necessary to succeed”.
- Developing a “proper media strategy” including “real information about life under Saddam ... The moral case for regime change should be made.”
- Addressing the “whole issue of the Muslim world and its relations with the West”.

**216.** Mr Blair wanted detailed work internally within the UK and with the US and suggested:

“A small team under JS [Jack Straw] and DM [David Manning] should meet and coordinate.

“If I go to the US in the next couple of weeks, the idea should be to agree the strategy with GWB [President Bush], set it out at the TUC [Trades Union Congress] or shortly after and then get going.”

**217.** In his memoir Mr Blair wrote that he had returned from holiday with his “lines clear”. He:

“... was going to be very tough: we had to deal with Saddam; it was right to do it; we had to send an unvarnished and plain message on WMD to the world.<sup>72</sup>

**218.** Mr Blair was concerned about the effect that press speculation, that he was seeking to influence the US, would have on President Bush.

**219.** Initially Mr Blair’s instinct was to reiterate the lines he had been using earlier in the year, but he quickly decided to use a press conference on 3 September to set out a public script on Iraq.

**220.** Mr Campbell wrote to Mr Blair on 30 August to warn him that during the flight to a Sustainable Development Summit in Johannesburg the following day, the press would be pushing him on Iraq.<sup>73</sup> Mr Campbell recommended a statement with the top line message that inaction was not an option, but which did not move the line on the question of a decision on military action.

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<sup>72</sup> Blair T. *A Journey*. Hutchinson, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> Minute Campbell to Prime Minister, 30 August 2002, ‘Iraq/Press’.

**221.** Mr Campbell recorded in his diary that Mr Blair wanted to “avoid” talking about Iraq; and that he would use the line that doing nothing was not an option “if pushed”, but he did not want to go beyond that.<sup>74</sup>

**222.** Mr Campbell added that Mr Blair was:

“Privately ... growing more and more dismissive of the critics ... Equally he was clear that the Yanks had not handled it well over the holiday ... [T]hey had allowed the game to run ahead of them, and Cheney and Rumsfeld had just made it worse.

“... He was a lot steelier than when he went on holiday. Clear that getting Saddam was the right thing to do ...

...

“David had got Condi to get GWB to offer TB next Saturday for a meeting in the margins of his so-called war counsel [sic]. I think they realised that they had messed up the presentation and had to get into a better position, so it seemed clear Bush did want TB there, but heaven knows what Cheney and Rumsfeld would make of it. TB was up for it.”

**223.** In response to an article in the *Financial Times* of 31 August, reporting that Mr Blair had pressed President Bush for a UN mandate, Mr Campbell wrote in his diary on 1 September:

“Iraq was becoming a frenzy again. TB was becoming more and more belligerent, saying he knew it was the right thing to do ... Obviously the best thing to do would be to avoid war, get the inspectors in and all the weapons out ... the US had to be managed into a better position ... but we won’t be able to do it if we come out against the US the whole time ... Equally it was clear that public opinion had moved against us during August.”<sup>75</sup>

**224.** On 2 September Mr Campbell wrote to Sir David Manning, and to Mr Powell and Mr Rycroft, saying that Mr Blair was “alarmed, and angry, at the way parts of our thinking and planning on Iraq are seeping into the media in an unco-ordinated and undisciplined way”.<sup>76</sup> “Above all”, Mr Blair was “concerned what the US Administration must think”. Mr Blair intended to use his press conference the following day (in his Sedgefield constituency) to make the general position clear and “give people a public script”. But more must be done “to ensure people do not depart from that, publicly or privately, or give a running commentary in every aspect of his thinking”.

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<sup>74</sup> Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

<sup>75</sup> Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

<sup>76</sup> [Minute Campbell to Manning, 2 September 2002, \[untitled\]](#).

**225.** Mr Campbell wrote that he left it to Sir David and Mr Powell to decide what to do with his minute, “but it might be worth sending round as a general message that if people are talking loosely ... they are being foolish and risk being highly counter-productive”.

**226.** Mr Powell commented on the manuscript: “David [Manning] will speak to the FCO.”<sup>77</sup>

**227.** Sir David Manning discussed the issue with Dr Rice on both 1 and 2 September.<sup>78</sup>

**228.** There is no record of the first conversation although it was a difficult one which Sir David had reported orally to Mr Blair. He described the second conversation as “much easier” and “a great deal better than it might have been”. Sir David said he had told Dr Rice that Mr Blair was “angry at the way the British press were covering the Iraq issue”, and that “We were doing all we could to ensure that there were no leaks at our end.” Mr Blair “had given fierce instructions”. Sir David suggested that the coverage “was probably the result of speculation, lucky hits, and people driving their own agenda”.

**229.** Sir David told Dr Rice that Mr Blair would deal with Iraq at his press conference the following day. Mr Blair would “dismiss all suggestions” that he was “trying to pressure the US”. There was “no lack of consultation” and Mr Blair would not “want to pressure the President” because he “believed very strongly that Saddam must be dealt with”. “However difficult, we had to face up to the problem and to the wider problem of WMD.” Mr Blair and President Bush “might get together at some point if you both felt that was useful”. Sir David reported that Dr Rice was content with that line.

**230.** Sir David Manning also reported that he and Dr Rice had discussed elements of a “very tough” resolution, including a stipulation that the UN inspectors would have force protection and the possibility of “external back up” provided by larger military forces in a number of neighbouring countries who would invade Iraq if Saddam tried to obstruct the work of UNMOVIC. The assumption was that the resolution should be tabled two or three days after President Bush’s speech on 12 September. Sir David added: “With luck, we may be over the worst. Your [Mr Blair’s] press conference tomorrow will obviously be important.”

**231.** Mr Campbell wrote that Mr Blair was “livid” about the stories in the media and had spoken to Mr Powell and Sir David Manning “saying that he wanted message round the system that all this loose talk had to stop. And he wanted the Americans to know how angry he was”.<sup>79</sup>

**232.** Mr Campbell also wrote that Dr Rice had “said it looked like we were trying to push them, and they didn’t like it”. He added that Dr Rice liked the argument that the UN was the route to deal with Iraq, not the route to avoid it.

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<sup>77</sup> Manuscript comment Powell on [Minute Campbell to Manning, 2 September 2002, \[untitled\]](#).

<sup>78</sup> Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 2 September 2002, ‘Conversation with Condi Rice’.

<sup>79</sup> Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

**233. The FCO was concerned that Mr Blair should strike a balance between acknowledging the deficiencies of the policy of containment without saying it had failed.**

**234.** In preparation for his press conference in Sedgefield, Mr Blair asked for:

- a summary of “what we knew of the existing Iraqi WMD programme, in particular ballistic missile technology (and its significance); and nuclear weapons technology (including why the civil nuclear programmes they are funding is almost certainly misused for weapons programmes)”;
- a “list of Saddam Hussein’s atrocities”;
- a “rough summary” of statistics showing the brutality of political repression;
- information on the “sanctions programme and containment” telling him “why the policy of containment cannot continue indefinitely”; and
- information on the extent to which Saddam Hussein’s refusal to use the Oil-for-Food programme properly was harming the Iraqi people.<sup>80</sup>

**235.** Advice was provided by Mr Straw’s Private Office on 2 September.<sup>81</sup>

**236.** Mr Charles Gray, Head of the FCO Middle East Department, explained to Mr Peter Ricketts, FCO Political Director:

“The difficulty lies in providing No.10 with language which will adequately bring out the deficiencies in our present policy and show that there is a need to move beyond it, without suggesting that it has been a total failure (which, for the reasons set out in the first version ... we do not believe to be the case). And I also see a presentational risk that if we do not in the end go hard over on a policy of military action, and [we] have already said categorically that containment has failed, we shall be setting ourselves up for accusations that we are then left with no policy at all.

“So rather than tie us down to pursuing an alternative to containment immediately, the language ... seeks to demonstrate why the present state of affairs cannot continue indefinitely, thus leaving us with some flexibility on the timing of any other action.”<sup>82</sup>

**237.** As well as the briefing note, Mr Rycroft was sent a “blind copy” of Mr Gray’s minute. He advised Mr Blair: “We need to bring out the deficiencies of the containment policy without saying that it has been a total failure.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> [Minute Blair to Manning, 1 September 2002, \[untitled\]](#).

<sup>81</sup> [Letter Sedwill to Rycroft, 2 September 2002, ‘Iraq’](#).

<sup>82</sup> [Manuscript comment Sedwill to Rycroft on Minute Gray to Ricketts, 3 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Containment: Query from No. 10’](#).

<sup>83</sup> Manuscript comment Rycroft to Prime Minister, 3 September 2002, on FCO briefing note ‘4. The sanctions programme and containment’.

**238.** The brief for Mr Blair stated:

- The purpose of the policy had been to ensure that Iraq was disarmed through two main elements:
  - disarmament through inspections regimes; and
  - reducing Iraq’s ability to finance its WMD programmes by controlling its revenues from oil.
- The policy had had “some success in dismantling Saddam’s arsenal when the inspectors were able to operate”, and it had “slowed his efforts to rebuild WMD”. The arms embargo had “been effective in preventing Saddam acquiring new complete weapons systems”.
- But, “in the absence of inspectors” Iraq could “work on its WMD programmes unimpeded” and Iraq was “in violation of a string of Security Council resolutions intended to curb” those programmes.
- Controls on revenues were “eroding”, giving Saddam Hussein “access to large sums over which the international community had no control” and “much” of that was “certainly going into his high-priority WMD programmes”.
- Although the sanctions regime had been “targeted on goods of most concern”, no sanctions regime would “be completely effective in stopping a ruthless and well-funded regime getting its hands on some of the goods and technology needed for a WMD programme”.

**239.** The FCO response to Mr Blair’s questions on Iraq’s WMD, which stated unequivocally that Iraq had and was hiding WMD and that it had continued its chemical, biological, nuclear and ballistic missile programmes after the departure of the UN weapons inspectors in 1998, is addressed in Section 4.2

### **The Sedgefield press conference, 3 September 2002**

**240.** In his press conference, Mr Blair stated that Saddam Hussein was, “without any question, still trying to develop” a “chemical, biological, potentially nuclear capability”; and that to allow him to do so would be “irresponsible”.

**241.** As he had discussed with President Bush, Mr Blair framed Iraq’s position as a challenge to the UN which the UN should address.

**242.** Mr Blair’s remarks indicated that time and patience were running out and that there were difficulties with the existing policy of containment.

**243.** Mr Blair announced that the “dossier” setting out the evidence of Iraq’s attempts to develop its “chemical, biological and potentially nuclear capability” would be published in the “next few weeks”.

**244.** Mr Campbell wrote that the hardest question to answer was “Why now?”

**245.** In his press conference, which lasted 90 minutes, Mr Blair stated:

“... I think I would be right in saying that many of your questions will be on Iraq ... I sense that some of you believe we have taken all the key decisions but just haven’t got round to telling you. That isn’t the case ... We, at every level of government, have been and remain in close dialogue with the United States of America about this issue and where we are in absolute agreement is that Iraq poses a real and unique threat to the security of the region and the rest of the world. But Saddam Hussein is continuing in his efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction ... We have to face up to it, we have to deal with it and will. The issue is then what is the best way of proceeding.”<sup>84</sup>

**246.** Mr Blair emphasised the importance of the “broadest possible basis of support”; and that “because this is a problem for the world ... the United Nations has to be the route to deal with this problem, not a way of people avoiding dealing with this problem”.

**247.** Explaining his support for the US, Mr Blair stated: “For a long period of time we have done our best to contain that threat, though it is increasingly difficult to do without inspectors being back in there with a proper regime on the ground which alters the way the [Iraqi] regime behaves.” The US was “right” to raise the issue and supporting them was not a question of “misplaced allegiance or blind loyalty”; it was the “right thing to do”.

**248.** Mr Blair stated that the policy of containment of Saddam Hussein had “worked up to a point, but there is a point beyond which it hasn’t worked because the inspectors aren’t in, we don’t really know what is happening now”.

**249.** Mr Blair said: “I think I am right in saying that a couple of years ago we reckoned there was somewhere in the region of \$1.8 billion of illicit money coming to the Iraqi regime, we think it is probably \$3 billion ... now”.

**250.** Mr Blair also drew attention to Saddam Hussein’s human rights record and the “thousands ... of refugees flooding across Europe”.

**251.** Referring to US concerns about Saddam Hussein’s past record of obstructing inspections and the need to follow through on any resolution, Mr Blair concluded:

“... is there a threat we can simply turn a blind eye to, despite the breach of all the UN resolutions. If the answer to that is no, we have to deal with it, then let’s work out the right way of dealing with it. But it is perfectly understandable if in the light of previous experience, that people will look with a very sceptical eye as to whether any regime could be successful, but that is not to dismiss it.”

**252.** A number of questioners pointed out that public opinion had moved against the idea of a strike against Iraq “partly because people feel that there hasn’t been much

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<sup>84</sup> The National Archives, 3 September 2002, *PM press conference* [at Sedgefield].

evidence ... We have heard again and again that there is a dossier of evidence about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. Why haven't we got it up to now and when are we going to see it?" Would there be any evidence in the dossier which had been "gleaned in the last four years" that Saddam Hussein had "moved any further down the route to nuclear weapons"? There were suggestions that there was "not going to be much new"; and that, in terms of public opinion, there was "a mountain to climb".

**253.** In response to the first question Mr Blair replied:

"Originally I had the intention that we wouldn't get round to publishing the dossier until we'd actually taken the key decisions. I think it is probably a better idea to bring that forward."

**254.** Mr Blair added: "A lot of the work has already been done, there needs to be some more work and some more checking" but "the best thing to do is to publish ... within the next few weeks". When that happened:

"... people will see that there is no doubt at all the United Nations resolutions that Saddam is in breach of are there for a purpose. He [Saddam Hussein] is without any question, still trying to develop that chemical, biological, potentially nuclear capability and to allow him to do so without any let or hindrance, just to say, we [sic] can carry on and do it, I think would be irresponsible."

**255.** In terms of the specifics of Iraq's WMD Mr Blair made a number of comments including:

- "... there is no doubt that at some point the Iraqi regime were trying to develop nuclear weapons ... I believe that there is evidence that they will acquire nuclear weapons capability if they possibly can."
- "Now we will provide what support we can for that, although of course the absence of inspectors ... means there is necessarily a limit. But I don't think we should be in any doubt about the nature of this regime, they will acquire whatever weapons they possibly can."
- "Certainly they were trying to obtain a nuclear weapons capability. I think there is some evidence that they continued to do so."
- "... we don't really know what is happening now, there are huge amounts of stocks of chemical, biological weapons unaccounted for."
- "... we can't be quite sure what is happening on the nuclear side ... but on the biological and chemical weapons side there is no doubt about it, there are vast stocks of these weapons unaccounted for by the previous weapons inspectors."
- "And in addition there is real concern that there is ballistic missile technology."

**256.** Mr Blair suggested that the reason Iraq might not be letting inspections take place was because "the last time the inspectors were in there, they uncovered so much that



the Iraqi regime was deeply embarrassed”. He also argued that people would “think about it differently once they see the evidence”.

**257.** Mr Campbell wrote in his diary on 3 September:

“The hardest [question] was: ‘Why now? What was it that we knew now that we didn’t before that made us believe we had to do it now?’ It was not going to be at all easy to sell the policy in the next few months ...”<sup>85</sup>

**258.** Mr Campbell added that announcing the publication of the dossier would “raise expectations massively. Today was about beginning to turn the tide of public opinion and it was going to be very tough indeed.”

**259.** Mr Campbell told the Inquiry that the decision to bring forward the publication of the dossier was a way of trying to calm the situation.<sup>86</sup> Mr Blair had wanted “to set out for the public, in as accessible a way as possible, the reasons why he had become more concerned” about Iraq.

**260.** The decision to publish the dossier and its preparation is addressed in Section 4.2. That also sets out the separate work in the FCO on a script addressing why the problem of Iraq’s WMD, unlike other countries’ programmes including Iran’s, could not be resolved through containment and diplomacy.

### **JIC Assessment, 3 September 2002**

**261. A JIC Assessment reviewing Iraq’s manipulation of its trade relations to obtain diplomatic support was issued on 3 September.**

**262.** An Assessment analysing the way in which Iraq used trade to exert influence, ‘Iraqi Trade: A Tool of Influence’, was issued at the request of the JIC on 3 September.<sup>87</sup>

**263.** The Key Judgements were:

- Iraq is successful in manipulating its trade relations to obtain diplomatic support from other countries. It will continue to do so. The weakness of the economies of many of Iraq’s neighbours means they will continue to be susceptible to Iraqi pressure through the offer of lucrative trading opportunities.
- Trade dependency has muted, but not eliminated, criticism of Iraq by its neighbours – whose policies are influenced but not determined by economic factors.

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<sup>85</sup> Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Public hearing, 12 January 2010, pages 66-67.

<sup>87</sup> [JIC Assessment, 3 September 2002, ‘Iraqi Trade: A Tool of Influence’](#).

- Iraq's ability to use cuts in oil supply or threats of such disruption to cause spikes to world energy market prices is likely to be temporary and limited by the extent to which Saudi oil production can make good any loss of Iraqi supplies.
- Iraq uses economic levers to put political pressure on Russia for support, whilst Russia sees its political importance to Iraq as a means to extract economic benefit. But Russia remains the dominant partner. At present Russia is able to exercise the greater leverage.
- Russian policy on Iraq will continue to be heavily influenced by its determination to protect its economic interests. The status quo provides the benefit of a privileged commercial position; but contracts which can only be realised after sanctions are lifted may not be honoured by a post-Saddam regime.
- Iraq's use of trade to further its political influence will be limited in future by its inability to significantly expand oil production."

**264.** Other points from the Assessment are set out in the Box below.

### **JIC Assessment, 3 September 2002: 'Iraqi Trade: A Tool of Influence'**

The Assessment concluded that Iraq deliberately used **"trade with other countries as one way to achieve strategic goals"**.

"It had worked hard to build up trading relations, legal and otherwise, both with its neighbours and influential countries on the UNSC. **The granting of future oil/gas extraction rights for the post-sanctions period is also a source of leverage.**"

In addition, **"Iraq manipulates OFF contracts to obtain political support from other countries."** The lifting of the ceiling on OFF contracts in 1999 had "increased Iraq's power of patronage significantly". Iraq had "used the OFF programme to divert funds illegally to Baghdad using a number of schemes, the most important being a 10 percent commission on all OFF contracts for goods coming into Iraq and the imposition of a surcharge on exports of its oil".

Iraq was also pursuing illegal trade which was described as "typically" involving "the transfer of Iraqi oil at below world prices". That gave the Iraqi regime "direct access to foreign currency" and allowed it "to procure goods prohibited by the UN from countries, firms and individuals willing to break sanctions".

The JIC assessed that Jordan and Syria were the two countries most dependent on Iraqi trade. For Jordan OFF and other trade with Iraq accounted for "about 20 percent" of its GDP; Syrian trade with Iraq was estimated to account for about 10 percent of its GDP, not including earnings of firms and individuals who dealt with Baghdad directly or some revenues derived from the use of Syria as a major transit route for illegal Iraqi trade. Illegal oil exports from Iraq through a pipeline with Syria began in 2000. Syria was the largest purchaser of illegal Iraqi oil which it used for domestic consumption allowing it to increase exports of its own oil.

With Egypt, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, trade was "relatively significant".

The JIC set out the scale of Russia's economic interests in Iraq, including expected earnings of US\$2.5bn in 2002 from OFF contracts; contracts to develop Iraq's oil and gas fields; and a five year trade agreement. Moscow was also concerned about recovering outstanding debt of at least US\$8bn.

Iraq used its economic relationship with Russia to put pressure on Russia, including to engage in illegal trade which the Russian Government had resisted. Iraqi bribes paid to Russian officials, businessmen and politicians and oil industry lobbyists had helped "nurture an influential pro-Iraqi lobby in Russia".

Russian policy was **"to hope for the best and plan for the worst – so far as its economic interests are concerned"**. Russia might see the **"deals it has signed with Iraq as a card to negotiate some form of compensation should the current regime be toppled by the US"**. It was "hoping to maintain and possibly expand its current trading position".

Russia wanted "to maintain good relations with the US while at the same time opposing an attack on Iraq". It was "becoming increasingly irritated by Iraq's refusal to allow the return of UN inspectors", which Russia saw as "the best way to avoid a conflict in Iraq and get sanctions lifted".

## US agreement to pursue "the UN route"

**265.** In a meeting on 3 September, Mr Blair told Mr Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, that:

"... Iraq needed to know that they had to let the inspectors back in and that, if they refused, the US would not ignore it. The President was under pressure not to go down the UN route and it was important that the international community stood ready to support him if he did."<sup>88</sup>

**266.** Mr Annan stated that he had been informed earlier in the year that it was thought Iraq would comply and let the inspectors back in.

**267.** Dr Rice telephoned Sir David Manning after the Sedgefield press conference to discuss the arrangements for Mr Blair and President Bush to meet at Camp David and develop US thinking on what the resolution should contain.<sup>89</sup>

**268.** Sir David Manning told Dr Rice that he had "assumed we would need to table a very tough initial draft that included negotiating fat that could be conceded". Some of the elements Dr Rice had outlined would be a "tough sell" and "we might have ... to modify these demands to get the resolution through". Sir David said he would get back to Dr Rice "when our experts had thought the issues through".

<sup>88</sup> Letter Lloyd to McDonald, 3 September 2002, 'Prime Minister's Meeting with Kofi Annan'.

<sup>89</sup> Minute Manning to PM, 3 September 2002, 'Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice'.

**269.** Outside No.10, only Mr Straw was sent a personal copy of the record of that discussion.

**270. Mr Blair and President Bush agreed they should meet on 7 September to discuss Iraq.**

**271. President Bush announced the meeting on 4 September, as part of wider remarks about his determination to disarm Iraq about which he would also be consulting Congress and other world leaders.**

**272.** President Bush and Mr Blair spoke later on 3 September.<sup>90</sup> They discussed Mr Blair's press conference and Mr Blair said he was confident that a very strong case could be made against Saddam Hussein. Mr Blair's visit to the US would be announced the next day. It would follow a US National Security Council meeting on 7 September and precede President Bush's speech to the UN on 12 September. They would also discuss the handling of the UK dossier.

**273.** On 4 September, in a press opportunity after a meeting with Congressional leaders in the White House to discuss foreign policy, President Bush stated that they had spent most of their time "talking about a serious threat to the United States" and to the world from Saddam Hussein. Doing nothing about that threat was "not an option".<sup>91</sup> He "looked forward to an open dialogue with Congress and the American people". The Administration would "participate fully in any hearings" that Congress wished to hold, and "at the appropriate time" he would seek Congressional approval to "deal with the threat".

**274.** President Bush also announced that he had asked Mr Blair to "come to Camp David on Saturday" where they would discuss "mutual concerns about how to make the world more secure and safe". President Bush said that he would also speak to other world leaders, including those of China, France and Russia, before giving his speech at the UN General Assembly in New York the following week.

**275.** Asked whether putting weapons inspectors back into Iraq was a viable option, President Bush replied that the issue was disarmament not inspectors. That was the primary issue and he would be discussing "ways to make sure that that is the case". In response to a subsequent question, President Bush added that he would be calling "on the world to recognize that he [Saddam]" was "stiffing the world"; and discussing "ways to make sure that he fulfils his obligations".

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<sup>90</sup> Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 3 September 2002, 'Iraq: Prime Minister's Phone Call with President Bush, 3 September'.

<sup>91</sup> The White House, 4 September 2002, *President discusses Foreign Policy with Congressional Leaders*.

**276.** Asked whether the time had come to issue an ultimatum “similar to that you issued to the Taliban [in October 2001 – see Section 3.1]”, President Bush replied:

“I am going to state clearly to the United Nations what I think ... he [Saddam] has not fulfilled any of the obligations that he made to the world. And I believe it is important for the world to deal with this man. And I believe it is really important for the world to have an open dialogue about how to deal with this threat.

“We are in a new era; the first battle of the first war of the 21st century took place in Afghanistan. The United States is under threat ... this is a debate the American people must hear, must understand. And the world must understand ... that its credibility is at stake.”

**277.** CNN published a letter that President Bush had given to Mr Dennis Hastert, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, during the meeting on 4 September.<sup>92</sup> The letter stated:

“America and the civilised world face a critical decision in the months ahead. The decision is how to disarm an outlaw regime that continues to possess and develop weapons of mass destruction ... Since September 11, we have been reminded that we are vulnerable to evil people. And this vulnerability increases dramatically when evil people have access to weapons of mass destruction.

“I know Members of Congress agree that Saddam Hussein’s regime is still a threat to peace ... America intends to lead the way to make certain that Saddam Hussein’s regime is not able to threaten anyone in the world with the world’s most devastating weapons.

“I am in the process of deciding how to proceed. This is an important decision that must be made with great thought and care. Therefore I welcome and encourage discussion and debate. Congress will hold hearings on Iraq this month, and I have asked members of my Administration to participate fully.

“Doing nothing in the face of a grave threat to the world is not an option. At an appropriate time and after consultation with the leadership, I will seek Congressional support for US action to do whatever is necessary to deal with the threat posed by Saddam Hussein’s regime. Congress can play an important role in building a national consensus for action.”

**278.** After a reference to meeting Mr Blair and consulting other world leaders, the letter continued:

“My Administration remains committed to the regime change policy enshrined in the Iraq Liberation Act. The world must address how the Iraqi people can be liberated ...

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<sup>92</sup> CNN, 4 September 2002, *Bush letter: ‘America intends to lead’*.

“We must not allow an outlaw regime that incites and uses terror ... to threaten the world by developing the ultimate weapons of terror ... the civilised world must come together to deal with the threat posed by the Iraqi regime.”

### **Sir Jeremy Greenstock’s advice, 3 September 2002**

**279.** Sir Jeremy Greenstock advised on 3 September that none of the options identified by the FCO for a draft resolution, giving Iraq an ultimatum which might then provide legal cover for military action, would be achievable. Even a challenge to Iraq to accept UN inspections would face “considerable opposition”.

**280.** Sir Jeremy advised that the UK should focus on the elimination of WMD rather than regime change, and choose its tactics “with circumspection”.

**281.** Mr Blair had concluded on 30 August that the UK strategy should be a new UN resolution which would become an ultimatum to Iraq.<sup>93</sup>

**282.** Sir Michael Jay had asked Sir Jeremy Greenstock for his “considered advice on the handling of a Security Council resolution on Iraq in preparation for the Prime Minister’s visit to Camp David at the end of the week”.<sup>94</sup>

**283.** Sir Jeremy replied to Sir Michael on 3 September addressing a draft FCO letter to No.10 provided by Mr Stephen Pattison, Head of UN Department in the FCO, “on the options for Security Council Resolutions aimed at putting pressure on Iraq and preparing the ground for enforcement action”.

**284.** Sir Jeremy described the FCO draft as raising three possibilities:

- a resolution “specifically authorising the use of force”;
- a “softer text determining a flagrant violation or material breach by Iraq of previous SCRs”; and
- a “middle-ground resolution aimed at provoking an indisputable example of Iraqi intransigence by calling for the re-admission of Inspectors with a tight timetable and more intrusive powers”.

**285.** Sir Jeremy advised that none of those options was yet achievable and only the second was “likely to stand much chance of success after further work”. He wrote:

“We start from a point where the other 13 members of the Council will, at best, have serious doubts about the use of force. Despite the attractions from our and the US perspective of a clear and ‘in your face’ justification for the use of force, there is bound to be strong resistance to this in the Council. Nor would we have the necessary nine votes for an explicit pre-authorisation in the event of continued Iraqi non-compliance. There will even be considerable opposition to throwing down

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<sup>93</sup> [Note Blair \[to No.10 officials\], 30 August 2002, \[extract ‘Iraq’\].](#)

<sup>94</sup> [Letter Greenstock to Jay, 3 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Handling in the Security Council’.](#)

the gauntlet to Saddam by challenging him to accept UN Inspectors under tight conditions. [...] introducing force protection for UNMOVIC is simply unachievable, even if UNMOVIC decided to ask for it. The majority of the Council members will see any attempt to ratchet up the requirements on Iraq as a device to create a pretext for military action rather than an effort to get verification and inspection under way. And trying and failing to obtain this sort of language would be worse than not trying at all because it would create a presumption of further Council discussion and decision before military action could start.”

**286.** Sir Jeremy advised that the UK should be:

“... focusing our presentation as much as possible on WMD elimination rather than regime change, and ... choosing our Security Council tactics with circumspection. On the assumption that our first requirement is to secure legal cover for military intervention if the UN route fails, our priority should be to reactivate SCRs 678 and 687. The Attorney General will need to give a view on the best way to make this legally watertight, but to be politically effective we would need to secure more than the minimum nine votes necessary.”

**287.** In that context, Sir Jeremy wrote:

“... Ideally this [the text of an ultimatum resolution] should include ‘material breach’ (rather than ‘flagrant violation’) language and be under Chapter VII of the Charter. But, subject to the Attorney General’s views, I do not think that either Chapter VII or an explicit ultimatum is necessary to secure the legal cover we need. [...] ... in my view [we] should be very cautious about spelling out an ultimatum, which could easily be used by others to argue for a further Council decision before military action is launched. Our real objective in a resolution should be to achieve the minimum language necessary to justify the use of force (without a further SCR) without striving for extra bells and feathers ...

“We may need to discuss later how to handle Iraqi reaction to a successful resolution. Actually getting inspectors back in would change the picture.”

**288.** Sir Jeremy asked Sir Michael Jay to arrange for the distribution of the letter in London. Sir Michael sent it to Sir David Manning and Mr Straw’s Private Secretary “only at this stage. For discussion at my meeting at 12 noon.”<sup>95</sup>

**289.** The letter was marked to Mr Blair by Mr Jonathan Powell who wrote: “I do not agree with this.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Manuscript comment Jay, 4 September 2002, on [Letter Greenstock to Jay, 3 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Handling in the Security Council’](#).

<sup>96</sup> Manuscript comment Powell to Prime Minister, [undated], on [Letter Greenstock to Jay, 3 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Handling in the Security Council’](#).

**290.** Mr Blair replied “? why not? – sounds right to me except possibly it may be possible to get a middle ground resolution.”<sup>97</sup>

### **FCO advice, 4 September 2002**

**291.** The FCO advice to No.10 on 4 September reflected Sir Jeremy’s view that **it would be difficult to negotiate any resolution which implicitly or explicitly authorised the use of force without clear Iraqi provocation to provide a “trigger”**.

**292.** Mr Straw’s Private Office sent advice to No.10 on 4 September on a “wider range of possible UNSCRs and a game-plan for securing them”, drawing attention to Sir Jeremy Greenstock’s advice in his letter of 3 September.<sup>98</sup> The letter to Sir David Manning made clear that Mr Straw had not seen the advice.

**293.** The FCO set out three possible approaches, but made no recommendation. First, **a resolution specifically authorising the use of force:** affirming that Iraq had “ignored” the UN’s demands and failed to comply with relevant resolutions; confirming that Iraq’s behaviour, and in particular its possession of WMD, “constituted a threat to international peace and security”; and authorising a “coalition of the willing to take ‘all necessary measures’ to ensure Iraq’s compliance with the UN’s demands”.

**294.** Such a resolution would “provide an unambiguous justification for the use of force” but it would be “immensely difficult to negotiate” and the prospects would improve “only if there were a recent and flagrant example of Iraqi non-compliance”.

**295.** Secondly, **a resolution determining that Iraq’s failure to co-operate with “UNMOVIC etc” constituted a flagrant violation or material breach of previous resolutions:** with a call for Iraq to co-operate fully and possibly a timed ultimatum “though the warning to Iraq would be implicit without it”.

**296.** In the FCO view “such a resolution could be argued to provide sufficient grounds for the use of force ... on the [grounds] that it revived the authorisation ... in [resolution] 687”. That would “undoubtedly be easier for some UNSC members to support than one which explicitly authorised all necessary measures, although many would recognise it for what it is, and take up positions accordingly”.

**297.** Thirdly, **a resolution calling for re-admission of inspectors with a tight timetable, more intrusive powers etc:** re-affirming Security Council support for UNMOVIC and the IAEA and for disarming Iraq of WMD with a tight timetable for compliance and UNMOVIC reports and a commitment to take action if UNMOVIC reported Iraq was not co-operating.

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<sup>97</sup> Manuscript comment Blair, [undated], on [Letter Greenstock to Jay, 3 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Handling in the Security Council’](#).

<sup>98</sup> [Letter Sedwill to Manning, 4 September 2002, ‘Iraq’ attaching Paper ‘Iraq: UNSC Action’](#).



**298.** The FCO advised that, in that eventuality: “It would obviously be preferable to have automatic authorisation of the use of force” but the Russians and others were “likely to insist on a separate decision”. Armed support for UNMOVIC “would be very difficult, if not impossible to negotiate”.

**299.** Such a resolution would “demonstrate ... willingness to give Iraq one last chance. But there would be pressure ... to keep to the timetable outlined in ... [resolution] 1284, which gave UNMOVIC months rather than weeks to report full Iraqi compliance.” There would also have to be tight criteria for determining whether Iraq was co-operating “to ensure that there would be no return to Iraq playing cat and mouse with UNMOVIC”.

**300.** The FCO judged that the UK would be “unlikely to secure language which provided a clear justification for future military action without further recourse to the UNSC”. It also pointed out that, “A failed attempt in this area would be damaging. For this reason, it would be wise not to go for the hardest option.”

**301.** Reviewing the “Prospects and Pitfalls” of action, the FCO concluded that it would be “difficult to negotiate any resolution which implicitly or explicitly authorises the use of force without clear Iraqi provocation”. It identified the Russian attitude as “pivotal”; and argued that China and other Security Council members would be nervous of setting a precedent for “what may look like regime change”.

**302.** The FCO also addressed the need for a trigger to support a resolution authorising the use of force:

“The best trigger would be if Iraq were to be caught out taking action in clear violation of UN Security Council demands. For example, if we were to get new evidence of an egregious attempt by Iraq to rebuild its WMD programme ... But it is unlikely that Iraq will play into our hands in this way.

“The next best trigger would be to adopt a resolution demanding more intrusive inspections ... in the expectation that Iraq would not co-operate ... Iraq’s refusal to let UNMOVIC in or a subsequent report from UNMOVIC of Iraq’s failure to co-operate would suffice.

“Even without a specific trigger ... we might argue that the UNSC’s patience had run out ... the first anniversary of ... resolution [1382] (on 29 November [2002]) might be a useful opportunity to focus minds.”

**303.** Addressing an ultimatum the FCO advised:

“Various types of ultimatum are possible. They would need to be linked to demands for the re-admission of inspectors, and Iraqi co-operation ... Some options would include deadlines ... but ... in the absence of ... Iraqi move[s] to comply within a reasonable (but short) period, they would be in clear violation.”

**304.** The FCO concluded: “The first step must be to share our thinking with the US” before addressing the approach to the other Permanent Members of the Security Council.

### Attack in Iraq, 5 September

In response to hostile acts against coalition aircraft monitoring the southern No-Fly Zone, US aircraft, with UK aircraft in support, attacked an Iraqi air defence facility in western Iraq on 5 September 2002, prompting press speculation that it was a prelude to Special Forces attacks and more general military action.<sup>99</sup>

Mr Amre Moussa, Secretary General of the Arab League, told a press conference in Cairo on 5 September that any attack would cause major instability in the region.<sup>100</sup> The press also reported Arab foreign ministers had said that military action to topple Saddam Hussein would “open the gates of hell” and that no Arab countries would join it.

### FCO advice, 6 September 2002

**305.** Mr Straw had a different perspective. He advised that the UK should seek a resolution that simply determined that Iraq’s failure to co-operate constituted a breach of its obligations and set an ultimatum for the readmission of inspectors on the basis of the provisions in resolution 1284.

**306.** Mr Straw’s Private Secretary wrote to No.10 on 6 September offering “elements” for a possible resolution “authorising a tougher mandate and enforcement powers for UNMOVIC inspectors in Iraq” and a draft resolution taking a different approach.<sup>101</sup>

**307.** The first draft resolution made clear that “Iraq would be obliged to grant inspectors immediate access to any sites, records or officials as requested”; with the “provision of armed guards to accompany UNMOVIC” and authorisation for “a standby force to assist UNMOVIC obtain Iraqi compliance if necessary”. The FCO stated that it had assumed military operations would be run by a “coalition of the willing led by the US”, not run by the UN.

**308.** The FCO advised that there would be “strong pressure” from members of the Security Council “to be consulted again before military action” commenced. The draft aimed “high” by “including various formulae designed to obtain prior UNSC authority or at least approval in principle, for any enforcement action”.

**309.** The timetable in the draft resolution was “modelled on the arrangements envisaged in UNSCR 1284 [1999]”, which the FCO commented were “likely to be considered too

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<sup>99</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 6 September 2002, *100 jets join attack on Iraq*.

<sup>100</sup> *BBC News*, 6 September 2002, *Iraqi air defence site attacked*.

<sup>101</sup> [Letter Davies to Manning, 6 September 2002, ‘Iraq’ attaching Paper ‘Draft Elements for a UNSCR on UNMOVIC’](#).

leisurely in the current political climate”. Any timetable would “in practice” need to take account of Dr Blix’s views.

**310.** The draft included only an implicit reference to regime change; “the market will bear no more”.

**311.** The draft “also included requirements for Iraq to allow access to humanitarian agencies, and for other UN members to co-operate by providing assistance to the coalition and information on sanctions busting”.

**312.** The second draft resolution reflected Mr Straw’s amendments to a draft letter to No.10 offered by officials on 5 September on which Mr Straw had commented that the options were “too ‘in your face’ at present”.<sup>102</sup>

**313.** While Mr Straw recognised “the importance of engaging the White House in discussion of the UN options and of a tough draft UNSCR designed to get the inspectors back in”, he believed the UK should:

“... point out to the White House that this is unlikely to be achievable and that the concerns of Sir Jeremy Greenstock ... must be taken seriously. You will recall that the Foreign Secretary mentioned this to the Prime Minister at yesterday’s meeting.”<sup>103</sup>

**314.** The letter of 6 September summarised Sir Jeremy’s concerns and stated that the FCO was, “therefore”, providing:

“... a draft resolution which takes a different approach, namely determining that Iraq’s failure to co-operate constitutes a material breach/gross violation of its obligations and sets an ultimatum for it to admit inspectors on the basis of the current arrangements.”

**315.** The text of the draft resolution was that sent to No.10 by the FCO on 27 August. The FCO stated:

“Even this approach will be difficult. We start from a point where the other 13 members of the Council will, at best, have serious doubts about the use of force.”

**316.** The FCO concluded with a caution on timing:

“... no action in the Security Council should be taken until the Russians have been squared. A text as complex as the revised UNMOVIC mandate would require even more pre-cooking if it were to succeed ... It would be far less difficult to see that

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<sup>102</sup> Manuscript comment Straw on Letter [draft] [FCO to No.10] attaching Minute Pattison to Ricketts and PS [FCO], 5 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.

<sup>103</sup> [Letter Davies to Manning, 6 September 2002, ‘Iraq’ attaching Paper ‘Draft Elements for a UNSCR on UNMOVIC’.](#)

[a Russian resolution] off than to salvage a negotiation of our own that was launched before the ground had been properly prepared.”

**317.** The FCO letter was sent to Sir David Manning; no copy addresses were identified.

**318.** Mr Straw’s meeting with Mr Blair on 5 September is addressed later in this Section.

**319.** In a conversation with Secretary Powell on 6 September, Mr Straw said that the UK would not want a kitchen sink resolution which was un-negotiable.<sup>104</sup> He was sure that Mr Blair would reinforce that message with President Bush.

### **Sir David Manning’s discussion with Dr Rice, 6 September 2002**

**320. Sir David Manning advised Mr Blair that there would be better prospects of securing a tough mandate if there was a promise to return to the Security Council before force was used.**

**321.** Sir David Manning and Dr Rice discussed the contents and handling of a draft resolution in the morning of 6 September.<sup>105</sup>

**322.** Sir David reported to Mr Blair that he had told Dr Rice:

- A resolution “must not be a transparent device to justify military action. The focus must be the return of Inspectors, and WMD. If Bush tabled something that could not easily be dismissed as a transparent pretext for immediate military action, there would be a wide measure of international support.”
- That “did not mean that the resolution should not be tough on Saddam. But it would need nice judgement and strong nerves to get the balance right ... Once the international community had signed up, we would be in a different place.”
- “The Russians would be key. It was essential that Bush did a great deal of heavy lifting with Putin before the resolution was tabled ...”
- “France would also be crucial to the argument.” Mr Blair was talking to President Chirac that day.
- Sir David “thought that the French would rally to a well constructed, even if tough resolution, as long as they believed the US purpose in tabling it was genuine”.
- A resolution was needed that “made it clear this was Saddam’s last chance. But the question of an ultimatum would need great care. It might be worth adopting a strategy in two parts: an initial resolution that stipulated strict conditions with the implication that further action would follow swiftly if these were not met. Thereafter, if Saddam failed to fulfil the conditions, we would need a second resolution containing an ultimatum. Countries that had supported the first resolution would find it correspondingly harder to oppose the second ... these

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<sup>104</sup> Minute Davies to Gray, 6 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.

<sup>105</sup> [Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 6 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Dr Rice’.](#)

were preliminary thoughts ... you [Mr Blair] would want to explore the pros and cons of an ultimatum, and its timing, when you saw [President] Bush tomorrow.”

**323.** Dr Rice did not contest Sir David’s points. She told him that “the current plan” was for President Bush’s speech at the UN General Assembly to “focus on a clear demand that Iraq must forswear WMD” which would be “accompanied by an announcement” that the US would be tabling a draft resolution.

**324.** Sir David reported that current White House thinking on the core points for the resolution included:

- full “WMD disarmament under the international supervision of the Security Council”;
- “unrestricted access for UNMOVIC”;
- freedom for “witnesses” to the WMD programme to leave Iraq and be interviewed by UNMOVIC “at any time”;
- empowerment for inspectors “to destroy any prohibited material they discovered”;
- “force protection” for UNMOVIC; and
- Iraqi agreement to no-fly and no-drive zones as required.

The resolution would conclude by stating that If Saddam Hussein “adhered to these conditions”, that would “lead to a new international relationship with Iraq”.

**325.** Sir David told Dr Rice that force protection would be “a hard sell”. He had repeated the need to have some “negotiating fat” in the draft resolution for Russia, which might include force protection. Dr Rice agreed.

**326.** Sir David reported that he had “welcomed the fact” that the US was “not now thinking of stipulating regime change”. Dr Rice said that as they “had discussed before, Saddam’s acceptance of the other conditions would lead to a radically different regime anyway”. Sir David also said that there was a need to find a way to emphasise that the “quarrel was with Saddam not the Iraqi people”; the “aim should be to isolate him, as we had tried to isolate Milošević”. Dr Rice agreed.

**327.** Sir David reported to Mr Blair:

“As I said to you afterwards, further encouragement. White House thinking about the contents of the resolution has come back to earth and looks broadly plausible. And their view of handling (a serious text, working with Putin etc) seems close to ours. We must hope all this survives Cheney and the NSC meeting starting this evening. But on this evidence, the Administration may now be ready to make a genuine effort to go the UN route. Cementing this at Camp David will be a real prize.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> [Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 6 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.](#)

**328.** Sir David did not send a report of his conversation to the FCO.

### **Sir Christopher Meyer's advice, 5 and 6 September 2002**

**329.** Sir Christopher Meyer reported on 5 September that the US Administration was considering starting to make the case against Saddam Hussein and using President Bush's speech at the UN to indict him then circulating a draft resolution the following week. Congressional resolutions authorising military action would be sought in early October.<sup>107</sup> The US was also thinking about a further resolution at a date to be determined which would issue a 48 hour ultimatum before military action was taken.

**330.** Sir Christopher added that there was still "feverish debate" about the content of the first resolution, and in particular how to secure intrusive inspections and whether to expand the case against Saddam beyond WMD. A study to be released on 6 September would suggest an "Inspection Implementation Force" to be established in neighbouring countries. Other options were also being considered although any option was likely to be unacceptable to Iraq. One official had commented: "but that was the whole point".

**331.** Sir Christopher reported that he had made clear that the UK view was that the focus had to remain squarely on the WMD threat, but there were two US concerns about that approach. First, the intelligence was not substantial enough to make a convincing case that regime change was necessary and justified. American public opinion would need something more; issues like human rights would play well. Secondly, there was concern that, if the focus was only on WMD and Saddam Hussein folded at the eleventh hour, it would undercut the imperative for regime change.

**332.** Sir Christopher Meyer advised on 6 September that Iraq was likely to dominate Washington politics during the autumn and there was a raft of unanswered questions about a "UN route".

**333.** Sir Christopher warned that it was "far from a given" that the "UN process should be exhausted, as we would understand it, before military action is contemplated".

**334.** Sir Christopher suggested that it would be more important to get it right than to do it fast.

**335.** Before the meeting at Camp David, Sir Christopher Meyer advised that, while President Bush's decision to go the UN route and to consult widely at home and abroad was welcome it left "a raft of questions unanswered".<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Telegram 1130 Washington to FCO London, 5 September 2002, 'Iraq: The US Diplomatic Game Plan'.

<sup>108</sup> [Telegram 1140 Washington to FCO London, 6 September 2002, 'PM's visit to Camp David: Iraq'](#).

**336.** Sir Christopher wrote:

- A military invasion and its aftermath would be “less perilous [for the US] in company”.
- President Bush’s initiative (his letter to Congress of 4 September) had “got him off the defensive” but he had “been damaged by policy drift”. Iraq was “likely to dominate Washington politics until Congress adjourns for the mid-term elections [in November 2002]”.
- President Bush had repeated comments that the policy was Saddam Hussein’s removal: “Disarmament as [an] objective has been left to lesser spokesmen to articulate.”
- President Bush’s instincts “were with the hawks”: Saddam Hussein had “had his chance” and would “never change”. The elimination of WMD was “inseparable from the elimination of Saddam himself; inspections were a discredited instrument” and the UN “was not to be trusted”.
- Mr Blair was “likely to find a President with his heart and his head in conflict”. While President Bush’s instincts might be to “move to attack Iraq as soon as possible”, now that he had “launched a process of consultation” he would “to a degree be bound by its dynamic”. The challenge for the President would be how to convince Congress and the American people “why it is urgent” to get rid of Saddam Hussein.
- Hearings in Congress could last “through October”. There was a “huge debate inside the Administration about the content of Security Council resolution(s) ... even the principle of a SCR remains under challenge. I am reluctant to predict how this will be decided ... before the Prime Minister arrives.”
- The “dilemma ... over inspections” was “sharp”: “Many Americans want to set the bar so high that if Saddam were to accept, it would be tantamount to regime change. I assume this is unsaleable in New York. For others ... the nightmare is that Saddam will say ‘yes’ and avoid attack. I think it is far from a given ... that the UN process should be exhausted, as we would understand it, before military action is contemplated. The UK could find itself in an awkward two-way stretch between the Americans and others in the Security Council.”
- The White House hoped that the UN approach would “square the circle of divisions within the Administration”. Sir Christopher commented that it might succeed but it was “as likely to reopen the fault line between [Secretary] Powell and the neo cons and by extension between the two sides of the Atlantic”.
- “The pre-conditions for military action are a focal point for Camp David. So are post-war Iraq and the MEPP ... The President seems to have bought the neo con notion that with the overthrow of Saddam all will be sweetness and light in Iraq, with automatic benefits in the rest of the Middle East (which partly explains his inactivity on the latter). In reality, it will probably make pacifying Afghanistan look like child’s play. The US is probably in greater need of coalition and UN

support for what is likely to be a very protracted post-war phase, than for the attack itself. Afghanistan has shown that the US is not good at consolidating politically what it has achieved militarily.”

**337.** Sir Christopher commented:

“The Prime Minister will have very clear ideas how he wants to play Iraq with Bush. I would say only that it is more important to get it right than to do it fast. Bush’s head will agree. But his heart is impatient, he fears being labelled a wimp like his father, and his emotions will be stirred by the approach of the 9/11 anniversary.”

There would be “pressure on Bush to elide the distinction” between the two positions.

### **President Chirac’s views, 6 September 2002**

**338.** President Chirac told Mr Blair that the inspectors had to return to Iraq immediately with full powers and they needed to be intelligent. He would support that sort of resolution.

**339.** The disadvantages of any US unilateralism would be much greater than the advantages.

**340.** In a conversation with President Chirac on 6 September, Mr Blair asked for his views in advance of the meeting with President Bush.<sup>109</sup>

**341.** President Chirac’s response was reported to have included:

- Iraq had been “systematically and stupidly provoked ... into getting rid of the inspectors”.
- He did not think Saddam Hussein “posed an immediate nuclear danger, but clearly there were CBW risks”.
- The inspectors had to return immediately, but in the current climate Mr Annan should give Iraq an assurance that the inspectors were real, not spies.
- The inspectors must have full powers, but they needed to be intelligent.

**342.** President Chirac told Mr Blair that France would support that sort of UN resolution, but if that did not work, there were two scenarios:

- The US could attack Iraq on its own initiative but, “France would not participate, ‘since we are against unilateralism and do not want to feed anti-Americanism’, and because it would be dangerous militarily especially if Saddam had CBW. It would not lead to the right result. There was a risk of Iraq blowing up in the absence of a serious opposition figure to take power. The disadvantages would

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<sup>109</sup> [Letter Rycroft to Sedwill, 6 September 2002, ‘Iraq and MEPP: Prime Minister’s Phone Call with President Chirac, 6 September’.](#)



be much greater than the advantages. He thought most Arab and EU countries would agree.”

- The Security Council “could be seized. If so, France would be ready to discuss options. France would not be alone in the possible use of its veto.”

**343.** Mr Blair told President Chirac that Saddam Hussein had to know that this was “his last chance to co-operate”. It would be:

“... difficult to persuade the US to go down the UN path unless they believed that a refusal by Saddam to abide by his UN obligations would result in some damage to him.”

**344.** Mr Blair added:

“... he understood the French position: support for a UNSCR on inspectors, no support for unilateral military action, and ready to discuss UN S[ecurity] C[ouncil] measures if Saddam refused to comply.”

**345.** President Chirac:

“... confirmed that that was his position. He recognised that maximum pressure was needed on Saddam. Saddam understood that he faced a choice: inspectors or attack. The problem was that he always took stupid decisions. So Chirac was worried. And worse was Cheney’s talk about military action whatever Saddam did on inspections, which gave Saddam no incentive to accept inspectors. There were imbeciles on both sides.”

**346.** Mr Blair “agreed to report back” to President Chirac after his discussions with President Bush.

### **Mr Blair’s meeting with Dr Blix, 6 September 2002**

**347.** Mr Blair met Dr Blix on 6 September.<sup>110</sup>

**348.** The record stated that Dr Blix told Mr Blair that Iraq was continuing to insist on a comprehensive settlement, which would link lifting the No-Fly Zones, removing the US threat, lifting sanctions, and establishing a zone free of WMD. The threat of military action had led to Iraq weakening its position but Iraq would not move to allow inspectors back in if it thought that military action was inevitable or if they thought there was no prospect of military action. They would move if they saw a link between a move and avoiding military action. Mr Blair said that he thought there was such a link but the inspection regime would have to be tough.

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<sup>110</sup> [Letter Rycroft to Sedwill, 6 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Meeting with Hans Blix, 6 September’.](#)

**349.** Dr Blix told Mr Blair that Iraq had two “fears”:

- Once the inspectors returned there would be a “a stand-off over access which the US would take as a casus belli”.
- UNMOVIC would “inherit UNSCOM’s leakiness” which had “discredited UNSCOM”.

**350.** Dr Blix said that he would support stronger inspections if that was the decision of the Security Council. Whatever arrangements were agreed, there would be limits to what inspections could achieve: “For instance, it would be very hard to catch Iraq’s mobile installations.”

**351.** Dr Blix also warned Mr Blair that UNMOVIC would need a couple of months to prepare and 60 days thereafter for “rebaselining”: “So it would be nearly four months before the inspectors could present the issues to the UNSC.”

### **President Putin’s views, 6 September 2002**

**352.** President Putin told Mr Blair that he had great doubts about the legality of the use of military force, but was prepared to work to achieve a UN resolution which would convince Iraq to readmit inspectors on terms which had been agreed in the Security Council.

**353.** In a telephone conversation on 6 September, President Putin stated that he thought the Russian and UK approaches were “very close”:

- both were insisting on the return of inspectors in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions;
- Foreign Ministers were working with a close understanding; and
- we had to be 100 percent sure that Iraq would never produce WMD programmes.<sup>111</sup>

**354.** Russia had been working with Iraq to ensure that it understood, and the Iraqi Foreign Minister had confirmed in Moscow earlier that week that it was prepared to discuss the return of “UN structures”. Iraq was prepared to allow UN inspectors and monitoring to return; we had to ensure that was on our conditions. Russia had to be involved in developing those conditions or it would not be possible for it to subscribe to those “rules”. Mr Blair agreed.

**355.** President Putin told Mr Blair that Russia had great doubts about the legality of the use of military force and all diplomatic means were far from exhausted: “But he thought it would be possible for the UN Security Council to come up with a common position, to ensure that the Iraqis saw that they had no way out.”

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<sup>111</sup> Letter Rycroft to Sedwill, 6 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Telephone Call with President Putin, 6 September’.

**356.** Mr Blair also agreed to a request from President Putin for the information on Iraq's WMD that had formed the basis of his remarks in his press conference on 3 September.

## Saudi Arabia

**357.** Mr Straw and Mr Blair met the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud, on 6 September. They discussed concerns about the effect on the solidarity of the international coalition on terrorism of the current speculation about military action in Iraq and the dangers in the region if military action was taken without some improvement in the situation of the Palestinian people. Mr Blair agreed to reflect those points in his discussions with the US.<sup>112</sup>

## Military options

**358.** No decision on a possible UK military contribution to US operations was taken before Mr Blair's meeting with President Bush, but the MOD advised that there could be a need for tough decisions within two weeks of that.

**359.** Mr Blair told Mr Hoon and Mr Straw that he did not expect President Bush imminently to commit the US to military action.

**360.** Mr Hoon had cautioned Mr Blair about the potential impact of a firefighters' strike in the MOD advice of 26 July.<sup>113</sup> The strike and its impact on the development of military options in the MOD are addressed in Section 6.1.

**361.** The MOD's assessment of the implications of having to earmark military personnel to provide cover during a firefighters' strike (Op FRESCO) was set out in a letter to Sir David Manning on 28 August.<sup>114</sup> The letter said that Mr Hoon considered:

“... it particularly important that we guard against any false assumptions that the US might make about the UK's potential contribution to any military action ... Explaining the impact ... to the US would ... serve to focus US planners on the real practical limitations we would face, were political decisions taken to join the US in military action.”

**362.** Sir David Manning commented to Mr Powell that he was not clear where the firefighters' issue stood; and that he would be “grateful for a word ab[ou]t what to say to Washington and when”.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Letter Wechsberg to McDonald, 6 September 2002, 'Iraq/MEPP: Prime Minister's Meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister'.

<sup>113</sup> [Letter Watkins to Rycroft, 26 July 2002, 'Iraq'](#).

<sup>114</sup> [Letter Williams to Manning, 28 August 2002, 'Iraq – Potential UK Contribution and a Fire Strike'](#).

<sup>115</sup> Manuscript comment Manning to Powell, 30 August 2002, on [Letter Williams to Manning, 28 August 2002, 'Iraq – Potential UK Contribution and a Fire Strike'](#).

**363.** Mr Blair's view, as reported on 3 September by Sir David Manning, was for "nothing to be said to the US about Op FRESCO for the moment".<sup>116</sup> Mr Blair hoped it would be possible to discuss the issues with Mr Hoon the following week before he flew to Washington.

**364.** Mr Blair discussed the UK's military contribution with Mr Hoon on 5 September.<sup>117</sup> Mr Straw was also present.

**365.** Mr Peter Watkins, Mr Hoon's Principal Private Secretary, recorded that Mr Blair, Mr Hoon and Mr Straw had discussed the packages, and that Mr Hoon had highlighted the benefits of Package 2. "No decisions were taken" and Mr Blair "did not expect President Bush to commit himself imminently to a military campaign".

**366.** Mr Watkins also recorded that Mr Hoon had met Mr Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, to discuss the options and alert him to the likely costs of Package 2.

**367.** There was no No.10 record of the meeting.

**368.** Mr Watkins wrote to No.10 on 6 September, providing an update on US military planning and "the factors informing decisions on any UK military contribution".<sup>118</sup> He cautioned that the MOD's assessment was "necessarily provisional", partly because the US plan was still evolving, and partly because there had not yet been "detailed joint planning with the US".

**369.** The MOD had identified three options ranging from minimum to maximum effort, including a further revision of the impact of Op FRESCO which meant that:

"Were we to throw in everything we are likely to have, the UK could potentially generate up to a divisional headquarters, an armoured brigade, 16 Air Assault Brigade and a logistic brigade."

**370.** The MOD was also "examining whether a Royal Marine Commando could form part of Package 2 [the air and maritime forces packages]".

**371.** A land Task Force would "offer significant capability to a US-led northern force, although it would not be fully suitable for involvement in decisive war-fighting operations".

**372.** The MOD advice concluded that should "US military preparations continue at their current pace, we will face some early tough decisions within two weeks of your return from Camp David".

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<sup>116</sup> Letter Manning to Williams, 3 September 2002, 'Iraq – Potential UK Contribution and a Fire Strike'.

<sup>117</sup> Minute Watkins to DG Op Pol, 5 September 2002, 'Iraq'.

<sup>118</sup> [Letter Watkins to Manning, 6 September 2002, 'Iraq: Military Planning'](#).

**373.** Copies of the letter were sent to the Private Offices of Mr Straw and Sir Andrew Turnbull, who became Cabinet Secretary in September 2002, and to Mr Desmond Bowen, who succeeded Mr McKane as Deputy Head of OD Sec.

**374.** More detail from the letter is provided in Section 6.1.

### **Mr Blair's meeting with President Bush, Camp David, 7 September 2002**

**375.** President Bush held a meeting of his National Security Council at Camp David before his meeting with Mr Blair, during which he decided to seek a UN resolution on Iraq.

**376.** President Bush described the meeting of the US National Security Council at Camp David on 7 September as having been convened “to finalize my decision on the resolution”; the US was “trying to find a way to remove the threat in Iraq without war”.<sup>119</sup>

**377.** The meeting was given a briefing by Gen Franks, who introduced his concept of five simultaneous “operational fronts” in Iraq.<sup>120</sup>

**378.** Describing the positions of senior members of the Administration, President Bush wrote that:

- Vice President Cheney had recommended giving Saddam: “30-60 days to come clean, and then disarm him by force if he refused to comply ... We can't delay for another year ... An inspection regime does not solve our problem.”
- Secretary Powell had pushed for a UN resolution: “If we take the case to the UN, we can get allies to join. If not, it will be hard to act unilaterally. We won't have the international support we need to execute the military plan.”<sup>121</sup>

**379.** President Bush also wrote:

“After listening to the options one last time, I made a decision: We would seek a resolution. ‘There's ambiguity in the international community's view of Saddam ... and we need to clear it up. Either he will come clean about his weapons or there will be war’.”

**380.** President Bush had told his team that he would deliver the message in his speech to the UN the following week:

“Either the words of the Security Council would be enforced, or the UN would exist only as a useless international body ...”

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<sup>119</sup> Bush GW. *Decision Points*. Virgin Books, 2010.

<sup>120</sup> Franks T & McConnell M. *American Soldier*. HarperCollins, 2004.

<sup>121</sup> Bush GW. *Decision Points*. Virgin Books, 2010.

**381.** Dr Rice gave a similar account of the 7 September NSC meeting in her memoir:

“The President had decided on a policy of coercive diplomacy. He would give Saddam a chance to respond to the united pressure of the international community, and the build-up of US forces would make that pressure credible ... One way or another, the threat of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq would finally be removed.”<sup>122</sup>

**382.** Dr Rice further commented:

“Some people have claimed that the President never asked his advisors whether he should go to war against Saddam. At that September meeting ... the National Security Council, after a full and frank discussion, decided on a course of action. Everyone in that room heard the President say: ‘Either he will come clean about his weapons, or there will be war.’ There was no disagreement. The way ahead could not have been clearer.”

**383.** Vice President Cheney wrote that he had been a strong advocate of using President Bush’s speech to “challenge the UN”, to “confront” it and “hold the organization accountable”, making clear that “if the Security Council was unwilling to impose consequences for violations, the UN would become irrelevant”.<sup>123</sup> He did not want “yet one more meaningless resolution”.

**384.** Vice President Cheney also wrote that President Bush:

“... had not yet made a decision, but in neither this meeting nor any other I attended did any of the President’s advisors argue against using military force to remove Saddam ... Nor did anyone argue that leaving Saddam in power, with all the risks and costs associated with that course, was a viable option.”

**385.** Mr Tenet wrote in his memoir:

“Colin Powell was firmly on the side of going the extra mile with the UN. The Vice President argued just as forcefully that doing so would only get us mired in a bureaucratic tangle with nothing to show for it other than time lost off a ticking clock ... To me, the President still appeared less inclined to go to war than many of his senior aides.”<sup>124</sup>

**386.** In a press conference before the discussions at Camp David, Mr Blair stated that Iraq had to be dealt with; the purpose of the meeting with President Bush was to work out the strategy.

**387.** President Bush and Mr Blair gave a press conference before their meeting.

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<sup>122</sup> Rice C. *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.

<sup>123</sup> Cheney D & Cheney L. *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.

<sup>124</sup> Tenet G & Harlow B. *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*. HarperPress, 2007.

**388.** President Bush stated that it was “an important meeting” with “an important ally” and friend. They were going to talk about how to keep the peace, the threats faced by the world and how to promote freedom.<sup>125</sup>

**389.** Mr Blair was more direct, stating that they would be “discussing the issues that are preoccupying us”, and adding:

“The point I would emphasise ... is the threat from Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological, potentially nuclear weapons capability, that threat is real. We only need to look at the report from the International Atomic Agency [sic] this morning<sup>126</sup> showing what has been going on at the former nuclear site to realise that. And the policy of inaction is not a policy we can responsibly subscribe to. So the purpose of our discussion today is to work out the right strategy for dealing with this, because deal with it we must.”

**390.** In response to a question, Mr Blair emphasised concern about Iraq’s attempts to develop nuclear weapons and the importance of the IAEA report he had mentioned, which showed there was “a real issue that has to be tackled here”. He stated that, on the way to Camp David, he had been reading “the catalogue of attempts by Iraq to conceal its weapons of mass destruction, not to tell the truth ... over a period of years”.

**391.** President Bush said that Saddam Hussein had:

“... said he was going to get rid of weapons of mass destruction. And for 11 long years, he has not fulfilled his promise. And we are going to talk about what to do about it. We owe it to future generations to deal with this problem, and that’s what these discussions are all about.”

**392.** Asked about international support, Mr Blair replied that:

“... people were asking perfectly reasonable questions ... but the one thing no one can deny is that Saddam Hussein is in breach of the United Nations resolutions on weapons of mass destruction ... that that poses a threat not just to the region, because there is no way, if those weapons are used, that the threat would simply stay in the region.

“People understand that. Now we have got to make sure that we work out a way forward that, of course, mobilises the maximum support, but does so on the basis of removing a threat that the United Nations itself has determined is a threat to the whole world.”

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<sup>125</sup> The White House, 7 September 2002, *President Bush, Prime Minister Blair Discuss Keeping the Peace*.

<sup>126</sup> The IAEA issued a press release (IAEA Press Release 2002/11) on 6 September 2002 stating: “With reference to an article published today in the New York Times, the International Atomic Energy Agency would like to state that it has no new information on Iraq’s nuclear weapons programme since 1998 when its inspectors left Iraq. Only through a resumption of inspection ... can the Agency draw any conclusion with regard to Iraq’s compliance with its obligations ... relating to its nuclear activities.”

- 393.** The British journalists covering the Camp David meeting focused on the WMD dossier.
- 394.** The *Sunday Express* anticipated a “*Dossier of Doom*”.<sup>127</sup>
- 395.** An editorial in the *News of the World* claimed that the dossier would be “as devastating as it is vital”.<sup>128</sup> It would show that “evil Saddam has enough chemical and biological stocks to attack the entire planet, and the missile technology to deliver them”, and would confirm that he is on the brink of nuclear capability. The editorial concluded “We believe Mr Blair CAN convince us a military attack on Iraq is right. We have faith in our Prime Minister.”
- 396.** In their meeting Mr Blair told President Bush that he was in no doubt about the need to deal with Saddam Hussein.
- 397.** Mr Blair argued that the strategy should be to seek two resolutions; one making tough initial demands including intrusive inspections, with the option of a second if and when Saddam Hussein did not comply.
- 398.** The UN would then need to accept the responsibility for enforcing its decisions, or action would be taken without it.
- 399.** Mr Blair also set out the need to build a case to persuade the international community of the threat posed by Iraq, including the potential for fusion of WMD and terrorism.
- 400.** It was “critically important” that the US and UK made it clear that they remained committed to the return of inspectors.
- 401.** Mr Blair cautioned President Bush about his assumption that the UK would be ready to lead a strike into northern Iraq. But he told President Bush that the UK would take a significant military role if it came to war with Iraq.
- 402.** Sir David Manning suggested that US and European opinion should be reminded that, while the US and UK would prefer to take action through the UN, they would find other means if that was not possible.
- 403.** Mr Campbell recorded that Mr Blair had discussed the content of a resolution on the flight to Camp David; and that “after a long discussion”, Mr Blair had “[come] round” to Sir David Manning’s view “that it was probably best to get a tough first mandate by promising to go back to the UN, but make it clear that the UN had to face up to this”.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> *Sunday Express*, 8 September 2002, *PM Sets Out Dossier of Doom*.

<sup>128</sup> *News of the World*, 8 September 2002, *Blair Will Win The PR Battle*.

<sup>129</sup> Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.



**404.** The meeting at Camp David was in two parts.<sup>130</sup>

**405.** Mr Blair, supported by Sir David Manning, discussed Iraq with President Bush, Vice President Cheney and Dr Rice from 1600 to 1745. Sir David Manning recorded that it was a “remarkable” meeting. President Bush had congratulated Mr Blair on his speech at Sedgefield.

**406.** During the meeting, the arguments for taking the issue to the UN, the type of resolution, the attitude of other members of the Security Council, the relationship with the MEPP, and aspects of a military campaign and the “morning after”, were discussed in depth.

**407.** Mr Blair said that he was in no doubt about the need to deal with Saddam Hussein; and that the likelihood was that this would mean military action at some point. The immediate issue was “how to maximise the chance of resolving the Saddam dilemma quickly and cleanly”. It was possible that sustained pressure would lead to his quick collapse, but “we could certainly not count on it”. That might “in part” depend on “winning the propaganda battle” and securing wide international support:

“If it came to force, we could hope that we would secure the relatively quick overthrow of Saddam. But even if we did, we would still be faced with the big issue of what followed his departure.”

**408.** There would be even more difficult problems if Saddam Hussein did not collapse quickly. We should not assume that there would be a quick collapse in Iraq as there had been with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

**409.** Mr Blair stated that the position of the international community made it important to bring the issue back to the UN and secure a new Security Council resolution. Indeed, two resolutions might be necessary: one setting conditions and one stipulating action when Saddam failed to meet them. Without a resolution, military action would have little or no international backing.

**410.** Later, Mr Blair recognised that the two resolution route offered a better chance of setting tough initial demands, but with a risk of difficulties in securing a second resolution authorising action. In a discussion about how a breach would be established and the need to avoid a long debate, Mr Blair said: “If Saddam was obviously in breach we would know, and we had to be ready to move.” On balance, Mr Blair favoured a tough initial resolution leaving open the option of going back to the UN for a second resolution, if and when Saddam were in breach.

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<sup>130</sup> Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 8 September 2002, ‘Your Visit to Camp David on 7 September: Conversation with President Bush’.

**411.** Mr Blair said that it was “unlikely” that Saddam would comply with the new resolution; even if he let the inspectors back in he would probably prevent them from doing their job. He added:

“We should then be in a very powerful position in demanding action in response to his obstruction and prevarication.”

**412.** Mr Blair suggested the need, in parallel with UN activity, to:

“... start making military deployments to demonstrate to Saddam and the international community our seriousness of intent; and to be ready to move if we had to. The message would be stark; either the regime must change in response to the UN resolution, or it would be changed through military action.”

**413.** Mr Blair stated that there would be a need to table a very strong resolution that would stipulate intrusive inspection; and that Dr Blix would do a “thorough job”. Dr Blix had put forward some good ideas about UNMOVIC’s coverage of Iraq in a discussion the previous day. The resolution would also need to include provisions for humanitarian monitoring inside Iraq, and possibly force protection for UNMOVIC. “The trick would be to make a resolution acceptable to Security Council members but sufficiently stringent to bring about profound change in Iraq were Saddam to implement it.”

**414.** Mr Blair also set out the need to make a good public case against Saddam, publishing all the evidence. The UK would publish a dossier. He stated that the US and UK:

“... must build our case, persuading the international community of the nature of the threat. In particular we must get over to our publics the reality that any crisis in the Gulf generated by Saddam would inevitably involve us.”

**415.** Later Mr Blair stated that there was a need to explain the case for action fully to public opinion: “While insisting that no-one wanted war, we must spell out why we had to act.” This included reminding people of the horrors of Saddam’s regime.

**416.** Mr Blair said that there was a:

“... natural reluctance to do difficult things, made worse by ignorance ... of Saddam’s capabilities and intentions. We had to correct this, at the same time answering the legitimate question of why we were taking action now. 11 September was a powerful argument for dealing with threats before they materialised ... At some point, WMD and terrorism would come together, with appalling consequences, unless we took action.”

**417.** In the context of a discussion about the attitudes of other members of the Security Council, Sir David Manning suggested that US and European opinion should be reminded of what had happened over Kosovo:

“We had tried to go the UN route; we were thwarted; so we had had to resort to a coalition of the willing. The moral was that we would prefer to take action through the UN if we could but we would find other means if we could not.”

**418.** Mr Blair stated that in those circumstances, the US and UK would have to make clear that either the UN accepted its responsibilities for enforcing its decisions, or action would be taken without it. It was “critically important” that the initial resolution should not appear to be “merely a pretext for military action”; we had to make it clear that we remained committed to the resumption of inspections and wanted the resolution to succeed.

**419.** President Bush and Mr Blair also discussed the prospects for a military campaign, including the possibility of leaving Saddam “bottled up” in Baghdad.

**420.** Sir David Manning recorded that Mr Blair had expressed caution about the US assumption that the UK would be ready to lead a strike from Turkey into northern Iraq and provide two-thirds of the force. But Mr Blair emphasised that the UK would indeed take “a significant military role” if it came to war with Iraq.

**421.** Finally, the importance of US action to make progress on the MEPP was also discussed.

**422.** Sir David Manning’s record of the discussion was submitted to Mr Blair and sent to a number of colleagues in No.10. A personal copy was also sent to Mr Straw. No other copies appear to have been made.

**423.** US and UK officials held a meeting in parallel with the discussions between President Bush and Mr Blair. The only record of that meeting appears in Mr Campbell’s diary, in which he wrote that they had addressed three issues:

- building the case on the evidence for why Saddam had to be dealt with now;
- why Saddam posed a unique threat; and
- the need for the US to engage on the Middle East.<sup>131</sup>

**424.** A plenary meeting between President Bush and Mr Blair and their teams followed the restricted discussion.<sup>132</sup>

**425.** Presentational issues were discussed between officials and in the plenary, including the “Why now?” question.

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<sup>131</sup> Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

<sup>132</sup> Letter Rycroft to Sedwill, 8 September 2002, ‘Prime Minister’s Meeting with Bush, Camp David 7 September: Public Presentation of Iraq Policy’.

**426.** Mr Blair stated that since 1998, there was evidence, including in the 6 September IAEA report, of continued development of WMD. He also thought that the nature of the Iraqi regime “should become part of our case on WMD”; and that: “We needed an active strategy to take the debate to the rest of the world.” He set out the UK’s plans to publish the dossier within a few weeks. Mr Campbell emphasised the need for people “to understand what BW actually did”; and that the “media threshold would be high, so the dossier would need to include new facts from the last four years”.

**427.** During the plenary meeting Mr Stephen Hadley, US Deputy National Security Advisor, put forward principles for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq: territorial integrity, democracy, and a role for the UN.

**428.** Mr Rycroft’s record of the plenary contained little of the substance addressed in the restricted meeting. It was sent to the Private Secretaries to Mr Hoon and the Cabinet Secretary, and to Sir Richard Dearlove, Sir Francis Richards, Mr Scarlett, Mr Bowen, Sir Christopher Meyer and Sir Jeremy Greenstock. It was again marked personal and it is clear from the copy on the FCO files that named senior officials were allowed to read the letter only in Mr Straw’s Private Office.

**429.** Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries that Mr Blair “felt that his job was to sell the case for the UN route to Cheney”.<sup>133</sup> After the private meeting, Sir David Manning had said that President Bush had used Mr Blair to persuade the Vice President; and that President Bush had made up his mind on the threat and the need for the UN to deal with it.

**430.** The official record confirms that was the UK perception.<sup>134</sup>

**431.** Mr Campbell wrote that President Bush had told him:

“... it’s the right thing to do and future generations will surely thank us. I really believe that. I really believe the world has to get rid of Saddam and I really appreciate y’all coming over.”<sup>135</sup>

**432.** **President Bush wrote in his memoir that he had told Mr Blair at Camp David that he had taken the decision to ask the UN for a resolution to disarm Saddam Hussein; and that if diplomacy failed he would take military action.**

**433.** President Bush wrote in his memoir that following the attack of 11 September 2001, he had chosen to pursue a policy of coercive diplomacy on Iraq:

“My first choice was to use diplomacy ...

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<sup>133</sup> Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

<sup>134</sup> Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 8 September 2002, ‘Your Visit to Camp David on 7 September: Conversation with President Bush’.

<sup>135</sup> Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

“... We believed Saddam’s weakness was that he loved power and would do anything to keep it. If we could convince him that we were serious about removing his regime, there was a chance he would give up his WMD ... The odds of success were long. But given the alternative it was worth the effort. The approach was called coercive diplomacy.

“Coercive diplomacy with Iraq consisted of two tracks: One was to rally a coalition of nations to make clear that Saddam’s defiance of his international obligations was unacceptable. The other was to develop a credible military option that could be used if he failed to comply. These tracks would run parallel at first. As the military option grew more visible and more advanced, the tracks would converge. Our maximum leverage would come just before they intersected. That would be the moment of decision. And ultimately, it would be Saddam Hussein’s decision to make.”<sup>136</sup>

**434.** President Bush wrote that Mr Blair had been “pleased when I told him that I was planning to ask the UN for the resolution”, and that Mr Blair had replied: “Many opponents wish we would just be unilateral – then they could complain ... But you are calling their bluff.”

**435.** President Bush added:

“We both understood what the decision meant. Once we laid out our position at the UN, we had to be willing to follow through with the consequences. If diplomacy failed, there would be only one option left. ‘I don’t want to go to war,’ I told Tony, ‘but I will do it’.

“Tony agreed.”

**436. Vice President Cheney wrote that President Bush wanted to support Mr Blair’s position; but he also expressed scepticism about the utility of inspections in achieving the US objectives.**

**437.** Vice President Cheney wrote that in the meeting with Mr Blair they had talked through the need for UN involvement:

“Blair was tough. He understood the stakes and the importance of acting against Saddam, and he was clear that he would be with us no matter what – and that was likely to include strong opposition from within his own party.

“Blair argued that a UN resolution was necessary to achieve maximum international cooperation. He was very persuasive, and I understood that the President wanted to support his friend. There was no legal obligation for us to pursue a resolution, but there were some in the United States and many more in Europe who felt it would legitimize military action, and a resolution would also speak to their concerns. The President told the Prime Minister he would go forward with a resolution.

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<sup>136</sup> Bush GW. *Decision Points*. Virgin Books, 2010.

“I knew the President was no more interested than I was in an endless round of inspections and deception in Iraq, and in the days that followed, I recommended inserting into the resolution a requirement for Saddam to submit within thirty days a declaration disclosing his WMD capacity and holdings.”<sup>137</sup>

**438. Mr Blair told Mr Hoon that he had been alarmed by US expectations that the UK would lead the northern axis and that there should be no visible preparations for a month or so. But Mr Hoon was not sent a copy of Sir David Manning’s record of the discussions at Camp David.**

**439.** Mr Blair telephoned Mr Hoon on the evening of 8 September, to give him a read-out of his discussions with President Bush and Vice President Cheney, and the US position on the UN route, in advance of Mr Hoon’s visit to the US.<sup>138</sup>

**440.** Mr Rycroft recorded that:

“The Prime Minister said that he had been alarmed that [President] Bush had understood that the UK would be ‘leading the invasion’ from the North of Iraq. This required very careful handling. Having received the military advice, the Prime Minister’s view was that we could not offer Package 3 in the timescale required and given the constraints of Operation Fresco. But we might be able to offer Package 2, plus some further elements. There should be no visible preparations for a month or so.”

**441.** Mr Hoon was not sent a copy of the record of the discussion at Camp David.

**442.** Mr Hoon told Secretary Rumsfeld on 11 September that the UK would not want to offer more than it could deliver and was therefore expecting to offer maritime and air assets for any military campaign.<sup>139</sup>

## **President Chirac’s interview, 8 September 2002**

**443.** President Chirac’s concerns about the broader implications for the international system of military action against Iraq without a Security Council decision, including the impact on the international coalition to counter terrorism, were published in the *New York Times* on 9 September.

**444.** President Chirac supported the return of inspectors on the basis of the provisions of resolution 1284. He made clear that consideration of the use of force should be considered in a second resolution if Iraq refused to allow inspections.

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<sup>137</sup> Cheney D & Cheney L. *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.

<sup>138</sup> Minute Rycroft to Manning, 9 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Military Contribution’.

<sup>139</sup> Letter Williams to Manning, 13 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Meeting with Donald Rumsfeld: 11 September 2002’.

**445.** President Chirac gave an interview to the *New York Times* on 8 September, which was published the following day.<sup>140</sup>

**446.** In the context of the US position that a doctrine of pre-emption was necessary to fight terrorism, President Chirac stated that he had told President Bush that he had “great reservations” about that doctrine: “As soon as one nation claims the right to take preventive action, other countries will naturally do the same ... How would the Americans, the Europeans and others react?”

**447.** Asked what would be the best way to be sure that Saddam Hussein did not develop “further weapons of mass destruction” and whether he shared the US objective of regime change, President Chirac replied:

“I don’t need to tell you that I condemn the regime ...

“Secondly, I am totally against unilateralism in the modern world. I believe that the modern world must be coherent and consequently, if a military action is to be undertaken, it must be the responsibility of the international community, via a decision by the Security Council. Now, the Security Council has decided that Iraq must not have weapons of mass destruction; it did not say that a regime change was necessary there. So if the objective is to prevent Iraq from having weapons of mass destruction, we have to go along with what the United Nations has done, that is, impose the return of inspectors in Iraq without restrictions or preconditions ... If it refuses, then it’s up to the Security Council to deliberate and decide what must be done and notably whether a military operation should be undertaken or not ...”

**448.** Asked about divisions between allies in the context of Mr Blair’s visit to Washington and his own meeting with Chancellor Schröder, President Chirac replied:

“France is a member of the Security Council, it cannot be prejudiced ... I agree completely that there must be a Security Council decision concerning the return of the inspectors ... If the inspectors are not allowed to return, then there should be a second Security Council resolution to say if there should be or not an intervention. Following the second resolution, France will definitely give its position. But I am very worried about the consequences of an intervention on the international coalition to counter terrorism ...”

**449.** Asked under what circumstances France would favour the use of force, President Chirac responded that he “naturally” wished for a change in the Iraqi regime:

“But a few principles and a little order are needed to run the affairs of the world. The issue today is to know whether there are any weapons of mass destruction. And to see it, the inspectors must be free ... to visit. This is the objective. If this is fulfilled, then it’s over. The Security Council or the international community never wanted to

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<sup>140</sup> *New York Times*, 9 September 2002, *Threats and Responses: Perspectives/Jacques Chirac; French Leader Offers America Both Friendship and Criticism*.

change the regime in Iraq, because there are numerous countries where one wished to see another regime. But if we go down that road, where are we going?”

**450.** President Chirac stated that military action was possible “if it’s decided by the international community on the basis of indisputable proof. For the moment, we have neither proof, nor decisions ...”

**451.** In a conversation with Mr Blair on 9 September, President Chirac reiterated his points.<sup>141</sup> Mr Blair gave him a report of his talks with President Bush. Mr Blair told President Chirac that a UN resolution must focus on WMD, not regime change, and ensure that the inspectors could return unconditionally and do their job properly.

**452.** Mr Rycroft recorded that President Chirac supported a resolution seeking the return of inspectors but was concerned that some in the US wanted Saddam Hussein to refuse to justify military action. In President Chirac’s view, there would have to be a second resolution to justify military action “and that would not be adopted”. Mr Blair responded that that “would depend on the circumstances”. If the inspectors returned and Saddam’s WMD were disarmed, the nature of the regime would change. Saddam Hussein should be given the chance to comply. If he refused to do so, we should be tough.

**453.** In response to a question from President Chirac about whether the UK was sure that Saddam Hussein had WMD, Mr Blair said that: “Personally he had no doubt that Saddam was trying to rebuild his WMD capacity.” Mr Blair’s view was:

“... we should move to the point where the choice was Saddam’s. Either he accepted and abided by the new resolution, or we would have to act to ensure that he abided by it.”

**454.** After further discussion of the US approach and its potential impact, Mr Blair said that he had made clear to President Bush the need to take action to relaunch the MEPP and the importance of Afghanistan. He was “convinced that through co-operation with the US on Iraq it would be possible to make progress in other areas”.

**455.** Following a conversation between Mr Jean-David Levitte, French Permanent Representative to the UN, and Sir Jeremy Greenstock on 11 September, the UK Mission to the UN New York reported that the French view was:

- Two resolutions were the only way of achieving consensus and building a coalition on Iraq. France would negotiate a second resolution, if needed, in a “positive spirit”.
- Consultations should start in capitals with the Permanent Five in New York discussing “concepts” not a draft text.

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<sup>141</sup> Letter Rycroft to Sedwill, 9 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Phone Call with President Chirac, 9 September’.



- To be successful in achieving the return of inspectors, any resolution had to coincide with a credible military timetable to maximise the pressure on Saddam.
- There should be no additional conditions for inspections.<sup>142</sup>

### **JIC Assessment, 9 September 2002: 'Iraqi Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons – Possible Scenarios'**

**456.** The JIC issued an Assessment of Iraq's possession of chemical and biological weapons and possible scenarios for their use on 9 September 2002.

**457.** The Assessment contained a number of significant changes which strengthened previous JIC judgements on Iraq's possession of chemical and biological weapons and the likelihood of their use.

**458.** In response to the request from Sir David Manning for advice on the possible scenarios for Iraqi use of chemical and biological weapons, the JIC commissioned an Assessment.<sup>143</sup>

**459.** The Key Judgements of the JIC Assessment, which was issued on 9 September, were:

- “• Iraq has a chemical and biological weapons capability and Saddam is prepared to use it.
- Faced with the likelihood of military defeat and being removed from power, Saddam is unlikely to be deterred from using chemical and biological weapons by any diplomatic or military means.
- The use of chemical and biological weapons prior to any military attack would boost support for US-led action and is unlikely.
- Saddam is prepared to order missile strikes against Israel, with chemical or biological warheads, in order to widen the war once hostilities begin.
- Saddam could order the use of CBW weapons in order to deny space and territory to coalition forces, or to cause casualties, slow any advance, and sap US morale.
- If not previously employed, Saddam will order the indiscriminate use of whatever CBW weapons remain available late in a ground campaign or as a final act of vengeance. But such an order would depend on the availability of delivery means and the willingness of commanders to obey.”<sup>144</sup>

**460.** The preparation of the Assessment, its detailed findings, and the intelligence underpinning it are addressed in Section 4.2. That Section also addresses the dossier,

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<sup>142</sup> Minute [junior official] to HMA [UKMIS New York], 11 September 2002, 'Iraq: Meeting with Levitte'.

<sup>143</sup> [Minutes, 4 September 2002, JIC meeting.](#)

<sup>144</sup> [JIC Assessment, 9 September 2002, 'Iraqi Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons – Possible Scenarios'.](#)

*Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Net Assessment*, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) on 9 September.<sup>145</sup>

## Mr Blair's speech to the TUC, 10 September 2002

**461.** In his speech to the TUC on 10 September, Mr Blair argued that the threat posed by Iraq was not imminent but it had to be dealt with before it could “erupt and engulf us all”.

**462.** As he had planned in his minute of 30 August, Mr Blair set out the rationale for tackling the problem of Iraq – “why I say Saddam is a threat that has to be dealt with” – in the first section of his speech to the TUC on 10 September.<sup>146</sup>

**463.** In the speech, Mr Blair elaborated many of the points he had made in his press conference on 3 September. Mr Blair argued that Saddam Hussein's actions in starting wars of aggression, using chemical weapons against his own people and oppressing them made his regime:

“With the Taliban gone ... unrivalled as the world's worst regime ...

“Given that history ... to allow him to use the weapons he has or to get the weapons he wants would be an act of gross irresponsibility and we should not countenance it.”

**464.** Mr Blair stated that “when the weapons inspectors were evicted from Iraq in 1998 there were still enough chemical and biological weapons remaining to devastate the entire Gulf region”. He also stated that Saddam Hussein had a nuclear programme, which he had denied and which had been “disrupted” by inspections. He was in breach of “23 outstanding UN obligations requiring him to admit inspectors and disarm”.

**465.** Containment had worked “up to a point”, but sanctions were eroding and Saddam Hussein was getting around US\$3bn a year through illicit trade which he was “almost certainly” using for his weapons programmes. British and American pilots were risking their lives to police the No-Fly Zones; and that couldn't “go on for ever”.

**466.** Addressing the way ahead, Mr Blair stated that it was right to deal with Iraq through the UN; it was the will of the UN that Saddam was flouting. The challenge for “all in the UN” was “to resolve the threat from Saddam not avoid it”. Mr Blair added:

“Let it be clear that he must be disarmed. Let it be clear that there can be no more conditions, no more games, no more prevaricating, no more undermining of the UN's authority.

“Let it be clear that should the will of the UN be ignored, action will follow. Diplomacy is vital. But when dealing with dictators ... diplomacy has to be backed by the certain

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<sup>145</sup> IISS Dossier, 9 September 2002, *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Net Assessment*.

<sup>146</sup> *The Guardian*, 10 September 2002, *Full text of Tony Blair's TUC address*.

knowledge in the dictator's mind that behind the diplomacy is the possibility of force being used.

"... if we do not deal with the threat from this international outlaw and his barbaric regime, it may not erupt and engulf us this month or next; perhaps not even this year or the next. But it will at some point. And I do not want it on my conscience that we knew the threat, saw it coming and did nothing."

**467.** Mr Blair concluded this section of his speech by asking people to "listen to the case" he would "be developing over the coming weeks and to reflect on it".

**468.** In a broader call for action, including to "restart the Middle East Peace Process" and for renewed efforts on international terrorism, Mr Blair stated:

"Internationalism is no longer a utopian cry of the left, it is practical statesmanship."

**469.** It is clear from a record of Mr Hoon's discussions in Washington on 11 September that officials in the US Administration were following what Mr Blair said in public closely: one senior official had described the speech to the TUC as "spectacular".<sup>147</sup>

## The decision to recall Parliament

**470. Mr Blair asked for Parliament to be recalled to debate Iraq and the issue of weapons of mass destruction.**

**471.** On 11 September, Mr Blair wrote to the Speaker of the House of Commons, and to the Lord Chancellor, asking for Parliament to be recalled in the week beginning 23 September.<sup>148</sup>

**472.** Mr Blair wrote that "Parliament must and will be at the heart of the national debate on the issue of Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction". He was seeking permission "to recall Parliament for a one-day debate on the Adjournment", led by Mr Straw, following a statement from himself. He added:

"By then, important discussions at the UN will have taken place. And the Government will be in a position to publish the dossier on what we know of the Iraqi regime and its WMD programme."

**473.** Mr Blair emphasised that "we are not yet at the stage of making decisions about military commitments with regard to Iraq, and that should we be so in the future, Parliament would obviously be given every opportunity to express its view".

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<sup>147</sup> Telegram 1159 Washington to FCO, 11 September 2002, 'Iraq: Mr Hoon's Visit to Washington, 11 September'.

<sup>148</sup> [Letter Blair to Martin, 11 September 2002, \[untitled\]](#).

## Establishing the objectives of a UN resolution

**474.** Questions emerged in Washington shortly after the meeting at Camp David about whether Mr Blair regarded intrusive inspections as a necessary first stage in the plan.

**475.** In discussions with Secretary Powell about the strategy, Mr Straw raised doubts about the plan to seek authority for the use of military force in a second resolution.

**476.** Letters from Sir Christopher Meyer<sup>149</sup> and Mr Brenton<sup>150</sup> on 9 September reported suggestions in the US Administration that Mr Blair had indicated at Camp David that he would be willing to move straight to a resolution that sought approval to use “all necessary means” in response to Iraq’s existing material breaches of its obligations without a resolution strengthening the inspection regime first. The UK was being asked to make sure that the White House correctly understood its position and, in particular, whether the UK regarded intrusive inspections as a necessary first stage in the plan.

**477.** Mr Straw spoke twice to Secretary Powell on 9 September.<sup>151</sup>

**478.** In the first conversation they discussed the issue of whether to go for one or two resolutions. The record stated that both were concerned to preserve what they described as “the Kosovo option”; and that Mr Straw thought that that “would require only one resolution as long as it contained a fig leaf for military action. We should not commit to a second resolution, although that option could be kept open.”

**479.** Mr Straw and Secretary Powell also agreed that no public document could produce an incontrovertible case for military action; the focus had to be on compliance with UN resolutions.

**480.** In the second conversation, Mr Straw had “confirmed ‘100%’ that a UNSCR was a key part of the strategy discussed between” Mr Blair and President Bush, and that President Bush had “made clear he did not regard military action as the first option”.

**481.** Secretary Powell and Mr Straw discussed the latest position in a telephone conversation on 10 September.<sup>152</sup> US thinking, influenced by Mr Blair at Camp David, was that the provision for the use of “all necessary means” against Iraq should be put in the second resolution. Mr Straw said that he was:

“... in two minds. He was searching for what would work best. If we could get what was needed in the first resolution, it would be good to have it in the bank. He was

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<sup>149</sup> Letter Meyer to Manning, 9 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.

<sup>150</sup> Letter Brenton to Manning, 9 September 2002, ‘Iraq’.

<sup>151</sup> Letter Sedwill to Manning, 9 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Conversations with Colin Powell, 9 September’.

<sup>152</sup> Telegram 1615 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 10 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s conversation with US Secretary of State, 10 September’.

certain that Saddam would play carefully and long to undermine the coalition we put together to pass the first resolution.”

**482.** Mr Straw and Secretary Powell discussed the possibility that a second resolution might not be agreed, whether they would be free to follow the “Kosovo model” and what Security Council members opposed to the use of force might do. Mr Straw said that “good wording in the first resolution would change the politics”. They agreed to discuss the issues further after Mr Straw had spoken to Mr Blair and Sir Jeremy Greenstock.

**483.** In parallel discussions with Dr Rice and in the context of clear US concerns about the potential timetable required by inspections, Sir David Manning emphasised the importance of inspections and the need for a report to the Security Council before addressing enforcement. Dr Rice asked for Mr Blair’s views.

**484.** Mr Blair stated that Iraq needed to be played cleverly, using a step by step approach to convince opinion that action was needed.

**485.** Sir David Manning and Dr Rice also discussed the developing thinking on a UN resolution on 10 September.<sup>153</sup> Sir David reported to Mr Blair that Dr Rice had told him President Bush was:

“... keen to find a way to ensure the onus was put back on Saddam. We did not want the ‘inspectors searching around forever’ in a game of cat and mouse. Bush was uneasy about finding himself in the position of asking the Security Council to give Saddam a last chance when Saddam had been given so many last chances already.”

**486.** Sir David had replied that this:

“... was unavoidable: we would inevitably be in the business of giving Saddam ‘another last chance’. This had its difficulties. But it had the overriding benefit of ensuring that we could attract widespread international support by making clear that we wanted to go the UN route. And this ‘last chance’ came with the widespread expectation that, this time we meant business.”

**487.** Dr Rice told Sir David that the US Administration was:

“... exploring the possibility of tabling a resolution in two parts. The first would stipulate that Saddam must make a declaration within fifteen to thirty days explaining why there had been a discrepancy between his claims and those of the UNSCOM inspectors ... in 1998. He would be required to account for the materials that UNSCOM had been unable to identify and to promise that UNSCOM would have access to any that were remaining. This would challenge him to provide physical evidence relating to his WMD programme, as well as test his commitment

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<sup>153</sup> [Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 10 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’](#).

of re-engaging seriously with the international community. Anything less than a forthcoming response would amount to an admission of guilt, confirming that he was in material breach of the ... UN resolutions.

“The second part would deal with inspections. This would stipulate that the inspectors would have sixty days to certify that they had now been granted full and unfettered access to all installations and materials in Iraq, with provision for them to report back to the Security Council ... If Saddam were co-operating, inspections could continue after the sixty day period. This part of the resolution would cover the conditions ... including free access (anyone, anywhere, anytime) ... and an explicit invitation to all members of the international community to provide full intelligence to the Inspectors.”

**488.** Dr Rice told Sir David that the US had abandoned the idea of seeking force protection for UNMOVIC and the second part of the resolution could be “dispensed with” if the response on a declaration was “unsatisfactory”. She said the US and UK “could argue that this would amount to a material breach and provided a green light for action”.

**489.** Sir David replied:

“... there were attractions in demanding a declaration from Saddam although we should not kid ourselves: he was likely to refuse, or to announce blithely that there had been no discrepancy with UNSCOM and all his WMD had long since been destroyed. But his response would show either that he was unco-operative and obstructive; or that he was ready to make claims that the inspectors would probably quickly expose.

“But ... there could be no question that the second part of the resolution could be dispensed with if Saddam’s response to the first part seemed unsatisfactory. As ... [Mr Blair] had told President Bush at Camp David, it was essential that the resolution stipulated intrusive inspection, and that this was carried out. This was the only way in which the international community would believe that we were serious about the UN route. I reiterated forcefully the points you had made at Camp David about avoiding any impression that the resolution was merely a pretext for quick military action, or that we were not sincere when we said that our preferred option was the reintroduction of an inspection regime. However unsatisfactorily Saddam responded to the first part of the proposed resolution, we were bound to be faced with a chorus of demands that we should test his response by getting the Inspectors back into Iraq. It was only after they had reported that we could move onto the enforcement issue.”

**490.** Dr Rice “pressed” Sir David, who said he:

“... was absolutely clear. We needed the international community behind us; this meant a resolution that did not appear to be a pretext for military action; and this in turn meant serious commitment to UNMOVIC inspections. I was confident that this

would be your view. I would check with you as soon as possible. The second part of the draft resolution was an integral part of the strategy.”

**491.** Dr Rice told Sir David that “‘speaking very frankly’, there was a timing problem”. The timetable he had set out “risked running well into next year before we could clear the decks for military action (assuming Saddam’s continued obstruction)”.

**492.** Sir David told Dr Rice that the US and UK should refuse to accept the:

“... ideal, but too leisurely, UNSCOM timetable. Once we had a resolution stipulating the return of the inspectors, we should get teams in quickly to look at carefully chosen targets. We should insist that they tackled the job right away. [Dr] Blix could build up to full strength in slower time.”

**493.** Dr Rice also said that the US was looking at giving the inspectors a Security Council label, which Sir David resisted because it would “look restrictive and alienate the wider UN membership”. It might be possible to associate the Security Council with the teams, and that “could be advantageous” if it was “sold” to Russia “as a way of ensuring” it was “fully consulted and implicated”.

**494.** Dr Rice said she would feed Sir David’s views into the White House debate and asked for Mr Blair’s views by the end of the day.

**495.** Sir David commented:

“The pressure on Bush to try a quick fix through the ‘material breach ploy’ will be Cheney’s attempt to rewrite the Camp David conclusions. I pushed back hard and made it clear that this would not run.”

**496.** Sir David subsequently discussed the issues with Mr Blair who:

“... emphasised the need to play Iraq cleverly. We must look reluctant to use force, making it clear that we saw the current situation as a challenge to the credibility of the UN, and to the international community. You [Mr Blair] were increasingly convinced that, in the end, people would come round to accepting the need to deal with Saddam, if we had made full and willing use of the UN route. You were confident that we could get the Security Council behind us once we had demonstrated clearly that Saddam remained in violation. But if we appeared to be riding roughshod over the UN or taking it for granted, opinion would be very difficult to shift. We should move step by step. Once we had a new resolution ... we would be putting the onus on Saddam as Bush wanted. But this would only work if the Americans resisted the Cheney temptation to go to the UN with what amounted to a take it or leave it resolution, and with the clear intention of early resort to military force.”

**497.** Sir David advised that, despite his prodding, the UK did not know what President Bush would say in his speech on 12 September. Mr Blair might have to speak to President Bush again “to try to hold him to the Camp David conclusions”.

**498.** Sir David subsequently informed Dr Rice that Mr Blair’s position was that Iraq must be made a challenge to the whole international community through a UN resolution which required intrusive inspections; that they were an indispensable part of the strategy; and that if the UN route was proposed with real conviction, support could be secured.

**499.** Sir David spoke again to Dr Rice on the evening of 10 September conveying Mr Blair’s:

“... very strong view that we must make Iraq a challenge to the whole international community. We must do so through a UN resolution that ... provided for an intrusive inspection regime. The inspectors were an indispensable part of the strategy. Saddam would either refuse to let the inspectors back, or he would let them in but almost certainly obstruct their operations. We should then be in a very strong position to insist on action. You [Mr Blair] believed that we should deal with Iraq step by step. We needed to get this resolution under our belt, put the onus squarely on Saddam, and then decide what to do in the light of his reaction.”<sup>154</sup>

**500.** Sir David added that it was “essential” that a resolution was put forward:

“... with conviction and made it absolutely clear that we wanted it to succeed. We should be emphasising at every turn that war was the last resort. The US Administration would have the worst of both worlds if it appeared to have been forced reluctantly to choose the UN route, or if it appeared to want a new resolution to serve as nothing more than a pretext for early military action.”

**501.** Sir David added that it was “increasingly” Mr Blair’s:

“... impression that public opinion would come round if we proposed the UN route with real conviction. If and when it became clear that Saddam had yet again violated the will of the UN and the international community, there was a real chance that we could build wide support for further action. But if we failed to do this, and it appeared that Washington wanted to go the unilateral route, the international community would be resistant or hostile to action. Securing wide support would be a great prize, one that you [Mr Blair] believed was in reach.”

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<sup>154</sup> [Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 11 September 2002, 'Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice'](#).



**502.** Sir David told Mr Blair that Dr Rice had been “pretty receptive to his arguments”. President Bush was “not currently planning to say anything about a resolution or inspection”. The speech made:

“... a strong and persuasive case about the horrors of Saddam and his regime, but cannot bring itself to say that, in dealing with this threat, we must have another UN resolution and further inspections. Arguably, this is implicit. But it would be far better in winning hearts and minds if Bush made it explicit, and did not leave it to Colin Powell to make the UN case afterwards ...”

**503.** Sir David told Dr Rice that Mr Blair would want to talk to President Bush before the speech.

**504.** Sir David commented to Mr Blair:

“There is little doubt that the Cheney counter-attack, with its wilful distortion of what you said at Camp David, will be sustained right up to the moment that Bush mounts the UN rostrum. Despite my two conversations with Condi ... it would still be very valuable if you could speak to Bush yourself.”

**505.** Although Sir David’s minutes were apparently sent only to addressees within No.10, copies were in the papers sent to the Inquiry from the Private Offices of Sir Michael Jay and Mr Straw.

**506. Sir Jeremy Greenstock told Mr Annan on 10 September that the UK wanted to avoid the use of military force.**

**507.** Sir Jeremy Greenstock told Mr Annan on 10 September that there had been “intensive discussions” between the US and UK.<sup>155</sup> “The priority for the UK was to make the UN route work if at all possible and to avoid the use of military force.” But the problem of WMD in Iraq “must be dealt with”. Sir Jeremy predicted that there was work to be done, including between capitals, before a debate could be launched in the Security Council.

**508.** Sir Jeremy and Mr Annan also discussed Iraq’s position, including a suggestion that Mr Tariq Aziz had been “casting around for a way out, willing to contemplate the return of inspectors but apparently genuinely puzzled as to how this could help Iraq if the inspectors were likely to be cover for spies to indicate Iraqi military targets”. Mr Annan said he had assured Mr Aziz of Dr Blix’s professionalism and independence.

**509.** Sir Jeremy commented that Mr Annan was aware that Iraq would not be contemplating any moves at all without the threat of military action.

**510. Secretary Powell told Mr Straw that there was still debate in Washington about the UK’s position on the need for inspectors.**

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<sup>155</sup> Telegram 1611 UKMIS New York to FCO, 10 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Annan’.

**511. Mr Straw advised Mr Blair that he would need to make his position clear to President Bush.**

**512.** On 10 September, Mr Straw and Secretary Powell, with officials, met for supper in New York.<sup>156</sup>

**513.** Secretary Powell told Mr Straw that President Bush's speech would not refer to a resolution but he (Powell) would confirm to journalists that a resolution was the aim. It would have four key elements:

- A "statement that Iraq was in 'material breach' of its obligations".
- Iraq to provide "all information required under [resolution] 687" within 15 days, and "a declaration of everything they were holding". There had been a debate in the Administration about how to respond if Iraq complied. Inspectors "would have to go in to destroy what Iraq had declared: there [would] be no further scope for military action. But most in the Administration did not think that Iraq would respond satisfactorily."
- Secretary Powell had acknowledged that intrusive inspections were an "alternative at this stage" and that all necessary means could be in either a first or second resolution.
- "Either way, the first resolution would deal with Iraq's violation of everything apart from WMD ... [T]he President would linger on this kind of thing in his speech."

**514.** Secretary Powell said:

"It was possible that the US would want to move from material breach to all necessary means without interim steps, ie without inspectors ... [T]here was some confusion about how the Prime Minister had left things at Camp David, i.e. some argued that the Prime Minister did not attach priority to inspectors."

**515.** Using Sir David Manning's record of the discussions at Camp David, Mr Straw put Secretary Powell "straight" on the UK position. He stressed that Mr Blair's "whole focus was on inspectors: regime change might be an incidental consequence of our policy but it was not the aim".

**516.** Secretary Powell said that he had heard that Dr Rice had presented Sir David Manning with the "declaration of holdings option"; and he implied that was "with some success".

**517.** Mr Straw said that was the first he had heard of the option and asked whether it "was a device to avoid inspectors". The world knew that Saddam Hussein was bad but not everybody was convinced by the threat he posed; the only way to prove it was to get inspectors in. Mr Straw was "worried about the motives of those suggesting the

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<sup>156</sup> [Letter McDonald to Manning, 10 September 2002, 'Iraq'](#).

declaration alternative. Saddam was intelligent and well advised; he could be coached into providing a difficult answer.”

**518.** In response to a question from Sir Jeremy Greenstock about whether the US was genuine about the UN approach or whether it was “a brief effort before the early use of force”, with the status of inspectors the key difference between the two approaches, Secretary Powell said that President Bush was not doing this as a fig leaf for war: the US could not act unilaterally; it needed too much help in the region. Secretary Powell added that the US needed more than resolution 1284 (1999). If the UN approach worked and regime change “dropped away”, the US would need a really tough inspection regime (“Blix plus plus”), not a weak UNSCOM.

**519.** Mr Straw gave an account of Sir David Manning’s telephone conversation with Dr Rice earlier that day, which Secretary Powell summed up as the UK saying that the US can’t say “we don’t like the answer [to our declaration demand], we’re going to war”. Secretary Powell advised that Mr Blair might need to make the importance he attached to the return of inspectors clear to President Bush.

**520.** Mr Straw sent Mr Blair a separate minute reporting the conversation and “recommend[ing] strongly” that Mr Blair should speak to President Bush after his speech “to secure a reconfirmation” of what he had agreed at Camp David.<sup>157</sup> Mr Straw suggested that Mr Blair should also “dismiss” any idea of simply giving Iraq 15-30 days to explain the discrepancies the inspectors had unearthed then moving to military action rather than seeking the insertion of inspectors.

**521. Sir David Manning told Dr Rice that Mr Blair thought President Bush should use his speech at the UN General Assembly to make a virtue of going the UN route.**

**522.** Sir David Manning spoke again to Dr Rice at 12.15pm on 11 September.<sup>158</sup> He suggested that President Bush’s speech needed to expand his concluding sentence on the role of the UN by announcing he would be proposing a new resolution “within the next few days”. That would have “immediate impact at the UN and great resonance in Europe and more widely. At present the speech left us hanging.” It was “at best, only implicit” what President Bush thought the UN should do.

**523.** In response to a question from Dr Rice, Sir David told her he was “confident” that was Mr Blair’s view. The President should use the speech to make a virtue of going the UN route.

**524.** Dr Rice told Sir David that President Bush “would probably be ready to do this” for Mr Blair.

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<sup>157</sup> Minute Straw to Prime Minister, 10 September 2002, ‘US/Iraq’.

<sup>158</sup> [Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 11 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.](#)

**525.** Following a conversation with Mr Blair, Mr Straw made the same point to Secretary Powell during two further discussions in New York on 11 September.<sup>159,160</sup>

## The UN General Assembly

### MR ANNAN'S SPEECH, 12 SEPTEMBER 2002

**526.** Mr Annan opened the annual debate of the UN General Assembly on 12 September by re-affirming the indispensable necessity and enduring relevance of multilateralism and multilateral institutions in maintaining international peace, security and freedom for all.

**527.** Mr Annan called on Member States to act through the UN adding that an effective international security system depended on the Security Council's authority and willingness to act even in the most difficult cases.

**528.** Mr Annan called on Iraq to comply with its obligations and appealed to those who had influence with Iraq to encourage it to do so. If Iraq's defiance continued, the Security Council "must face its responsibilities".

**529.** Mr Annan's address to the General Assembly on 12 September focused on the arguments for multilateral not unilateral action to address the challenges on the UN's agenda and for the full use of multilateral institutions, where all States had "a clear interest, as well as a clear responsibility, to uphold international law and maintain international order".<sup>161</sup>

**530.** Mr Annan stated that "only concerted vigilance and co-operation among all States" would offer "real hope of denying terrorists their opportunity" and warned:

"On all these matters, for any one State – large or small – choosing to follow or reject the multilateral path must not be a matter of simple political convenience. It has consequences far beyond the immediate context ...

"The more a country makes use of multilateral institutions – thereby respecting shared values, and accepting the obligations and restraints inherent in those values – the more others will trust and respect it, and the stronger its chance to exercise true leadership."

**531.** Addressing the role of the Security Council, Mr Annan stated that "when States decide to use force to deal with broader threats to international peace and security", not acting under the inherent right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, there was "no substitute for the unique legitimacy provided by the United Nations". Member

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<sup>159</sup> Letter McDonald to Manning, 11 September 2002, 'Iraq'.

<sup>160</sup> Letter Straw to Manning, 11 September 2002, 'Iraq'.

<sup>161</sup> UN General Assembly, 'Fifty-seventh session Thursday 12 September 2002' (A/57/PV.2).

States attached “fundamental importance to such legitimacy and the international rule of law”. They had shown, “notably in the action to liberate Kuwait”, that they were:

“... willing to take actions under the authority of the Security Council, which they would not be willing to take without it.

“The existence of an effective international security system depends on the Council’s authority – and therefore on the Council having the political will to act, even in the most difficult cases ... The primary criterion for putting an issue on the Council’s agenda should not be the receptiveness of the parties, but the existence of a grave threat to world peace.”

**532.** Addressing “current threats to world peace, where true leadership and effective action are badly needed”, Mr Annan stated:

“... the leadership of Iraq continues to defy mandatory resolutions adopted by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter.

“I have engaged Iraq in an in-depth discussion on a range of issues, including the need for arms inspectors to return, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

“Efforts to obtain Iraq’s compliance with the Council’s resolutions must continue. I appeal to all who have influence with Iraq’s leaders to impress on them the vital importance of accepting the weapons inspections. This is the indispensable first step towards assuring the world that all Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction have indeed been eliminated, and – let me stress – towards the suspension and eventual ending of the [economic] sanctions ...

“I urge Iraq to comply ... If Iraq’s defiance continues, the Security Council must face its responsibilities.”

**533.** Mr Annan wrote in his memoir that concerns had been expressed in early September about the impact on international law of pre-emptive action taken by one state, and that his response had been that support given by the United Nations for military action would bestow both legitimacy and legality on anything done with respect to Iraq.<sup>162</sup> In his address to the Assembly, he stated:

“...there was no alternative for the legitimate use of force than through a united Security Council and that there was still time to seek a peaceful way out.”

**534.** Mr Annan added:

“After the meeting I spoke with Tony Blair for whom the process of negotiating a new resolution wasn’t so much about achieving the disarmament goals. To him, above all, it was a test of the UN in the eyes of the United States: ‘a critical moment for the

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<sup>162</sup> Annan K. *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace*. Allen Lane, 2012.

UN to persuade the US that the UN has the wherewithal to be effective and relevant in the future’.”

#### PRESIDENT BUSH’S SPEECH, 12 SEPTEMBER 2002

**535.** In his speech to the General Assembly, President Bush set out his view of the “grave and gathering danger” posed by Saddam Hussein and challenged the UN to act to address Iraq’s failure to meet the obligations imposed by the Security Council since 1990.

**536.** President Bush made clear that, if Iraq defied the UN the world must hold Iraq to account and the US would “work with the UN Security Council for the necessary resolutions”.

**537.** But the US would not stand by and do nothing in the face of the threat.

**538.** President Bush’s speech to the UN General Assembly on 12 September focused primarily on Iraq.<sup>163</sup>

**539.** President Bush began his speech by referring to the origin of the United Nations, stating that the Security Council had been created “so that, unlike the League of Nations, our deliberations would be more than talk, our resolutions would be more than wishes”. He stated that security was being challenged by regional conflicts, ethnic and religious strife, and “outlaw groups and regimes that accept no law of morality and no limit to their violent ambitions”. The “greatest fear” was that terrorists would “find a shortcut to their mad ambitions when an outlaw regime supplies them with the technologies to kill on a massive scale”.

**540.** President Bush stated:

“In one place and one regime, we find all these dangers in their most lethal and aggressive forms – exactly the kind of aggressive threat the United Nations was born to confront.”

**541.** President Bush stated that, to suspend hostilities after its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, Saddam Hussein had “accepted a series of commitments” and “agreed to prove” that he was “complying with every one of those obligations”. By “breaking every pledge”, Saddam had “made the case against himself”.

**542.** President Bush set out the obligations imposed by the UN on Iraq, including that it should:

- “cease at once repression of its own people”;
- “return all prisoners from Kuwait and other lands”;

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<sup>163</sup> The White House, 12 September 2002, *President’s Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly*.

- “renounce all involvement with terrorism and permit no terrorist organisations to operate in Iraq”; and
- “destroy and stop developing all weapons of mass destruction and long range missiles and to prove to the world it has done so by complying with rigorous inspection”.

**543.** President Bush set out Iraq’s failure to meet those obligations. Iraq had “broken every aspect” of the last pledge, including:

- “Right now, Iraq is expanding and improving facilities that were used for the production of biological weapons.”
- UN inspections had revealed that Iraq “likely maintains stockpiles of VX, mustard and other chemical agents, and that the regime is rebuilding and expanding facilities capable of producing chemical weapons”.
- Iraq continued “to withhold important information about its nuclear program”; employed “capable nuclear scientists and technicians”; and retained “the physical infrastructure needed to build a nuclear weapon”. It had “made several attempts to buy high-strength aluminium tubes used to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon”. If Iraq acquired fissile material, “it would be able to build a nuclear weapon within a year”.
- Iraq’s “state controlled media” had “reported numerous meetings between Saddam Hussein and his nuclear scientists, leaving little doubt about his continued appetite for these weapons”.
- Iraq also possessed “a force” of SCUD-type missiles with greater than permitted range and was “building more ... that can inflict mass death throughout the region”.
- Iraq had “subverted” the OFF programme “to buy missile technology and military materials”.
- Despite the UN’s demands for the return of inspectors, Iraq had had “four years ... to plan and to build and to test behind the cloak of secrecy”.

**544.** Challenging the United Nations to act, President Bush stated:

“We know that Saddam Hussein pursued weapons of mass murder even when inspectors were in his country. Are we to assume that he stopped when they left? The history, the logic and the facts lead to one conclusion: Saddam Hussein’s regime is a grave and gathering danger. To suggest otherwise is to hope against the evidence. To assume ... good faith is ... a reckless gamble ... [T]his is a risk we must not take.

“We have been more than patient ... Saddam Hussein has defied all these efforts and continues to develop weapons of mass destruction. The first time we may be completely certain he has ... nuclear weapons is when ... he uses one. We owe it to all our citizens to prevent that day from coming.

“The conduct of the Iraqi regime is a threat to the authority of the United Nations, and a threat to peace ... All the world now faces a test, and the United Nations a difficult and defining moment. Are the Security Council resolutions to be honoured and enforced, or cast aside without consequence? Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding or will it be irrelevant?”

“The United States ... want the United Nations to be effective and respected and successful. We want the resolutions of the world’s most important multilateral body to be enforced, and right now those resolutions are being unilaterally subverted by the Iraqi regime ...”

**545.** Challenging Iraq, President Bush stated: “If the Iraqi regime wishes peace” it would act in accordance with its obligations to the UN. He listed those obligations but did not explicitly mention the obligation to allow weapons inspectors to return.

**546.** President Bush offered the prospect of a new relationship:

“If all these steps are taken, it will signal a new openness and accountability in Iraq. And it could open the prospect of the United Nations helping to build a Government that represents all Iraqis – a Government based on respect for human rights, economic liberty and internationally supervised elections.

“The United States has no quarrel with the Iraqi people ...

“My nation will work with the UN Security Council to meet our common challenge. If Iraq’s regime defies us again, the world must move deliberately and decisively to hold Iraq to account. We will work with the UN Security Council for the necessary resolutions. But the purposes of the United States should not be doubted. The Security Council resolutions will be enforced, and the just demands of peace and security will be met, or action will be unavoidable, and a regime that has lost its legitimacy will lose its power.”

**547.** President Bush warned:

“Events can turn in one of two ways.

“If we fail to act in the face of danger the people of Iraq will continue to live in brutal submission. The regime will have new power to bully, dominate and conquer its neighbours, condemning the Middle East to more years of bloodshed and fear. The regime will remain unstable ... With every step the Iraqi regime takes towards gaining and deploying the most terrible weapons, our own options to confront that regime will narrow. And if an emboldened regime were to supply these weapons to terrorist allies, then the attacks of September 11 would be a prelude to far greater horrors.

“If we meet our responsibilities, if we overcome this danger, we can arrive at a very different future. The people of Iraq can shake off their captivity. They can one



day join a democratic Afghanistan and a democratic Pakistan, inspiring reforms throughout the Muslim world ...”

**548.** President Bush concluded:

“Neither of these outcomes is certain ... We must choose between a world of fear and a world of progress. We cannot stand by and do nothing while dangers gather ... By heritage and by choice, the United States will make that stand. And, delegates to the United Nations, you have the power to make that stand as well.”

**549.** President Bush also made a brief reference to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, stating:

“... there can be no peace for either side without freedom for both sides. America stands committed to an independent and democratic Palestine, living side by side with Israel in peace and security ... My nation will continue to encourage all parties to step up to their responsibilities as we seek a just and comprehensive settlement to the conflict.”

**550.** Dr Rice wrote in her memoir that the speech was intended to remind the audience of the dangers of Saddam Hussein’s regime and “to put the world on notice that the United States would act – alone if necessary – to deal with the threat”.<sup>164</sup> President Bush had been “supposed to call for a *new* resolution ... Somehow it had been left out ... The President ... immediately noticed the omission and ad-libbed a line that put the fate of Saddam into the hands of the UN Security Council.”<sup>165</sup>

**551.** There was uncertainty in the UK until the last moment about whether President Bush would announce that the US would seek a new Security Council resolution on Iraq.

**552.** Mr Straw wrote in his memoir that he had “been slipped an advance copy” of the speech and that he and others had:

“... spotted that the crucial line on working with the Security Council ‘for the necessary resolution’ had been omitted ... I immediately assumed dirty work ... But simple human error ... was to blame. Fortunately the President spotted the omission and ad-libbed ...”<sup>166</sup>

**553.** In a handwritten letter to President Bush congratulating him on the speech, Mr Blair wrote:

“It was a brilliant speech. It puts us on exactly the right strategy to get the job done. The reception has been very positive with every one now challenged to come up to the mark. Well done.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Rice C. *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.

<sup>165</sup> President Bush added: “We will work with the UN Security Council for the necessary resolutions.”

<sup>166</sup> Straw J. *Last Man Standing: Memoirs of a Political Survivor*. Macmillan, 2012.

<sup>167</sup> [Letter \(handwritten\) Blair to Bush, 12 September 2002, \[untitled\]](#).

MR DE VILLEPIN'S SPEECH, 12 SEPTEMBER 2002

**554.** Mr Dominique de Villepin, the French Foreign Minister, stated that France supported a demarche requiring Iraq to meet its obligations within a defined timetable, but emphasised the need for collective responsibility to be exercised through the Security Council; and that the Security Council should determine the action taken if Iraq did not comply.

**555.** In his statement to the General Assembly Mr de Villepin warned that the use of “force alone” was “often futile” and that, in an interdependent world, “Let us take care that our interventions do not give rise to new frustrations, do not produce new imbalances and spark fires which we cannot put out.”<sup>168</sup>

**556.** Mr de Villepin stated:

“The case of Iraq is typical of this new situation. It is a country that has defied the authority of the Security Council and flouted international law for several years. It is a regime that poses a grave threat to security, particularly the security of the peoples of its region, because of the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Its conduct is the direct cause of the great suffering endured by its people.

“Is the international community concerned? Of course it is. Can it continue to tolerate this situation? Definitely not. Should it act? Obviously: the status quo cannot go on. France’s determination to obtain compliance with the law is absolute.

“We must act, but we must do so effectively ...”

**557.** Mr de Villepin added that action should not “exacerbate” a situation that was “already very disturbing”:

“We must act, but there are many traps. Intervention that is politically or legally ill-defined or poorly mounted would not garner the broad support necessary; it might galvanise public opinion in the region against it, and the regime in Baghdad which is isolated now could benefit; lastly, it might aggravate tensions in the Middle East and beyond at a time when we should ... re-double our efforts to return to the path of dialogue and peace.”

**558.** Mr de Villepin stated that there was “only one way” to avoid those traps, the path of “collective responsibility”:

“The necessary measures must be adopted by the international community after an in-depth and transparent consideration. Any temptation to engage in unilateral preventive action would be dangerous. We must take care to avoid any suspicion of bias or injustice. This is the only way to ensure that any action to enforce law and restore security does not add to insecurity ...

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<sup>168</sup> UN General Assembly, ‘Fifty-seventh session Thursday 12 September 2002’ (A/57/PV.2).

“That is why ... France advocates a demarche made completely legitimate through collective deliberation. It requires two successive steps. First, we must together reaffirm the need for United Nations inspectors to return and demand that Iraq comply at last with its obligations under the Security Council decisions taken since 1991, and to do so according to a definite timetable ... If Baghdad persists in its refusal to allow the inspectors to return unconditionally, then there must be consequences. The Security Council should then decide measures to be taken without excluding any option. Responsibilities would be clarified. The world must be able to act. But it must also be coherent and effective, in a sustained way. That is today the real challenge to our values, and to our democracies.”

**559.** Mr Blair spoke to President Chirac on 13 September to discuss the UN resolution.<sup>169</sup> Mr Blair emphasised the need for a tougher inspections regime. He said that Saddam Hussein had to understand that there would be action against him if he did not comply: “unless Saddam thought we were serious there was no chance of him complying”.

**560.** Mr Blair and President Chirac also discussed the need to be clear when the inspectors had finished their work “either because WMD had been discovered and destroyed or because there was no WMD”. Mr Blair said that he would think about the two resolutions route (a return to the Security Council in the event of Iraq’s non-compliance).

#### RUSSIA AND CHINA’S COMMENTS ON IRAQ

**561.** Russia and China emphasised the importance of dealing with Iraq through the instruments of the UN and in accordance with international law.

**562.** In his speech on 13 September, Mr Igor Ivanov, the Russian Foreign Minister, made only a brief reference to Iraq. In a passage in his speech on regional conflicts he stated:

“Experience shows that no matter how complex international crises and conflicts may be, whatever challenges and threats they may be fraught with, they can be settled with the aid of United Nations instruments and on the basis of international law. This fully applies to the situation around Iraq, which has long required political settlement in strict compliance with the Security Council resolutions.”<sup>170</sup>

**563.** Mr Tang Jiaxuan, the Chinese Foreign Minister, stated that:

“Counter-terrorism should be pursued on the basis of international law and of the norms of international relations, allowing the United Nations and its Security Council to play a leading role ... Efforts should be made to prevent the arbitrary enlargement

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<sup>169</sup> Letter Rycroft to Sedwill, 13 September 2002, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Phone Call with Chirac, 13 September’.

<sup>170</sup> UN General Assembly, ‘Fifty-seventh session Friday 13 September 2002’ (A/57/PV.5).

of the scope of the counter-terrorism campaign, but proven terrorists ... must be resolutely stamped out.”<sup>171</sup>

**564.** Mr Tang added that, in relation to Iraq, China stood “for a political settlement” in which the United Nations “should play an important role”. He called on Iraq to “implement the relevant Security Council resolutions in a faithful and strict manner”.

#### MR STRAW’S SPEECH, 14 SEPTEMBER 2002

**565.** Mr Straw’s speech to the General Assembly focused on the unique challenge to the UN posed by Iraq’s continued defiance, and the consequences for the UN’s wider authority if action was not taken.

**566.** Mr Straw’s speech to the UN General Assembly on 14 September focused on the critical role the UN had to play in world affairs, and the “three rising challenges” of failing states, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.<sup>172</sup> He cited the experience with the International Security Assistance Force working with the UN in Afghanistan as showing what could be done.

**567.** Addressing the threat from proliferation, Mr Straw stated: “Nowhere is the case for universal support for the enforcement of the UN’s law stronger than in the field of weapons of mass destruction.” He added:

“... with one infamous exception – no States have resorted to these, the world’s worst weapons.

“That exception is Iraq. For two decades, Saddam has defied and frustrated every attempt to enforce the international rule of law. Iraq is the only country to be condemned by the United Nations for breaching the Convention on Chemical Weapons. Iraq has fought two wars of aggression ... No country has deceived every other country in the world as systematically and cynically as Iraq. And no country presents as fundamental a challenge to the United Nations ...

“Every society has to have rules ... So those of us who believe in an active international community cannot stand by and do nothing while Iraq continues to defy the will of the United Nations. All of us who believe in the United Nations have to make up our minds now about how to deal with Iraq. The authority of the United Nations itself is at stake.

“We cannot let Iraq do grave damage to this Organisation and the international order it represents. We cannot let Iraq go on defying a decade of Security Council resolutions. If we do, we will find all our resolutions are dismissed by aggressors everywhere as mere words ...

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<sup>171</sup> UN General Assembly, ‘Fifty-seventh session Friday 13 September 2002’ (A/57/PV.5).

<sup>172</sup> FCO News, 14 September 2002, ‘Security is not an option, it is a necessity – Straw (14/09/02)’.

“There are times when hard choices have to be made. On Iraq, we have now reached such a moment. If we fail to deal with this challenge, the United Nations will be seriously weakened. And that would make the world a much more dangerous place.

“As President Bush spelled out ... we have to be resolute in the face of Iraq’s defiance as President Bush said in his excellent speech ... and secure the will of the United Nations. We must require Iraq to re-admit inspectors with unfettered access. We have not just an interest but a responsibility to ensure that Iraq complies fully with international law. We have to be clear to Iraq and to ourselves about the consequences which will flow from a failure by Iraq to meet its obligations.”

#### THE UK GOVERNMENT’S POSITION

**568.** Mr Blair wrote in his memoir that he had decided during August 2002 that Saddam had to be dealt with; and that the one objective of his meeting with President Bush at Camp David on 7 September was to persuade President Bush to go to the UN.

**569.** Mr Blair described that as obtaining a resolution and giving Saddam Hussein a final chance to comply.

**570.** In his memoir Mr Blair described Iraq, and what the UK was going to do about it, as, by the summer of 2002, “an insistent and pervasive backdrop”.<sup>173</sup> He recorded that as a result of 24-hour media:

“Literally every day, stories would appear moving the debate this way and that and in line with developing patterns of reporting, always hardening speculation into fact. At times we would not be sure whether we were driving the agenda or being driven by it. On holiday in France in August 2002, I took a call from George, who was equally frustrated by the fact that everyone assumed we had made up our mind and that the march to war was inexorable.”

**571.** Mr Blair added:

“When I returned from holiday ... I also had my lines clear. I was going to be very tough: we had to deal with Saddam; it was right to do it; we had to send an unvarnished and plain message to the world.”

**572.** Mr Blair wrote that the Camp David meeting had had one objective:

“... to get [President Bush] to go down the UN route, ie to agree that before any action we would pass a UN resolution and give Saddam a final chance.

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<sup>173</sup> Blair T. *A Journey*. Hutchinson, 2010.

“This was not an easy sell. The US context ... was completely opposite to ours; and the UN did not play well there. The meeting was a little tense ... In the end, one to one, I got his acceptance ... because ... ultimately he bought the idea that this was going to be a whole lot easier if we had a coalition behind us.”<sup>174</sup>

**573.** In the context of putting Iraq back into the UN system, Mr Blair told the Inquiry, that he had had “to persuade [President Bush] to take a view radically different from any of the people in his Administration”.<sup>175</sup>

**574. Sir David Manning told the Inquiry that it would in his view have been impossible for the UK to act in support of the US without “the UN route”, but US acquiescence was reluctant.**

**575.** Asked what thought had been given to the position if President Bush had decided not to take the UN route, Sir David Manning told the Inquiry that his assumption was that it would have been impossible for the UK to act for two reasons:

“One was that I thought the domestic political position was just impossible ... the other ... was it seemed to me legally it would be very, very difficult.”<sup>176</sup>

**576.** Asked whether the US had fully embraced the UN route, Sir David replied:

“No, I think the description ... is we moved them from scepticism to reluctant acquiescence. I don’t think there was a sudden conversion.”

**577. In his memoir, Mr Straw expressed concern that the US Administration interpreted Mr Blair’s position in his discussions with President Bush as offering the UK’s unconditional support.**

**578.** Mr Straw told the Inquiry that President Bush’s speech was the critical point at which the US “committed itself to the strategy which we had been arguing for”, and “meant that we were embarked on the strategy which, in my judgement could easily have led to a peaceful resolution of this major dispute and that was fundamental to the approach of the British Government”.<sup>177</sup>

**579.** In his memoir, Mr Straw wrote:

“... when telling people things they didn’t want to hear, Tony frequently used ambiguous, elliptical language. I continually worried that Bush heard Tony’s nuanced phraseology as offering unconditional support. Time and again, on Iraq and the Middle East especially, Colin told me that this was exactly what he was picking up

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<sup>174</sup> Blair T. *A Journey*. Hutchinson, 2010.

<sup>175</sup> Public hearing, 21 January 2011, page 50.

<sup>176</sup> Private hearing, 24 June 2010, pages 70-71.

<sup>177</sup> Public hearing, 21 January 2010, page 540.

inside the US Administration. ‘The Bush team took TB’s comments as full support, and pocketed them’, is Colin’s subsequent comment to me.”<sup>178</sup>

**580. Lord Turnbull told the Inquiry that the UK’s strategy on Iraq was set following the meeting at Camp David.**

**581.** Lord Turnbull, Cabinet Secretary from September 2002 to September 2005, told the Inquiry:

“I arrived at a very interesting transitional phase in this whole story ... This was, I would say, the conclusion of the strategy phase. The strategy was basically set following Camp David. The idea that Saddam Hussein would be confronted, that there would be an approach to the UN in alliance with the US and a justification would be put into the public domain. All that happened within days of my arrival ...”<sup>179</sup>

**582.** Lord Turnbull added:

“I think that was a point where a particular strategy coalesced, and at that point the position of [the] Cabinet Office, the Civil Service generally was: we now have a settled strategy and we now will pursue this and make it effective.

“... there was never any opportunity seriously to say, ‘This is the wrong option. Iran is the real problem or Korea is the real problem’ or whatever ... certainly by September 2002 that decision had been made ...

“... We had agreed, not only what we wanted to do but the Prime Minister ... had agreed with the President of the United States what was going to be done next, and the idea of formulating [a] single resolution, and you could almost say setting a trap for Saddam Hussein – the idea of an ultimatum, that was all formulated at around that time.”<sup>180</sup>

**583.** Asked whether the pros and cons of toppling Saddam Hussein had been examined, Lord Turnbull replied: “I think that was largely concluded by September.”<sup>181</sup>

## Conclusions

**584. Following Mr Blair’s meeting of 23 July, there were no further collective recorded discussions within the UK Government about the UK’s Iraq strategy before Mr Blair’s meeting with President Bush at Camp David on 7 September.**

**585. From the end of July 2002 until Mr Blair’s meeting with President Bush at Camp David, Mr Blair and Mr Straw were attempting to persuade the US Administration to secure multilateral support before taking action on Iraq.**

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<sup>178</sup> Straw J, *Last Man Standing: Memoirs of a Political Survivor*. Macmillan, 2012.

<sup>179</sup> Public hearing, 13 January 2010, page 4.

<sup>180</sup> Public hearing, 13 January 2010, pages 21-22.

<sup>181</sup> Public hearing, 13 January 2010, page 76.

**586.** By late August, the UK was proposing coercion of Iraq to disarm by means of a UN resolution issuing an ultimatum to Iraq to admit the weapons inspectors. In the event that Saddam Hussein refused, or subsequently obstructed, the inspectors, the UK was seeking a commitment from the Security Council to take action.

**587.** The UK Government's first objective was to offer Iraq the opportunity and a last chance to comply with its obligations and avoid military action. In the event of Iraq not taking that opportunity, the UK was also seeking to establish conditions whereby military action (should it become necessary) would command multilateral support and be taken with the authority of the Security Council.

**588.** In his public statements, Mr Blair clearly presented the strategy as providing a final opportunity for Saddam Hussein to disarm peacefully.

**589.** Reflecting the level of public debate and concern, Mr Blair decided in early September that an explanation of why action to deal with Iraq was needed should be published. That led to the publication of the Iraq dossier on 24 September. He also considered debate on the issue was sufficiently important for both Houses of Parliament to be recalled from recess.

**590.** As a result of Mr Blair's initiative and the subsequent bilateral discussions involving Mr Blair, Sir David Manning and Mr Straw, the US Administration was left in no doubt that the UK Government needed the issue of Iraq to be taken back to the Security Council before it would be able to participate in military action in Iraq.

**591.** The UK's arguments complemented and reinforced the arguments being made within the US Administration, particularly by Secretary Powell, that the US should not act alone.

**592.** The UK was a key ally whose support was highly desirable for the US.

**593.** That and the force of UK diplomacy undoubtedly made a significant contribution to President Bush's decision in the meeting of the National Security Council on 7 September to take the issue of Iraq back to the UN.

**594.** The objective of the subsequent discussions between President Bush and Mr Blair at Camp David was, as Mr Blair stated in the press conference before the discussions, to work out the strategy.

**595.** Although at that stage no decision had been taken on which military package might be offered to the US for planning purposes, Mr Blair also told President Bush that, if it came to war, the UK would take a significant military role.

**596.** When President Bush made his speech on 12 September, the US and UK had agreed the broad approach but not the substance of the proposals to be put to the UN Security Council, nor the tactics.



**597.** Statements made by China, France and Russia in the General Assembly debate after President Bush's speech highlighted the different positions of the five Permanent Members of the Security Council, in particular about the role of the Council in deciding whether military action was justified. The UK also recognised the danger that the US might seek to set the bar for Iraq so high that a new resolution might not be agreed by the Security Council.

**598.** Those tensions meant the negotiation of resolution 1441 was complex and difficult. That is addressed in Section 3.5.