



An analysis of the US and UK decision to go to war in Iraq – June 2003

Introduction

This brief draws upon the experience of BASIC and Saferworld's specialist knowledge of arms control and international security issues.¹

The primary reason given for the US-led invasion of Iraq was the biological and chemical weapon disarmament of Saddam Hussein's regime. Since the invasion, US and UK forces have failed to find any significant quantities of either biological or chemical agents, despite the deployment of a special force of US inspectors.

There is increasing reason to wonder whether Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), code for nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons, was as extensive as US and UK officials claimed before going to war.

This brief sets out to review the evidence and covers 4 main areas:

- an overview and reconsideration of the evidence of Iraqi possession of chemical and biological weapons as uncovered by the UN inspectors prior to their withdrawal and the subsequent military 'liberation' of Iraq; (p.4)
- an analysis of the information given to the UK Parliament in the period leading up to military action in Iraq; (p. 6)
- a review of the evidence of Iraqi WMD that has been accumulated since the fall of the Saddam regime; (p. 7) and
- an assessment as to whether the WMD threat from Iraq was overstated by the US and UK (p. 14)

Appendix 1: A chronology of key events in Iraq between the departure of UNMOVIC in 1998 and to date (p. 19)

Appendix 2: Relevant excerpts from UNMOVIC Report "Unresolved Disarmament Issues" 06/03/03 (p.21)

¹ This submission also draws heavily on a BASIC Special Briefing, *'Matters of Emphasis: The Hunt for Chemical and Biological Weapons in Iraq'*, by David Isenberg, Ian Davis and Paul Ingram, which is being periodically updated on the BASIC website: www.basicint.org

Evidence of WMD prior to war

Appendix 1 provides a chronology of key events between the departure of UNMOVIC in 1998 and the date of this submission.

Background

That Iraqi armed forces had chemical and biological weapons, and tried to produce nuclear weapons, is beyond doubt. The seven years of UN inspections after the 1991 Gulf War clearly established the existence of weapons programmes in all three areas. The world knew as far back as the Iraq-Iran war that Iraq had successfully developed and used chemical weapons. Iraq also used chemical weapons on its own Kurdish population in Halabja in March 1988. And despite declaring in 1991 that it did not possess any biological weapons or related items, the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) uncovered a well-developed biological weapons programme in 1995.

However, these those same chemical and biological programmes experienced setbacks as a result of the 1991 war, and the subsequent UN inspections regime. UNSCOM, for example, destroyed more than 480,000 litres of chemical agents and 1.8 million litres of chemical precursors in Iraq's arsenal. That, coupled with Saddam Hussein's past refusal to comply with UN Security Council resolutions to disarm, and to obstruct inspections by UNSCOM and its successor, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), made assessing the scope and extent of Iraq's biological and chemical programmes very difficult.

The UN inspection process evidence

Despite formidable obstacles, and contrary to many public statements by British and American officials and political leaders (see Part II below), UN inspectors had made progress in narrowing down the uncertainties. These uncertainties were compiled by UNMOVIC in a report, *Unresolved Disarmament Issues: Iraq's Proscribed Weapons Programmes*, dated March 6.² The report was released the day before Hans Blix, UNMOVIC director, gave his last quarterly report to the Security Council, just thirteen days before the start of the war. It grouped 100 "unresolved disarmament issues" into 29 clusters, and presented by discipline: missiles, munitions, chemical and biological weapons. The report provided much evidence to support both sides of the debate over the state of Iraq's NBC weapons programmes.

Unfortunately, the report received very little public attention, even though UNMOVIC promptly posted it on its website, and was largely ignored by UK and US political leaders in pre-war debates. Relevant extracts from the report are provided in Appendix 2.

In terms of delivery systems, ten days before the invasion began, the *New York Times* reported that UN weapons inspectors in Iraq had discovered a new variety of rocket seemingly configured to strew bomblets filled with chemical or biological agents over large areas.³ The weapon was discovered after the UN inspectors returned to Iraq in November 2002. At first, Iraq told the inspectors that it was designed as a conventional cluster bomb, which would scatter explosive sub-munitions over its target, and not as a chemical weapon. A few days later, the Iraqis conceded that some of the weapons might have been configured as chemical weapons.

But it remains unclear, according to the UNMOVIC report, whether the Iraqi cluster warhead was a newly developed one, devised during the absence of inspectors over the past four years, or whether its existence was kept secret before 1998, when the inspectors left.⁴

² UNMOVIC Working Document, *Unresolved Disarmament Issues: Iraq's Proscribed Weapons Programmes*, 6 March 2003, <http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/documents/6mar.pdf>.

³ John H. Cushman Jr. with Steven R. Weisman, "A new type of rocket found in Iraq: Inspectors say chemicals could cover wide area," *New York Times*, 10 March 2003.

⁴ *Ibid.*

The situation regarding anthrax stocks also remained unresolved. Despite receiving an updated report from Baghdad just before the war in Iraq began, UN inspectors continued to doubt that Iraq had destroyed all of its anthrax stores. In the report, Iraq tried to account for the destruction of 3,400 litres of anthrax agent at a site called al-Hakam. A translation of the report from Arabic was completed recently and UNMOVIC experts have since reviewed the report.⁵

Citing data collected from soil samples, Iraq claims it used a sufficient quantity of potassium magnate to neutralize all the anthrax at its al-Hakam facility. UNMOVIC spokesman Ewen Buchanan said commission experts were sceptical that the Iraqi report completely documented anthrax destruction activities.⁶

Even if the document were true, he said, Iraq had still not fully accounted for the remainder of the 8,445 litres of anthrax agent it had declared that it produced at two facilities and destroyed. Iraq previously had declared that some of the material had been loaded into aerial bombs and missile warheads.⁷

Three days before the war started, the Washington Post reported that despite US administration claims about Iraq' s weapons of mass destruction, US intelligence agencies had been unable to give Congress or the Pentagon specific information about the amounts of banned weapons or where they were hidden.⁸

On 17 March the former UK Foreign Secretary and then Leader of the House of Commons, Robin Cook, resigned from the Cabinet and told the UK Parliament that:

Iraq probably has no weapons of mass destruction in the commonly understood sense of the term – namely a credible device capable of being delivered against a strategic city target. It probably still has biological toxins and battlefield chemical munitions, but it has had them since the 1980's.....⁹

- **Before the war broke out no conclusive WMD had been found. The official justification of the coalitions use of military force against Iraq was to disarm the country of its weapons of mass destruction because they posed a threat to international peace and security and because the inspections process was not working. If US inspectors continue to fail to uncover significant amounts of WMD, the reason why the US and UK went to war needs to be carefully analysed and objectively reassessed on both sides of the Atlantic.**

⁵ David Ruppe, "Iraq: Latest Iraqi Report Fails to Clear Anthrax Questions," *Global Security Newswire*, http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2003/4/2/9s.html.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Walter Pincus, "U.S. Lacks Specifics On Banned Arms," *Washington Post*, 16 March 2003, p. 17

⁹ House of Commons Hansard, 17 March 03, col 727

Information given to the UK Parliament in the period leading up to military action in Iraq

“As a result of the intelligence we judge that Iraq has: continued to produce chemical and biological agents; military plans for the use of chemical and biological weapons, including against its own Shia population. Some of these weapons are deployable within 45 minutes of an order to use them.”

British dossier on the threat posed by Iraq, published September 24 2002

The September 2002 dossier

On 24 September 2002, Prime Minister Tony Blair released an intelligence report on Iraq, often referred to as the “British dossier”.¹⁰ One of the major new claims in the dossier was the assertion that “As a result of the intelligence we judge that Iraq has . . . sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa, despite having no active civil nuclear power programme that could require it.”¹¹ The evidence that Iraq sought to obtain uranium from an African country, Niger, played a major role in the case against Iraq. The evidence was a central component of the assertion that Iraq was developing nuclear weapons, the only true weapon of mass destruction. This evidence was subsequently used by the US State Department in its response to Iraq’s arms declaration, by the President in his State of the Union address, and by numerous senior US Administration officials, including Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. However, the IAEA revealed on 7 March 2003 that the evidence was forged.

The release of the dossier received widespread media coverage, with the claim that Iraq sought uranium from Africa being prominently featured on network news and the front pages of major newspapers around the world.

On the 10 October 2002, the US House of Representatives passed the resolution authorising the use of force against Iraq, and the Senate followed suit on 11 October. In the weeks leading up to and after the vote on the resolution, over 180 members of Congress cited the threat of Iraqi nuclear capability as a reason for supporting the use of force in Iraq. Numerous members specifically cited the Iraq’s purported effort to obtain uranium from an African country in their floor statements during debate over the war resolution.¹²

On 7 December 2002, the Iraqi government submitted its arms declaration to the UN. In its response to the Iraqi declaration, the US State Department highlighted the failure of Iraq to account for its attempts to procure uranium from Niger. According to the State Department, one of eight “key omissions and deceptions” in Iraq’s weapons declaration was that “[t]he Declaration ignores efforts to procure uranium from Niger”.¹³ The US emphasis on the failure of Iraq to explain its efforts to obtain uranium from Africa was reflected in news coverage. Once again, the forged nuclear evidence was prominently featured on network news and the front pages of newspapers around the world.

The most prominent use of the forged evidence occurred in the President’s State of the Union address on 28 January 2003. The President told Congress and the nation: “The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa”. US officials continued to cite the forged nuclear evidence as part of the case against Iraq until virtually the day the IAEA revealed the evidence to be a forgery. For

¹⁰ *Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government*, 24 September 2002 <http://www.pm.gov.uk/files/pdf/iraqdossier.pdf>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Para.24.

¹² ‘Fact Sheet: The Bush Administration’s Use of the Forged Iraq Nuclear Evidence’, Committee on Government Reform, Minority Office Rep. Henry A Waxman, Ranking Member, June 2003.

¹³ US Department of State, Fact Sheet, *Illustrative Examples of Omissions From the Iraqi Declaration to the United Nations Security Council*, 19 December 2002.

example, in his presentation to the UN on 5 February, Secretary of State Colin Powell referred to the dossier as a “fine paper” that describes Iraqi deception in “exquisite detail”.¹⁴

In June 2003, the CIA was accused of withholding evidence when it emerged that the Agency failed to pass on its conclusions that allegations of Iraq attempting to buy Uranium in Niger were false. A retired US ambassador had been sent to Niger in February 2002 and had reported back that the alleged weapons documents may have been forged. He reported his concerns over the British nuclear claims to the CIA, but the CIA failed to pass this on. A senior intelligence official told the *Washington Post* that the CIA was guilty of “extremely sloppy” handling of a crucial piece of evidence.¹⁵

The February 2003 dossier

In a statement to the House of Commons on 3 February 2003, Tony Blair drew attention to a new report published by Downing Street, which further detailed Iraqi non-compliance with UN weapons inspectors. The report, which claimed to include new intelligence, was subsequently criticized when it was found to include information, which had been publicly been available for a number of years and based on academic research, without this being made clear.

The evidence post-war

The US inspections regime

The day the war started, the *New York Times* reported that the Bush administration had deployed several new tactical units called mobile exploitation teams, or METs, to locate and survey at least 130 and as many as 1,400 possible weapons sites.¹⁶ The day after the war started, the *Washington Post* reported that the UN agencies would not be invited to participate until US forces were ready to turn over dual-use biological or chemical sites for long-term monitoring.¹⁷

US military planners see four stages in their search-and-disarm effort:

- to take control of and assess any known site that might present an immediate threat to U.S. forces;
- to disable the threat and any ongoing production;
- to deploy "exploitation teams" with linguists, tools to extract information from hidden or encrypted computer files, and field laboratories that include detectors for radiation and sophisticated tests for biological and chemical toxins; and
- full destruction, which is expected to come much later.¹⁸

In April the Pentagon announced that it was sending 1,000 scientists, technicians, intelligence analysts and other experts to Baghdad. Called the Iraq Survey Group, the largely civilian team will be led by a general and will be equipped with mobile laboratories that can do tests in Iraq. It also is developing procedures for testing in laboratories in the US and the United Kingdom. The US Army's 75th Exploitation Group, which has searched several sites in Iraq, will come under the command of the larger Survey Group and provide its transportation and logistics.¹⁹

Interestingly, the search for weapons will be only one of the Iraq Survey Group's tasks. Its mission also includes uncovering information related to Saddam Hussein's regime, his

¹⁴ US Department of State, *Remarks to the United Nations Security Council*, 5 February 2003.

¹⁵ *Washington Post*, 12 June 2003.

¹⁶ Judith Miller, “U.S. Mobile Labs Are Poised to Hunt Iraqi Arms,” *New York Times*, 19 March 2003.

¹⁷ Barton Gellman, “U.S. Reaps New Data On Weapons,” *Washington Post*, 20 March 2003, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ John J. Fialka, “U.S. Readies A Different Army To Search For Weapons In Iraq,” *Wall Street Journal*, 17 April 2003.

intelligence services, terrorist outfits that might have had a presence in Iraq, any connections between the regime and terrorist organizations, war crimes and POWs.²⁰

On May 1 President Bush declared an end to major combat operations in Iraq. At that point the search for evidence of biological and chemical weapons in Iraq was intensified. However, as time has passed those searching for biological and chemical weapons have become increasingly disillusioned.²¹ A nuclear special operations group from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, called the Direct Support Team, has already sent home a third of its original complement, and plans to cut the remaining team by half.²²

Box 1: What US inspectors are looking for

Chemical Weapons:	80 tones of mustard gas	<i>unaccounted for by Iraq</i>
	weaponized VX nerve agent	<i>UN says Iraq may have retained this</i>
	stocks of tabun, sarin, cyclosarin	<i>UN disputes Iraq's declaration on this</i>
Biological weapons:	10,000 litres of anthrax	<i>"strong presumption" that this still exists according to the UN</i>
	3-11,000 litres of botulinum toxin	<i>UN says Iraq failed to disprove figures of previous inspectors</i>
	Up to 5,600 litres of clostridium perfringens	<i>UN says Iraq failed to disprove figures of previous inspectors</i>
Missiles:	86 Samoud 2 missiles which fly more than the permitted range of 150 km	<i>Out of 120 listed by UN, 34 have been destroyed</i>
	Scud and al-Hussein missiles system, Plus 50 Scud-B warheads	<i>UN says this "suggests" they may have been retained for "proscribed missile force"</i>
Munitions:	R-400 bombs, which can deliver chemical and biological weapons	

Signs and indications, but no 'smoking gun'

Despite frequent media reports that coalition military forces are finding "signs" and "indications" of chemical and biological weapons, usually turning out to be unspecified documents and possible dual-use equipment, to-date no chemical, biological or nuclear

²⁰ David Corn, "Bush' s WMD Search: No Full Speed Ahead," @pitop Games column, *The Nation*, 8 May 2003.

²¹ See, for example, Barton Gellman, "Odyssey of Frustration: In Search for Weapons, Army Team Finds Vacuum Cleaners," *Washington Post*, 18 May 2003, p. A1.

²² Barton Gellman, "Frustrated, U.S. Arms Team to Leave Iraq: Task Force Unable To Find Any Weapons," *Washington Post*, 11 May 2003; p. A01.

weapons have been found. Substantive evidence of a 'smoking gun' remains as elusive as ever.

As the coalition forces advanced increasing effort was devoted to locating CB weapons, but to no effect. For example, an entire artillery brigade, typically comprising 3,000-5,000 soldiers, was retrained to secure and examine sites suspected of holding banned weapons. The Pentagon offered rewards of up to \$200,000 for help in finding Iraqi leaders or chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.²³

In mid April, US forces were reported to have narrowed their hunt for banned weapons to about three-dozen sites dispersed throughout Iraq. Inspection of these sites was expected to take about at least a month.²⁴ By the end of April it was being reported that around 90 of the top 150 'hot' sites that US intelligence indicated were most likely to hold illegal weapons had been visited. The current string of false alarms includes:

- ***Al Tuwaitha (south east of Baghdad): suspected nuclear weapons***

US soldiers broke IAEA seals in attempting to 'verify' the presence of safeguarded nuclear material. Not appreciating the significance of the facility, the soldiers left the contents unattended for days, during which time the materials could have been diverted or stolen.²⁵ The IAEA issued a statement calling for greater care and requesting to be allowed back in to ensure that the material is not diverted or disturbed.

- ***Baghdad: suspected biological and chemical weapons***

In April, US special forces raided the Baghdad home of a microbiologist Rahib Taha, nicknamed "Dr. Germ", who allegedly ran Iraq's secret biological weapons programme. Documents were seized and three men arrested.²⁶ Taha was subsequently detained along with her husband Amir Muhammed Rasheed, Saddam's former oil minister and one of the most senior Iraqis dealing with UN inspectors. However, despite capturing and interrogating several key leaders of the former Iraqi weapons programme, it is reported that almost nothing of value has been disclosed to the US inspectors.²⁷

At the *Taji Airfield* on the outskirts of Baghdad, US troops have been searching for traces of chemical and biological weapons, so far without success.

- ***Baija (northern Iraq): suspected chemical weapons***

Field tests are being conducted on 14 55-gallon drums discovered by US special forces on April 25. Initial reports suggested that tests had confirmed positive for a chemical nerve agent cyclo-sarin, although these reports were later said to be incorrect. More accurate verification is awaited, as samples of the fluid have been sent to three labs for further testing: one in the United States, one in Europe and one in the Persian Gulf.²⁸

- ***Hindiya (near Kerbala, central Iraq): suspected chemical weapons***

Initial tests on substances found suggested the presence of nerve agents sarin and tabun and the blister agent lewisite. Subsequent US tests indicated that substances found are not chemical weapons agents but pesticides.

²³ Peter Eisler and Cesar G. Soriano, "Iraq Scoured For Signs Of Banned Arms," *USA Today*, 16 April 2003, p. 5.

²⁴ Don Van Natta Jr. and David Johnston, 'U.S. to check 36 sites for chemical weapons', *International Herald Tribune*, 15 April 2003.

²⁵ Philip Coyle, "Finding Saddam Hussein's Weapons of Mass Destruction", *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 23 April 2003.

²⁶ 'U.S. Raids Home of Iraq's Bio Lab Chief', *The Associated Press*, 16 April 2003.

²⁷ Barton Gellman, "Covert Unit Hunted for Iraqi Arms - Amid Raids and Rescue, Task Force 20 Failed To Pinpoint Weapons", *Washington Post*, 13 June 2003; Page A01.

²⁸ Guy Taylor, "Second Test Positive for Nerve Agent", *The Washington Times*, 28 April 2003; Judith Miller, "Suspicious Discovery Apparently Wasn't Chemical Weapons", *New York Times*, 28 April 2003.

- ***Nassiriya (southern Iraq): suspected chemical weapons and conventional munitions***

US marines found chemical suits, masks and atropine injectors in buildings used by Iraq's 11th Infantry Division. Earlier marines found weapons and ammunition inside a hospital.

- ***Najaf (southern Iraq): suspected chemical weapons***

Early reports that US forces captured a possible chemical-weapons plant in the town of Najaf turned out to be false.²⁹

- ***Qa Qaa (central Iraq): suspected chemical, biological and conventional munitions***

Ongoing investigations at this five-square-mile ammunition manufacturing and storage plant near Karbala have so far been inconclusive.³⁰ Reports suggest that some radioactive material was discovered in a maintenance building, together with suspicious dual use biological equipment that was buried in metal containers. Seven canisters of cesium were removed from the huge maintenance warehouse, and although analysts have not yet determined their specific purpose, early indications suggest that the containers of cesium were probably intended to calibrate machinery in one of the many buildings and production facilities under construction at the site. International inspectors visited the plant as late as February, but failed to find biological or chemical weapons or agents there.³¹

CNN reported on April 15, that the 11 mobile laboratories found buried in the ground near the ammunition plant were not for chemical and biological weapons, as originally reported, but are likely to have been intended to make conventional weapons.³²

- ***Mobile biological weapons laboratories***

In a presentation before the United Nations in February, US Secretary of State, Colin Powell said Iraq had as many as 18 trucks used as mobile facilities for making anthrax and botulinum toxin. With nothing to distinguish them from ordinary trucks, such mobile trucks are likely to be difficult to find. It was reported on April 29 that US forces in northern Iraq had seized a truck that US intelligence officials believed could be a mobile biological weapons laboratory.³³ Another trailer was found at the al-Kindi Research, Testing, Development, and Engineering facility in Mosul in early May.

A May 28 joint CIA and Defense Intelligence Agency report on the trailers, *Iraqi Mobile Biological Warfare Agent Production Plants*, said:

Coalition experts on fermentation and systems engineering examined the trailer found in late April and have been unable to identify any legitimate industrial use—such as water purification, mobile medical laboratory, vaccine or pharmaceutical production—that would justify the effort and expense of a mobile production capability.³⁴

But subsequent analyses by respected non-governmental experts have raised questions about the trailer's utility for biological weapons production.³⁵ For example, the trailers are said to lack proper containment equipment and are thus unsuited to the production of virulent BW agents. An as yet unpublished investigation into the two trailers by British scientists is

²⁹ "Iraq: No Chemical Weapons Found at Captured Najaf Site," *Global Security Newswire*, 17 March 2003.

³⁰ Judith Miller, "U.S. Inspectors Find No Forbidden Weapons At Iraqi Arms Plant," *New York Times*, 16 April 2003.

³¹ Judith Miller, "Survey of Arms Plant: Mysteries But No Proof," *International Herald Tribune*, 16 April 2003.

³² "Tests rule out suspect bio-labs," *CNN*, 15 April 2003.

³³ Greg Miller and Bob Drogin, "Truck is Tested for Biological Agents," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 April 2003; and Rupert Cornwell, "Trailer found in Iraq ' was bioweapons lab' ," 8 May 2003, *Independent*. See photo of trailer at <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/May2003/030507-D-9085M-001.jpg>.

³⁴ http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/iraqi_mobile_plants/index.html#06.

³⁵ Critical debate on the use of the trailers has been ongoing on the Federation of American Scientists' CBW email list-serve. Further details of this discussion can be found in a forthcoming update of the BASIC Special Briefing, *Matters of Emphasis*, Op.Cit.

reported to have concluded that they were for the production of hydrogen to fill artillery balloons.³⁶

Furthermore, as noted by the US Institute for Science and International Security, there are several problems with the CIA/DIA report. The chief findings rely heavily on intelligence gathered from a single source: an Iraqi chemical engineer who revealed this information to the United States in 2000. However, much of the US intelligence on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction has turned out to be flawed, including information derived from human sources. The report lists other additional human sources as supporting this defector's information, but close scrutiny of their information shows only weak confirmation of this original story.³⁷

Significance of the failure to find banned weapons

There are four potential explanations for the current failure to find significant evidence of banned weapons in Iraq, both before and post the recent invasion

- The weapons exist but have not yet been found;
- The weapons were destroyed or moved out of Iraq prior to invasion;
- The weapons were destroyed in coalition bombing or subsequent looting; or
- The weapons were destroyed even earlier, perhaps in the mid 1990s

Each of these explanations, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive, is considered in turn.

The weapons exist but have not yet been found

The lack of success thus far in finding chemical or biological weapons—even the most strident proponents of the war no longer expect to find any nuclear weapons—is increasingly a problem for the United States. As Scott Ritter, former United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) arms inspector, wrote:

What if it turns out that Iraq was, in fact, disarmed? What if it transpires that the UN weapons inspectors had succeeded in their mandate, and that the Iraqi government had complied with its obligation? The consequences and ramifications of such a finding are many, and few are trivial.³⁸

Even if coalition forces find evidence of Iraqi chemical and biological weapons, they will face a credibility problem. An article in the *Washington Post* quotes Jay Davis, who led the Defense Threat Reduction Agency until 2001:

A very important political component is if you find these things, how do you establish the proof of that to the satisfaction of 35 foreign ministries and those of you in the media? A large number of conspiracy theorists all over the world will say the US government has planted all that stuff.³⁹

And similar concerns were expressed by British Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, who called for any discovery of weapons to be verified by an independent body:

I think it is important that we have an objective source of verification. Whether that should be UNMOVIC, which wasn't particularly successful in its time in Iraq, or whether it should

³⁶ Peter Beaumont, Antony Barnett and Gaby Hinsliff, "Iraqi mobile labs nothing to do with germ warfare, report finds", *The Observer*, 15 June 2003.

³⁷ *New Intelligence Report Does Not Replace the Need for Independent International Inspections of Suspect Iraqi Biological Weapons Trailers*, ISIS Issue Brief, 28 May 2003, <http://isis-online.org>.

³⁸ Scott Ritter, "Missing Arms Cast Doubt On War", *Long Island Newsday*, 16 April 2003.

³⁹ Gellman, Op.cit.

be some other international body or some other country that has a tried and tested reputation for objectivity in this area, I think we are still looking at it.⁴⁰

Britain has considered asking impartial countries such as Sweden or Switzerland to verify any banned items uncovered by US or UK forces, but it would be more appropriate to facilitate the return of UNMOVIC to Iraq.

The Prime Minister has remained confident that evidence of Iraqi WMD would be found, and has even hinted that some of the evidence has already been accumulated. In a television interview at a Russia-European Union summit at the end of May, Tony Blair said that he had already seen plenty of information that his critics had not, but would in due course:

“Over the coming weeks and months we will assemble this evidence and then we will give it to people... I have no doubt whatever that the evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction will be there. Those people who are sitting there saying ' Oh it is all going to be proved to be a great big fib got out by the security services, there will be no weapons of mass destruction' , just wait and have a little patience. I certainly do know some of the stuff that has already been accumulated...which is not yet public but what we are going to do is assemble that evidence and present it properly.”⁴¹

- **If Downing Street has, as was claimed by the Prime Minister at the end of May, as yet unpublished evidence of Iraqi WMD this should be published without delay.**
- **Continued instability in Iraq is undoubtedly making it difficult for US teams to conduct systematic surveys and careful testing. However, the conduct of the war suggests that Iraq probably had no useable WMD and posed no threat outside its borders. Most analysts had predicted that Saddam Hussein would use such weapons if his regime faced collapse, but no such weapons were used, suggesting either unprecedented restraint (possibly because of the threat of being charged with war crimes) or confirmation that he lacked the weapons or an effective delivery capability.**
- **Despite the doubts raised, UNMOVIC was relatively successful in Iraq, and a return of the UN inspectors would confer some much needed legitimacy to the post-conflict search for weapons, and also help to re-engage the wider international community in the reconstruction of a post-Saddam Iraq. UNMOVIC should also be given the task of on-going monitoring in Iraq once the ‘coalition’ military forces have left in order to ensure that any new Iraqi government complies with its disarmament obligations.**
- **The fact that US and UK officials are now indicating that the search process could take up to a year to complete is ironic. Before the war began, UNMOVIC said it could wrap up inspections in a few months.**
- **The British Government should also put its weight behind establishing a broader mandate within UNMOVIC as suggested by Hans Blix.⁴² Over the years, UNMOVIC has acquired much experience in the verification and inspection of biological weapons and missiles as well as chemical weapons, but only in Iraq. It has scientific cadres who are trained and could be mobilised to provide the Security Council with a capability for ad hoc inspections and monitoring, whenever this might be needed.**

⁴⁰ Quoted in Rory McCarthy, Nicholas Watt and Julian Borger, ‘Saddam’s half-brother in custody, US says’, *The Guardian*, 14 April 2003.

⁴¹ Mike Peacock, “Blair Says Iraq Weapons Secrets Will Be Publicized”, Reuters, 31 May 2003.

⁴² Hans Blix, “Let Us Inspect Everywhere”, *Wall Street Journal*, 16 May 2003.

Were the missing weapons destroyed or moved out of Iraq prior to the invasion?

There are reports from individual scientists that Iraq destroyed chemical weapons and biological warfare equipment only days before the war began. Reportedly the scientist led Americans to a supply of material that proved to be the building blocks of illegal weapons, which he claimed to have buried as evidence of Iraq's illicit weapons programmes.⁴³ However, these reports have not yet been substantiated by independent evidence and have been the focus of much debate in the US media.⁴⁴

- **It is unlikely that weapons were destroyed or moved out of Iraq immediately prior to the invasion. The logistical problems of transporting or destroying large stocks of chemical and biological weapons just days before the US-led invasion are likely to have precluded this as a realistic option, although there is a real danger that in the post-war chaos and looting that some WMD materials may have been diverted out of Iraq (as was predicted by at least one analyst prior to the war⁴⁵).**

Were the weapons destroyed in the bombing campaign or stolen by looters?

Scores of suspect sites, industrial complexes and offices have been stripped of valuable documents and equipment. Investigations at the Qa Qaa facility, for example, have been hampered by the failure to secure it from looters. For instance, the experts found manuals that came with two drying ovens imported from Germany, equipment that can be used to culture viruses and bacteria for weapons. But the ovens themselves were gone by the time the specialists arrived.⁴⁶

- **The destruction of weapons by the bombing campaign is only a semi-plausible explanation (at best) for the failure to find ANY illicit weapons that had been identified so confidently prior to the war**

Were the missing weapons destroyed many years ago?

Claims that Iraq destroyed some illicit chemical and biological weapons in the 1990s – an explanation that failed to convince the UN inspectors and British and American intelligence officials prior to the invasion – are also being given greater credence in current US administration briefings.⁴⁷ There was very little reporting of this speculation prior to the war, however.

One exception was an exclusive report largely ignored by the rest of the US and UK media at the time. In early March, *Newsweek* reported that Hussein Kamel, the highest-ranking Iraqi official ever to defect from Saddam Hussein's inner circle, told CIA and British intelligence officers and UN inspectors in the summer of 1995 that after the gulf war, Iraq destroyed all its chemical and biological weapons stocks and the missiles to deliver them. The UN inspectors allegedly covered up Kamel's revelations for two reasons: Saddam did not know how much Kamel had revealed; and the inspectors hoped to bluff Saddam into disclosing still more. Iraq

⁴³ Judith Miller, "Illicit Arms Kept Till Eve of War, an Iraqi Scientist Is Said to Assert," *New York Times*, 21 April 2003.

⁴⁴ . See, for example: Howard Kurtz, "Times Battle Over Iraqi Weapons," *Washington Post*, 26 May 2003; Page C1; Jack Shafer, "Reassessing Miller: U.S. intelligence on Iraq' s WMD deserves a second look. So does the reporting of the *New York Times'* Judith Miller." *SLATE*, <http://slate.msn.com/id/2083736/>; and Eli J. Lake, "CIA report slams Pentagon' s favoritraqi," *UPI* , 8 April 2003, <http://www.upi.com/view.cfm?StoryID=20030407-055713-8345r>.

⁴⁵ Jonathan B. Tucker, "Can We Find The Weapons?," *Washington Post*, 14 March 2003, pA27.

⁴⁶ "Tests rule out suspect bio-labs," *CNN*, 15 April 2003.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Ken Fireman, "Finding No Arms Test U.S. Esteem", *Long Island Newsday*, 28 April 2003.

has never shown the documentation to support Kamel's story, but the defector's tale raises questions about whether the stockpiles attributed to Iraq still existed prior to the war.⁴⁸

Other *post facto* (but still unconfirmed) reports, based on recent interviews with a leading Iraqi scientist, Nassir Hindawi, suggest that Iraq's biological weapons programme may have been shut down as a result of the economic sanctions in the 1990s.⁴⁹

- **There are strong grounds for believing that the main reason that the US and British forces have been unable to find chemical and biological weapons in Iraq is because the vast majority, if not all, of these weapons were destroyed by a combination of the first Gulf War, 12 years of punishing sanctions and the successful destruction of weapons and materials by UN inspectors from 1991-98.**
- **Reports suggesting that, Iraq may have concentrated on dual-use programmes in recent years⁵⁰ - putting chemical and biological production equipment within commercial facilities so that it would not be discovered but could be used "on demand" or "just in time" – seem plausible enough, but are hardly the imminent threat to the US, UK and the rest of the world that justified the decision to go to war.**

Conclusion – Was the WMD threat from Iraq overstated by the UK and US governments?

The US

Although it is still too soon to be drawing any final conclusions, reports started to emerge in the US media in mid April 2003 that the US intelligence community widely misjudged the Iraqi weapons programme and was seeking to lower expectations at what might be found. Some senior officials began to emphasize the need to find a paper trail and testimony that pointed to the Hussein regime's capability and intent to develop chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons, as opposed to a readily usable stockpile of weapons.⁵¹

Pressure applied to intelligence community

Anecdotal evidence of pressure being applied to the intelligence community has also come to the fore. As John Prados, a historian of the intelligence community wrote:

What is clear from intelligence reporting is that until about 1998 the CIA was fairly comfortable with its assessments on Iraq, but from that time on the agency gradually buckled under the weight of pressures to adopt alarmist views. In fact, the looming threat of the day—Iran—has gradually been eclipsed even though it, like North Korea, had—and has—more questionable and more highly developed programs in several areas than had Iraq.⁵²

Prados also elaborated further on June 10:

a leaked passage of a September 2002 report from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) -- the kind of report used to plan military operations -- conceded that there was "no reliable information" on either the location of Iraqi chemical and biological weapons facilities or "on whether Iraq is producing and stockpiling chemical weapons" at all.

⁴⁸ "The Defector's Secrets", *Newsweek*, 3 March 2003.

⁴⁹ "Iraqi scientist: Sanctions killed germ war programme", CNN, 30 April 2003.

⁵⁰ Walter Pincus, 'Weapons Linked to 'Dual-Use' Facilities in Iraq', *Washington Post*, 2 June 2003, p. 14.

⁵¹ Bryan Bender "Pressure to find weapons mounts," *Boston Globe*, 17 April 2003, p. A1.

⁵² John Prados, "Iraq: A necessary war?," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May/June 2003, Volume 59, No. 3, pp. 26-33.

The DIA, which works for the Pentagon, usually takes a more extreme view of foreign military threats than CIA. So, if there was evidence of an Iraqi weapons infrastructure it would certainly have been articulated in a DIA document.

Instead, the DIA information is consistent with the CIA' s reports to Congress (up until September of 2001) which outlined Iraq' s desire to reconstitute a weapons infrastructure but did not declare there was a clear and present threat.⁵³

A recent article in the *New Yorker* reported that analysts and advisers in the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans rivalled both the CIA and the Pentagon's own Defense Intelligence Agency as President Bush's main source of intelligence regarding Iraq's possible possession of weapons of mass destruction.⁵⁴ And it is also worth noting that both Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, have a long record of questioning the assumptions, methods and conclusions of the CIA.⁵⁵

It has also been revealed that Vice President Cheney and his most senior aide, chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, made multiple trips to the CIA to question analysts studying Iraq' s weapons programmes and alleged links to al Qaeda, creating an environment in which some analysts felt they were being pressured to make their assessments fit with the Bush administration' s policy objectives.⁵⁶

Indeed, the CIA has begun a review to try to determine whether the American intelligence community erred in its pre-war assessments of Saddam Hussein' s government and Iraq' s weapons programmes.⁵⁷

Reliance on Iraqi defectors

An over-reliance on intelligence from Iraqi defectors may be another problem, as indicated by David Albright, a former UNSCOM inspector:

There seemed to be in the last couple of years more of a reliance on human defectors and the INC produced a lot of them. We had been reviewing INC defector information for years and often found it deeply flawed. And we knew that a lot of those people and they do have an agenda. It was regime change, very much opposed to inspections because inspections work, no regime change, and they skewed a lot of information. We would see that when we evaluate their information. Some would be almost ludicrous technically.⁵⁸

TIME magazine has interviewed several dozen current and former intelligence officials and experts at the Pentagon and CIA and on Capitol Hill in recent weeks to try to understand how the public version of the intelligence got so far ahead of the evidence. The reporting suggests three factors were at play: treating the worst-case scenario as fact; glossing over ambiguities; and the fudging of mistakes. For example, after it became known that the British intelligence report on Iraqi uranium procurement from Niger was revealed to be bogus, rather than withdraw the charge, the White House claimed instead that Bush omitted any reference to Niger because reports that Saddam had sought uranium had come, an official explained, "from more than one country and more than one source". The other nation, if it exists, has yet

⁵³ John Prados, "Hoodwinked," TomPaine.com, 10 June 2003, <http://www.TomPaine.com/feature2.cfm/ID/8035>.

⁵⁴ Seymour M. Hersh, " Selective Intelligence: Donald Rumsfeld has his own special sources. Are they reliable?," *New Yorker*, 12 May 2003, http://www.newyorker.com/printable/?fact/030512fa_fact. See also news transcript from the US Department of Defense, DoD News Briefing, Douglas J. Feith, USD (Policy), 4 June 2003 - 8:38 a.m. EDT, <http://defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030604-0248.html>.

⁵⁵ Michael Duffy, "Weapons Of Mass Disappearance: The war in Iraq was based largely on intelligence about banned arms that still haven' t been found. Was America' s spy craft wrong or manipulated?" *Time* 9 June 2003 , p. 28.

⁵⁶ Walter Pincus and Dana Priest, "Analysts Cite Pressure on Iraq Judgments: Cheney, Aide ' Sent Signals," Senior Official Says," *Washington Post*, 5 June 2003; p. A1.

⁵⁷ James Risen, "C.I.A. Studying Prewar Reports On Iraqi Threat," *New York Times* 22 May 2003.

⁵⁸ "Where Are the Weapons?," Segment of *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, 29 May 2003, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/jan-june03/wmd_5-29.html.

to be named, but the Senate Intelligence Committee has asked the CIA for an investigation.⁵⁹

- **Final conclusions about the reliability of US intelligence on Iraqi's WMD programme and the role of senior figures in the US Administration in interpreting and disseminating that evidence will need to be deferred until further information becomes available, hopefully as a result of the planned oversight hearings by Congress. However, on information currently in the public domain, it appears that the US administration hyped the intelligence, drawing the most alarming conclusions from the available information in a push for war to oust Saddam Hussein.**

The UK

In recent weeks, the Prime Minister's former Cabinet colleagues, Clare Short and Robin Cook, have suggested that the evidence presented in the run up to the conflict was misleading or worst deliberately deceiving. Blair refuted this stating:

I stand absolutely 100% behind the evidence, based on intelligence, that we presented to people... the idea that we doctored intelligence reports in order to invent some notion about a 45 minute capability of delivering weapons of mass destruction, the idea that we doctored such intelligence is completely and totally false. Every single piece of intelligence that we presented was cleared very properly by the Joint Intelligence Committee.⁶⁰

However, there are four crucial questions that remain to be clarified:

1. Did Downing Street ask the joint intelligence committee (JIC) to add to, or change the wording of, the September 2002 dossier?

The dossier contains four references to the claim that Iraq could deploy chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes of an order to do so. It has been claimed that these were inserted at Downing Street's request. It has also been reported that Alastair Campbell and John Scarlett, chairman of the JIC, spent considerable time discussing what should go into the dossier, and that it may have been "sexed up" at the former's request. The Government has dismissed both allegations as the work of "rogue elements" in the intelligence agencies. However, a comparison between what Downing Street wanted and what the intelligence agencies preferred would be telling - and publication of the minutes of the meetings between Campbell and Scarlett would be one way of helping to resolve this question.

2. Why did the government fail to publish a promised first dossier in March 2002?

Allegations have arisen that Downing Street scrapped a dossier on Iraq drawn up by intelligence officials because it failed to establish that Saddam Hussein posed a growing threat. The six-page document was allegedly produced in March last year by staff working for the joint intelligence committee using material supplied by MI6 and the Ministry of Defence. It was said to have been written six months before the release of the governments controversial 50-page dossier, but was never published.⁶¹

3. Who was responsible for the "dodgy dossier" published by Downing Street in February 2003?

In its Annual Report published on 10 June, the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) was heavily critical of the February dossier:

⁵⁹ Michael Duffy, "Weapons of Mass Disappearance", *Time*, 9 June 2003, p. 28

⁶⁰ Evian G8 statement, 02/06/03

⁶¹ Nicholas Rufford and Nick Fielding, "No 10 Shelved 'No Threat' File On Saddam", *Sunday Times*, 8 June 2003.

In September 2002 some intelligence was declassified and used to produce a dossier on the Iraqi WMD programme. The Agencies were fully consulted in the production of the dossier, which was assembled by the Assessments Staff, endorsed by the JIC and issued by the Prime Minister. The Committee supports the responsible use of intelligence and material collected by the Agencies to inform the public on matters such as these.

We believe that material produced by the Agencies can be used in publications and attributed appropriately, but it is imperative that the Agencies are consulted before any of their material is published. This process was not followed when a second document was produced in February 2003. Although the document did contain some intelligence derived material it was not clearly attributed or highlighted amongst the other material, nor was it checked with the Agency providing the intelligence or cleared by the JIC prior to publication. We have been assured that systems have now been put in place to ensure that this cannot happen again, in that the JIC Chairman endorses any material on behalf of the intelligence community prior to publication.⁶²

Downing Street has apologised for failing to admit that much of the dossier came from published academic sources, including an article by a Californian PhD student. But the question remains, who authorised its release in this format, and why?

Some of the answers may well surface in the forthcoming ISC inquiry:

It is impossible at the present moment to make any definitive statements about the role of intelligence and the situation in Iraq. Whilst the Committee has been briefed, we intend to examine in more detail the intelligence and assessments available and their use. We will report when our inquiries have been completed.⁶³

4. Did the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, have concerns similar to those of his US counterpart, Colin Powell, about intelligence claims?

The Foreign Secretary denies he expressed doubts to Powell about the quality of intelligence prior to the crucial UN Security Council meeting on 5 February. Yet Powell had doubts of his own about some of the questionable intelligence on Iraq's weapons programme and was in constant communication with the Foreign Secretary during this period.⁶⁴

Indeed, the Foreign Secretary has since conceded that hard evidence might never be uncovered. In a BBC radio interview on 14 May, he said that uncovering Iraq's WMD was not "crucially important".⁶⁵ This is a stark change from the Foreign Secretary's earlier remarks that "the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime has become necessary to eradicate the threat from his programmes to develop weapons of mass destruction".⁶⁶

- **Many people who questioned the war against Iraq on the grounds that the doctrine of preemption is a flawed and dangerous instrument of foreign policy, did take at face value the evidence presented by the British government that Saddam Hussein possessed unconventional munitions, long-range missiles or missile parts, bulk stores of chemical or biological warfare agents or enrichment technology for the core of a nuclear weapons programme. Although the British Government cited all those components specifically as part of Iraq's concealed arsenal, to date no evidence to support any of these claims has been uncovered in post-war Iraq.**

⁶² *Intelligence and Security Committee Annual Report 2002–2003*, Chairman: The Rt. Hon. Ann Taylor, MP, Intelligence Services Act 1994, Chapter 13, Cm 5837, paras 81-82. Available at: <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/reports/intelligence/pdf/annualir0203.pdf>.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, para 83.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Bruce B. Auster, Mark Mazzetti and Edward T. Pound, "Truth and Consequences", *U.S. News & World Report*, 9 June 2003.

⁶⁵ The BBC Today Programme, 14 June 2003.

⁶⁶ Speech at Newspaper Society Lunch, 2 April 2003.

- **It is important to establish whether the threat was either genuinely miscalculated or deliberately exaggerated. In either case, unless independent evidence to the contrary arises, it would appear that the biological and chemical agents in the country did not present a realistic threat to the UK that could not be dealt with by vigorous international inspection.**
- **The Inquiry by the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) is welcome, but unlikely to be sufficient. The ISC is appointed by and answerable to the Prime Minister, and reports are censored before they are published. The magnitude of the issue involved – the decision to go to war – requires an independent judicial inquiry. The magnitude of the issue involved – the decision to go to war – requires an independent judicial inquiry. Such an inquiry is also important because with the doctrine of pre-emption seemingly accepted by the British Government and with bellicose noises now being made by the US Administration towards Iran, it is possible that future wars will be fought on the basis of intelligence claims about possession of WMD. It is vital therefore to scrutinise the intelligence gathering and claims that led to the Iraq war. It took the Scott Inquiry to uncover the truth over the UK's role in arming Iraq; it may be that a similar inquiry is necessary to uncover the truth surrounding the disarming of Iraq.**

Appendix 1: A chronology of key events in Iraq between the departure of UNMOVIC in 1998 and to date

1998 - 20-23 February- Iraq signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations on February 23, 1998. Iraq pledges to accept all relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate fully with UNSCOM and the IAEA, and to grant to UNSCOM and the IAEA "immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access" for their inspections.

1998 - 31 October - Iraq ends all forms of cooperation with the UN Special Commission to Oversee the Destruction of Iraq' s Weapons of Mas Destruction (UNSCOM).

1998 - 16-19 December - After UN staff are evacuated from Baghdad, the U.S. and U.K. launch a bombing campaign, "Operation Desert Fox," to destroy Iraq' s nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs.

1999 - 8 January- Clinton Administration officials admit monitoring coded radio communications of Saddam Hussein' s security forces, using equipment secretly installed by UN arms inspectors.

1999 - 17 December - UNSC Resolution 1284 creates the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) to replace UNSCOM. Iraq rejects the resolution.

2000 - November - Iraq rejects new weapons inspections proposals.

2000 - December - Iraq temporarily halts oil exports after the UN rejects Iraq' s request that buyers pay a 50-cent-a-barrel surcharge into an Iraqi bank account not controlled by the UN.

2001 - February - U.S. and British aircraft attack two communications and control facilities outside Baghdad. Iraq has been actively, but unsuccessfully, trying to shoot down allied planes patrolling the no-fly zones since December 1998.

2001 - 20 September - British and U.S. jets go on a bombing raid against surface-to-air missile batteries in southern Iraq. A Ministry of Defence official denies any connection to the September 11 attacks.

2001 - 19 November - John Bolton, the under-secretary for arms control and international security, tells an arms conference in Geneva that President Saddam Hussein may have covertly developed biological weapons in the past three years.

2002 - January- In his State of the Union address, President Bush refers to Iraq as part of the "axis of evil", alongside North Korea and Iran

2002 - February- Responding to anti-aircraft fire, the U.S. and Britain strike Iraq with bombs in the northeast

2002 - 14 May – The UN introduces ' smart sanctions' targeted at military equipment, to replace existing sanctions. The UN agrees to long-awaited smart sanctions for Iraq.

2002 - 5 July - In talks with UN Secretary General, Iraq rejects weapons inspections proposals.

2002 - 2 August- In a letter to the UN Secretary General, Iraq invites the UN chief weapons inspector to Baghdad.

2002 - 19 August - UN Secretary General rejects Iraq' s proposal as the "wrong work program" but renews offer to facilitate the return of inspectors in accordance with UNSC resolution 1284, passed in 1999. The resolution calls for UNMOVIC inspectors to spend 60 days conducting active inspections to determine what has changed since U.N. weapons inspectors were expelled in 1998 and what needs to be done for Iraq to be rid of all chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

2002 - 12 September- President Bush addresses the UN to present the case for war against Iraq.

2002 - 16 September - Iraq accepts ' unconditional' ~~turn~~ return of UN inspectors.

2002 - 24 September- Britain publishes dossier saying Iraq could produce a nuclear weapon within one or two years, if it obtains fissile material and other components from abroad.

2002 - 30 September- UN negotiators and an Iraqi delegation meet in Vienna for three days of talks to agree to terms for resuming weapons inspections.

2002 - 8 November- UN Security Council votes unanimously to back a US-British resolution requiring Iraq to reinstate weapons inspectors after a four year absence.

2002 - 13 November- President Saddam sends a letter to the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, accepting the UN resolution.

2002 - 27 November- The weapons inspectors start inspections.

2002 - 12 December- Iraqi officials in Baghdad present the UN with a 12,000 page dossier disclosing Iraq' s programs for weapons of mass destruction

2003 March - Chief weapons inspector Hans Blix reports that Iraq has accelerated its cooperation but says inspectors need more time to verify Iraq' s compliance.

2003 17 March - UK' s ambassador to the UN says the diplomatic process on Iraq has ended; arms inspectors evacuate; US President George W Bush gives Saddam Hussein and his sons 48 hours to leave Iraq or face war.

2003 20 March - American missiles hit targets in Baghdad, marking the start of a US-led campaign to topple Saddam Hussein. In the following days US and British ground troops enter Iraq from the south.

2003 9 April - US forces advance into central Baghdad. Saddam Hussein' s grip on the city is broken. In the following days Kurdish fighters and US forces take control of the northern cities of Kirkuk and Mosul. There is widespread looting in the capital and other cities.

2003 May - UN Security Council approves resolution backing the US-led administration in Iraq and the lifting of economic sanctions. US administrator abolishes the Baath Party and institutions of the former regime.

Source: http://academic3.american.edu/~mertus/timeline_on_iraq.htm

Appendix 2: Relevant excerpts from UNMOVIC Report: Unresolved Disarmament Issues, 6 March 2003

- According to Iraqi authorities, instructions were given to all MIC [Military Industrial Complex] establishments that they were to be evacuated of “*all dangerous materials and essential assets*” by 15 January 1991. The Gulf War started two days later. It would appear that most WMD programmemes were halted during the war, although Iraq has acknowledged that the diversion of aircraft fuel drop tanks in to spray tanks for BW agents such as anthrax, did continue throughout the war (p. 8)
- By its design and technical parameters, the R-400 bombs could be quite suitable as a delivery means for some chemical warfare agents, but less so for the proper aerosolization of biological agents. With an impact fuse the R-400 could have been effective for delivering a Sarin weapon; fitted with an air burst fuse it could have been suitable for delivering persistent agents, such as VX and Mustard. With respect to biological agents, the relatively large volume of liquid agents together with the small burster tube and thick bomb walls means that much of the agents would not be dispersed as respirable particles but as relatively large droplets (p. 47)
- According to documents discovered by UNSCOM in Iraq, the purity of Sarin-type agents produced by Iraq were on level below 60%, and dropped below Iraq’s established quality control acceptance level of 40% by purity some 3 to 12 months after production (p. 72)
- There is no evidence that any bulk Sarin-type agents remain in Iraq – gaps in accounting of these agents of these agents are related to Sarin-type agents weaponized in rocket warheads and aerial bombs. Based on the documentation found by UNSCOM during inspections in Iraq, Sarin-type agents produced by Iraq were largely of low quality and as such, degraded shortly after production. Therefore, with respect to the unaccounted for weaponized Sarin-type agents, it is unlikely that they would still be viable today (p. 73)
- To UNMOVIC’s knowledge, the only precursors for Sarin-type agent production that Iraq may have been may have been capable of producing indigenously (although no such production has been declared) were cyclohexanol and thionyl chloride, as the starting materials for production of these precursors are available in Iraq. While the specific chemical process equipment required to construct such plants could be obtained by removing them from various facilities in Iraq, to UNMOVIC’s knowledge, there is no such plant. Therefore, unless precursors remain from Iraq’s CW programme before the Gulf War, or are clandestinely acquired since then, Iraq would not possess all of the chemical required to produce Sarin-type agents. Iraq would also need to use “corrosion resistant” process equipment for some processes involved in this production sequence. The bottleneck for Sarin-type agents would then be the limited amount of such process equipment available to Iraq.

Assuming improvements in its quality control and process to produce the agent, it is possible that Iraq today has the capability to produce Sarin-type agents of a storable quality. If not, Iraq might instead produce readily storable precursors such as MPC, which can be used for Sarin production when needed. However, no evidence of precursors has so far been observed by UNMOVIC inspection teams. (p. 74)

- There is much evidence, including documents provided by Iraq and information collected by UNSCOM, to suggest that most quantities of Mustard remaining in 1991, as declared by Iraq, were destroyed under UNSCOM supervision. The remaining gaps are related to the accounting for Mustard filled aerial bombs and artillery projectiles. There are 550 Mustard filled shells and up to 450 Mustard filled aerial bombs unaccounted for since 1998. The mustard filled shells account for a couple of tonnes of agents while the aerial bombs account for approximately 70 tonnes. According to an investigation made by the Iraqi "Depot Inspection Commission", the results of which were reported to UNMOVIC in March 2003, the discrepancy in the accounting for the mustard filled shells could be explained by the fact that Iraq had based its accounting on approximations. (p. 76)

Iraq has trouble storing Sarin/Cyclosarin (GB and GF) for long periods of time – most of the agent found by UNSCOM after the Gulf War was of low quality. The quality of Sarin that Iraq produced was such that it would drop to below 40% purity (Iraq's minimum acceptance purity for filling munitions with the agent) 3 to 12 months after production. The same problem would have been encountered with Soman.

- On the other hand, it seems unlikely that significant undeclared quantities of botulinum toxin could have been produced, based on the quantity of media unaccounted for. Thus the estimate based solely on fermenter availability, that an additional 7,000 litres of botulinum toxin could have been produced is not supported i.e. the limiting factor for additional botulinum toxin production is not fermenter availability but media (p.125)