

## Fixing the intelligence and facts?

Blair's assertions about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, which he made in the September 2002 Dossier, not to mention Scarlett's equivocation about his own responsibility for the accuracy of these claims as chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee with overall responsibility for the Dossier, are confounded by Dr Brian Jones. From 1987, when he joined the Defence Intelligence Staff of the Ministry of Defence, Dr Jones led efforts on the analysis and assessment of intelligence on foreign chemical and biological weapons programmes. From 1996, his responsibilities expanded to include nuclear weapons programmes. His expertise was central to the preparations of what came to be called *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government*, the dossier published with a foreword by Prime Minister Tony Blair on 24 September 2002.

As late as 20 September 2002, four days prior to publication, Dr Jones was still taking issue with two explicit claims in the Prime Minister's Foreword to the draft Dossier. He set them out in a memo to the Deputy Chief of Defence Intelligence, who was one of his organisation's three representatives on the Joint Intelligence Committee. He wrote:

‘ 2. a . Prime Minister's Foreword, 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph states:

“What I believe the assessed intelligence has established beyond doubt is that Saddam has continued to produce chemical and biological weapons ...”

I acknowledge that in this statement the Prime Minister will be expressing his own “belief” about what the assessed intelligence has established. What I wish to record is that based on the intelligence available to me it has NOT established beyond doubt that Saddam has continued to produce chemical [and biological] weapons.

2. b . Prime Minister's Foreword, 8<sup>th</sup> paragraph states:

“And the document discloses that his military planning allows for some of tile [the] WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them”. A similar statement appears in the Dossier. This is reported as fact whereas the intelligence comes from a single source. In my view the intelligence warrants no stronger a statement than “intelligence suggest that military planning allows ...”

Where did this unreliable information come from? It was contained in a formal intelligence report issued by the Secret Intelligence Service. Dr Jones noted in a record he compiled in 2003 that:

‘The second of the two JIC assessments on Iraq that was commissioned in August did not go to the Committee for approval until Wednesday 4 September,

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the day after Blair called for the dossier. Five days earlier, late on Friday 30 August MI6 had issued new top secret intelligence reports that related to the JIC paper. With a weekend intervening most of those to whom they were distributed would not have seen them until Monday 2 September. This was too late for the information in them to be properly digested and for any consequential changes to be made to the draft JIC paper which the Committee considered. During discussion of that draft, 'C' drew the attention of his colleagues to the new intelligence reports from his Service and suggested there was new information in them that should be incorporated in the assessment. The Assessment Staff was asked to deal with this before the paper was issued.'

Dr Jones goes on to note that MI6's description of the source of the new intelligence 'was not quite as clear as we would normally have expected'. His staff had asked MI6 about it but, 'unusually, they had not received the clear guidance they had hoped for'. Not surprisingly, the Defence Intelligence experts decided they had to assume this was an 'unproven' source. Hence the doubts about Mr Blair's assertions in his Foreword to the Dossier which Dr Jones recorded in his memos to some members of the Joint Intelligence Committee.

We have seen how the head of MI6, Sir Richard Dearlove or 'C', had pressed for the inclusion of this dubious information in the Joint Intelligence Committee's Assessment, and hence in the Government's Dossier. Defence Intelligence Staff had not been allowed to see the relevant 'compartmentalised' intelligence. On 23 July 2002, at the Prime Minister's meeting in Downing Street, 'C' reported that 'Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy.'

Were the intelligence and facts now being 'fixed' in London, as well?

At the Iraq Inquiry on 9 December 2009, Committee member Sir Roderic Lyne asked Sir John Scarlett, who had chaired the Joint Intelligence Committee during 2002 prior to succeeding Dearlove as head of MI6, if he was aware of Dr Jones' reservations. Scarlett simply replied 'no'. There was no follow up from the members of the Chilcot Committee at that time. Will these central questions be properly probed?

*Tony Simpson*