

Dossier exaggerated the case for Iraq war

UK WMD intelligence chief tells Hutton enquiry

THE INDEPENDENT, London

Tony Blair's case for invading Iraq was in tatters Wednesday night after damning public criticism by two senior intelligence officials of the way the September weapons dossier was manipulated by government "spin merchants".

Brian Jones, who headed the intelligence department dedicated to investigating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme, told the Hutton inquiry there was deep disquiet among his colleagues about the way significant evidence they had supplied for the dossier was altered. He said evidence in the dossier was "over-eggged", the language was too strong and there were misgivings over the now-infamous claim that Iraq could launch weapons of mass destruction in 45 minutes.

The other official, identified to the Hutton inquiry as "Mr A", and described as the country's foremost authority on chemical warfare, disclosed how a claim in the dossier about chemical weapons was inserted despite protests from him and other experts. He wrote in an e-mail to David Kelly, whose apparent suicide is being examined at the inquiry, that the dossier would become "tomorrow's chip wrappers". Mr A told the inquiry: "The perception was that the dossier had been round the houses several times in order to find a form of words that would strengthen certain political objectives."

The inquiry was told that the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which compiled the dossier, did not even meet to discuss the final draft of the document before John Scarlett, the committee's chairman, signed it off. Such was the level of unhappiness about alleged political interference that Dr Jones wrote a memo to his superiors in the Defence

Intelligence Staff listing his concerns a few days before the dossier was published on September 24.

Dr Jones, who recently retired, told the inquiry: "The impression I had was that on September 19 the shutters were coming down on this particular paper. The discussion and argument had been concluded. It was an impression I had at the time that our reservations about the dossier were not being reflected in the final version."

Some of his staff were "concerned and unhappy" about "all aspects" of the dossier, Dr Jones said. The chief chemical authority on the team - not Mr A - had particularly strong reservations. "They were really about the tendency in certain areas, from his point of view, to shall we say, over-egg certain assessments, particularly in relation to the production of chemical weapons," he said. Describing himself as "probably the most senior and experienced intelligence official working on WMD" - a claim not challenged by the Ministry of Defence - he stressed the disquiet felt about the way information was supplied by his department had been used for the sake of political expediency.

Dr Jones's use of the phrase "over-egg" was yet another addition to the ever-growing lexicon of the inquiry, prompting comparisons with the expression that has dominated proceedings so far: "sexed-up". Wednesday's criticism from the intelligence community reinforced the impression that the Hutton inquiry has turned into quicksand for Downing Street. It also backed the BBC's original story about disquiet in the intelligence community about the dossier.

Dr Jones maintained that important claims made in the document, and repeated by Blair and his ministers, were fundamentally flawed.

He pointed out the weaknesses in the claim that Saddam Hussein could launch chemical and biological attacks within 45 minutes. He said that while the JIC insisted that the 45-minute claim came from a reliable agent, he had only obtained the information from a second-hand source in Iraq. He said the source did not appear to "know very much about it" and may have been "trying to influence and not inform" the British officials.

Reservations and proposed amendments were discussed at a meeting in the department on September 19, which Dr Kelly had attended along with Mr A.

Giving evidence by audio-link, Mr A, who is attached to the counter-proliferation and arms control department at the MoD, said there had been unhappiness at the meeting that the government had claimed in a draft of the dossier that there was great concern that Iraq was manufacturing phosphene for chemical weapons at a compound. The allegation was false and he advised that it should be changed. But his recommendation was ignored and he said that he was not surprised when Iraqi authorities took journalists to visit the compound after the dossier's publication.

That day, Mr A sent an e-mail to Dr Kelly saying he agreed with the plant manager, who was reported as saying it was "a pretty stupid mistake by the British". He added: "They [the government] were grasping at straws... Another example... that you and I should have been more involved in this than the spin merchants... Let's hope it turns into tomorrow's chip wrappers."



PHOTO: STAR

The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leaders meet at the CPB office yesterday to discuss possibilities of cooperation between the two left parties.

US draft on Iraq

FROM PAGE 12

The war. "Now is the time to look forward, and that can only happen if the United Nations can take responsibility for the political process," Schroeder said.

Schroeder and Chirac were both ardent opponents of the war in Iraq, and both are particularly adamant that the United States cede control of the political process there. They said they would coordinate their positions on the U.S. draft resolution and that they hoped that the United States would be open to changes.

Their statements dealt a blow to the proposed U.S. resolution. France is one of five permanent members of the UN Security Council, a position that gives it veto power over Council actions.

"We are naturally ready to study it in the most positive manner," Chirac said of the U.S. draft. "But we are quite far removed from what we believe is the priority objective, which is the transfer of political responsibility to an Iraqi government as quickly as possible."

The draft resolution, obtained by The Associated Press, would transform the U.S.-led military force in Iraq into a U.N.-authorized multinational force under a unified command. It would also ask the Iraqi Governing Council to cooperate with the United Nations and U.S. officials in Baghdad to produce a timetable and program for drafting a new constitution and holding democratic elections.

Key provisions in the US draft would: Call on U.N. member states to help train and equip an Iraqi police force.

Invite the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council to cooperate with

the United Nations and U.S. officials in Baghdad to produce "a timetable and program for the drafting of a new constitution for Iraq and for the holding of democratic elections."

Ask the U.N. representative in Iraq to facilitate a "national dialogue and consensus building" to promote the political transition.

Ask all U.N. member states and international and regional organizations "to accelerate the provision of substantial financial contributions to support the Iraqi reconstruction effort" and appeal to international financial institutions to take immediate steps to provide a full range of loans and other assistance.

Call on countries in the region "to prevent the transit of terrorists, arms for terrorists, and financing that would support terrorists."

Reaction from Security Council members yesterday was mixed. Hours before Schroeder and Chirac spoke, Russia sent its first signal that it might consider sending peacekeepers to Iraq as part of an international force.

"It all depends on a specific resolution. I wouldn't exclude it outright," Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov told the Interfax news agency.

Meanwhile, AFP reports from Baghdad that US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld flew into the Middle East yesterday, bowing to calls for more troops to tame Iraq, but not Americans, in line with US calls for a multinational peacekeeping force.

Rumsfeld's unannounced regional visit to meet US commanders, civilian leaders and troops comes as Kurdish security forces found 1.2 tonnes of explosives intended for three major bombings in Iraq's northern oil capital Kirkuk.

The secretary said he was seeking an assessment of the situation in Iraq which has been under US occupation since the March invasion to oust Saddam Hussein.

Rumsfeld, speaking to reporters en route to the region, gave no details of his itinerary but said he would make "multiple stops" in the US central command area of operations, which includes Iraq and Afghanistan.

He insisted US commanders believe that the estimated 140,000 US troops now in Iraq were sufficient.

"Should the total number go up for security? Yes, I think so, but I think it's going to be on the Iraqi side and on the international side more than the US side," he said.

Asked how many international troops were needed he said: "I don't know, maybe another division."

He said most of the security requirements would have to come from increasing the size of the Iraqi army and police.

The trip came as the United States said it would seek a UN mandate for an US-led multinational force in Iraq and encourage more countries to provide troops and assistance.

Paving the way for an international force, a Polish-led division assumed responsibility from US marines on Wednesday for an area of southern Iraq that includes Najaf, where Shiite leader Mohammed Baqer al-Hakim was blown to bits Friday in a car bombing that also killed 82 others.

Study shows protein injection sharply cuts appetite

REUTERS, Boston

A protein found naturally in the body could bring scientists a step closer to developing a natural and effective diet pill, a new British study said on Wednesday.

Volunteers injected with the protein PYY two hours before mealtime consumed 30 percent fewer calories when they sat down to eat, without experiencing any difference in the taste of the food or other apparent side effects.

Injections of PYY two hours before mealtime cut the appetite of fat and skinny people, and did so without affecting the taste of the food or causing other apparent side effects.

"PYY appears to be a major factor limiting appetite after meals," researchers from Hammersmith Hospital in London said in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine, where their study was published.

But it could be a while before the latest PYY research benefits consumers who are overweight - like the 59 million obese people in the United States alone.

Long-term tests have not been done, and the protein, also known as peptide YY3-36, cannot be taken in pill form because it is quickly broken down by the stomach.

Scientists would have to develop a more resilient form or discover a chemical that mimics PYY, which is released by the cells lining the intestine, travels through the blood and fools the brain into thinking that the body has been fed.

PYY is one of more than two dozen hormones known to regulate appetite and energy. Among those are ghrelin, which is released by the stomach and upper intestine and causes feelings of hunger.

'MAGIC BULLET'

Researchers had hoped that leptin, a hormone found in body fat, would help with weight loss after tests showed it helped limit hunger. But experiments showed that obese people have a resistance to leptin.

The New England Journal study, led by Rachel Batterham, found that PYY did not have the same limitation. Two hours after PYY was given intravenously, the 12 obese patients

ate 30 percent fewer calories from an all-you-could-eat buffet than they did after a salt water injection. Twelve lean volunteers ate 31 percent fewer calories.

The effect persisted for at least another 10 hours, and even after 24 hours, people in the obese group had eaten 17 percent fewer calories.

"We found that obese subjects were not resistant to the anorectic effects of PYY," the researchers concluded.

They also found that PYY levels were naturally low in obese volunteers, which may be a reason why they were overweight.

Hasina for pro-liberation political alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) chief and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for a pro-liberation political alliance to oust the Bangladesh Nationalist Party led coalition government.

"Through a fresh united move, we, the pro-liberation forces, have to root out all militant groups of the country," she said while addressing a seminar in the city.

Bangabandhu Prokoushali Parishad organised the seminar titled "Development Policy of Bangabandhu and Present Reality" to observe the 28th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She also urged all to establish secular democracy in the country and denounced the present rulers as "anti-independence forces".

The Jamaat-e-Islami, a partner of the coalition government, is expanding its 'terror network' across the country under the umbrella of alliance government, Hasina alleged.

The AL chief urged like-minded political parties, social and professional bodies to find ways to build greater unity among people with the spirit and ideology of the liberation war.

"Political vengeance of the present government is hindering country's development," she said.

Referring to the spate in criminal activities in Khagrachhari, the opposition leader said the BNP-Jamaat alliance does not believe in the peace accord and is creating unrest at Chittagong Hill Tracts area.

Dr Golam Mostafa presided over the seminar while Mazharul Islam, Santosh Gupta, Yeafes Osman and Hasanul Haq Inu spoke.

Petrobangla

FROM PAGE 12
director (finance) and general manager (operations), tried to make the union leaders understand that the US company legally and ethically was not in a position to make any such "unlawful payment".

As the unsatisfied union men showed rough attitude, the sources said, the senior officials of Petrobangla could manage them.

The sources said that the "extortion" bid came after the Unocal had turned down a previous demand for a handsome amount of money.

Senior officials at Petrobangla are upset over such a demand to a major foreign investor, that too at a negotiation meeting on gas supply from Moulvibazar-2 field.

"I'll certainly discourage foreign investors like an oil giant Unocal from making investment in the energy sector for which the country is trying hard," said a senior Petrobangla official.

Indian river-linking 3 left parties

erosion of Bangladesh land by bordering rivers.

The meeting wanted to introduce service charge to all irrigation projects, including the Teesta Dam project.

It planned to construct cross-dams in the coastal areas, especially in Noakhali and Sandwip to reclaim land.

The meeting asked the dredger department of the Water Development Board to give five of its 20 dredgers to the shipping ministry to dig rivers, especially in the confluence of the Meghna, Dakatia and Padma at Chandpur.

It would ensure smooth river transport and stop whirlpools in the rivers near Chandpur.

Asked whether they would go for common political programmes, Selim said, "We'll render support to each other's programmes. We may arrange common programmes too to protect the interests of the people in the face of rise in fundamentalism and imperialism."

Selim, Monjurul Ahsan Khan, Shahidullah Chowdhury, MM Akash, Morshed Ali, Ruhin Hossain Prince, Mahub Alam and Sazzad Zahir represented the CPB at the meetings while Hasanul Haq Inu, Jafar Sazzad, Moinuddin Khan Badal, Mir Hossain Akhter, Robiul Alam, Monsur Ahmed and Azizur Rahman represented the JSD-Inu in the meeting and Ahmedul Kabir led the GP delegation in the other meeting.

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3 left parties

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Move to tap phones

criminally off. "Manju added.

Although security agencies cannot legally eavesdrop on telephone conversations, allegations have long been there that they monitor and tap telephone calls illegally. But at present, they cannot use the information derived by such means as evidence in a court of law.

With the act amended, the intelligence agencies will be able to manoeuvre freely to listen to individual telephone calls, read e-mails and produce tapped and e-mailed messages before court as evidence.

The agencies want amendment to three sections of the telecoms act, which will put the independence of telecoms regulator Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission at stake, legal experts said.

for no fault of him.

The Bol has a one-stop-service desk at Zia International Airport to help foreign investors, but most visiting entrepreneurs are ignorant about the service as Bol has not disseminated information about the desk.

"Ignorant about the service, many investors are seen lining up in long queues, waiting for customs and immigration clearance in rooms without air-conditions. Such an experience creates a bad image about the country, which eventually affects FDI flow," Lissner said.

He said maybe one-third of the bad image is untrue, but it cannot be ruled out that corruption, poor law and order and bureaucracy are breeding image problems, hampering FDI.

Coming back to the Japanese survey, he said friendly and suggestive complaints should be received positively to remedy the situation. He urged the prime minister to direct agencies concerned to take immediate measures to improve the investment environment.

Lissner said political unrest is driving away investors. Terming the tenures of caretaker governments an example of good governance, he expressed his conviction that Bangladesh can improve governance.

Asked what steps the govern-

ment would take in response to the Japanese investors' allegations, Bol Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman said the government will hold an interministerial meeting soon to look into the problems.

About the decline in FDI flow, he said domestic demand and market competitiveness are the key to roping in investors. Domestic market is growing and if the cost of production can be kept competitive, Bangladesh will see an increase in FDI, he said.

About the statistical puzzle, he said the Bangladesh Bank should follow the Unctad method to calculate FDI flow. Although Lafarge Cement alone made a \$46 million equity investment through Credit Agricole Indosuez on May 18, the Bangladesh Bank recorded only \$17.50 million FDI during January-June, 2002, he said.

Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Wali Bhuiyan, expressing his sarcasm over the current slide in order, said: "What better investment destination a country can be where a businessman cannot be traced even after 40 days of his abduction?"

Mustafa Kamal Mujeri, visiting fellow of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, presented the annual investment report.

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