

SECTION 3.7

DEVELOPMENT OF UK STRATEGY AND OPTIONS, 1 FEBRUARY TO 7 MARCH 2003

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Introduction and key findings

1. This Section addresses the development of the UK position on Iraq between Mr Blair's meeting with President Bush on 31 January 2003, at which he sought US support for a further, "second", Security Council resolution before military action was taken, and the meeting of the Security Council on 7 March, at which the UK, US and Spain tabled a revised draft resolution stating that Iraq would have failed to take the final opportunity offered by resolution 1441 unless the Council concluded on or before 17 March that Iraq was demonstrating "full, unconditional, immediate and active co-operation" with its obligations to disarm.
2. During that time, the UK Government was pursuing both intense diplomatic negotiations with the US and other members of the Security Council about the way ahead on Iraq and a pro-active communications strategy about why Iraq had to be disarmed, if necessary by force, against the background of sharply divided opinion and constant political and public debate about the possibility of military action.
3. Development of UK strategy and options between 8 March and the start of military action overnight on 19/20 March is addressed in Section 3.8.
4. Other key developments in February and early March are addressed elsewhere in the Report, including:
 - The provision of advice by Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General, on the legal basis for military action to secure Iraq's compliance with its disarmament obligations is addressed in Section 5.
 - The planning for military operations in southern Iraq and preparations to equip the forces deployed are addressed in Sections 6.2 and 6.3 respectively.
 - UK planning and preparation for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq is addressed in Section 6.5.
 - Advice and briefings on Iraq's chemical, biological, nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities and its intentions in relation to concealing them from inspections and in response to military action are addressed in Section 4.3.

Key findings

- By the time the Security Council met on 7 March 2003 there were deep divisions within it on the way ahead on Iraq.
- Following President Bush's agreement to support a second resolution to help Mr Blair, Mr Blair and Mr Straw continued during February and early March 2003 to develop the position that Saddam Hussein was not co-operating as required by resolution 1441 (2002) and, if that situation continued, a second resolution should be adopted stating that Iraq had failed to take the final opportunity offered by the Security Council.

- On 6 February, Mr Blair said that the UK would consider military action without a further resolution only if the inspectors reported that they could not do their job and a resolution was vetoed unreasonably. The UK would not take military action without a majority in the Security Council.
- Mr Blair's proposals, on 19 February, for a side statement defining tough tests for Iraq's co-operation and a deadline of 14 March for a vote by the Security Council, were not agreed by the US.
- The initial draft of a US, UK and Spanish resolution tabled on 24 February, which simply invited the Security Council to decide that Iraq had failed to take the final opportunity offered by resolution 1441, failed to attract support.
- Throughout February, the divisions in the Security Council widened.
- France, Germany and Russia set out their common position on 10 and 24 February. Their joint memorandum of 24 February called for a programme of continued and reinforced inspections with a clear timeline and a military build-up to exert maximum pressure on Iraq to disarm.
- The reports to the Security Council by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported increasing indications of Iraqi co-operation. On 7 March, Dr Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the IAEA, reported that there was no indication that Iraq had resumed nuclear activities and that it should be able to provide the Security Council with an assessment of Iraq's activities in the near future.
- Dr Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), reported to the Security Council on 7 March that there had been an acceleration of initiatives from Iraq and, while they did not constitute immediate co-operation, they were welcome. UNMOVIC would be proposing a work programme for the Security Council's approval, based on key tasks for Iraq to address. It would take months to verify sites and items, analyse documents, interview relevant personnel and draw conclusions.
- A revised draft US, UK and Spanish resolution, tabled after the reports by Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei on 7 March and proposing a deadline of 17 March for Iraq to demonstrate full co-operation, also failed to attract support.
- China, France and Russia all stated that they did not favour a resolution authorising the use of force and that the Security Council should maintain its efforts to find a peaceful solution.
- Sir Jeremy Greenstock, UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, advised that a "side statement" with defined benchmarks for Iraqi co-operation could be needed to secure support from Mexico and Chile.
- Mr Blair told President Bush that he would need a majority of nine votes in the Security Council for Parliamentary approval for UK military action.

1 to 13 February 2003

Parliamentary debates on Iraq, 3 February 2003

5. Reporting on his visit to Washington on 31 January 2003, Mr Blair told Parliament on 3 February that Saddam Hussein was not co-operating as required by UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1441(2002) and, if that continued, a second resolution should be passed to confirm such a material breach.

6. Mr Blair continued to set the need for action against Iraq in the context of the need to be seen to enforce the will of the UN and to deter future threats.

7. Following his meeting with President Bush in Washington on 31 January 2003, Mr Blair made a statement to Parliament on Monday 3 February.¹

8. Mr Blair described Iraq as the “immediate focus of the visit” although he and President Bush had also discussed the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), Afghanistan, and global poverty and development. Mr Blair also reported that he had had meetings and discussions with other Heads of State and Government.

9. Stating that, “We are entering the final phase of a 12-year history of the disarmament of Iraq”, Mr Blair said that Saddam Hussein had “consistently flouted” 27 “separate and categorical obligations” in a series of 17 resolutions. That was why a sanctions regime had been in place, which “because of the way in which Saddam has applied it, has caused wholly unnecessary suffering for the Iraqi people”.

10. Mr Blair stated:

“Eight weeks have now passed since Saddam was given his final chance. Six hundred weeks have passed since he was given his first chance. The evidence of co-operation withheld is unmistakable. Saddam has still not answered the questions concerning thousands of missing munitions and tons of chemical and biological agents unaccounted for.”

11. Mr Blair reported the recent finds by the weapons inspectors and drew attention to the report published by No.10 the previous weekend, which made clear that Iraq had “a huge infrastructure of deception and concealment designed to prevent the inspectors from doing their job”.

12. That report, the No.10 dossier, ‘Iraq – Its Infrastructure of Concealment, Deception and Intimidation’, is addressed in Section 4.3.

¹ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 3 February 2003, columns 21-38.

13. Referring to the report by Dr Hans Blix, the Executive Chairman of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), to the Security Council on 27 January, including his comments that Iraq did not appear to have come to a genuine acceptance of the disarmament demanded, and that the discovery of chemical rocket warheads could be the “tip of an iceberg”, Mr Blair added:

“The situation therefore could not be clearer. There is a duty on Saddam to co-operate fully. At present, he is not co-operating fully. Failure to do so is a material breach of resolution 1441. Should Dr Blix continue to report Iraqi non-co-operation, a second resolution should be passed to confirm such a material breach. President Bush and I agreed that we should seek maximum support for such a resolution, provided, as ever, that seeking such a resolution is a way of resolving the issue, not delaying or avoiding dealing with it at all.”

14. Mr Blair also drew attention to the “powerful evidence of the continuing terrorist threat” which had appeared over the past few weeks. Terrorist groups were “actively seeking to use chemical or biological means to cause as much death and injury and suffering as they can”.

15. Mr Blair stated that Iraq was not alone in developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and repeated his warning that:

“... unless we take a decisive stand now as an international community, it is only a matter of time before these threats come together. That means pursuing international terrorism across the world in all its forms. It means confronting nations defying the world over weapons of mass destruction. That is why a signal of weakness over Iraq is not only wrong in its own terms. Show weakness now and no one will ever believe us when we try to show strength in future. All our history, especially British history, points to this lesson. No one wants conflict. Even now, war could be avoided if Saddam did what he is supposed to do. But if having made a demand backed up by a threat of force, we fail to enforce that demand, the result will not be peace or security. It will simply be returning to confront the issue again at a later time, with the world less stable, the will of the international community less certain and those repressive states or terrorist groups that would destroy our way of life emboldened and undeterred.”

16. Mr Blair concluded that he hoped that conflict with Iraq could be avoided and that Saddam Hussein “can come to his senses, co-operate fully and disarm peacefully”. But if he did not:

“... he must be disarmed by force. If we have to go down that route, we shall do all we can to minimise the risks to the people of Iraq, and we give an absolute undertaking to protect Iraq’s territorial integrity ...

“Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction and the threats they pose to the world must be confronted. In doing so, this country and our Armed Forces will be helping the long-term peace and security of Britain and the world.”

17. In response, Mr Iain Duncan Smith, Leader of the Opposition, stated that his party fully supported the UN route and he hoped a second resolution would be possible: “Although it is not a prerequisite for future action, it is highly desirable.” He stated that the “fundamental problem is not lack of time, but the attitude of Saddam Hussein”. He agreed with Mr Blair that “if the international community backs away from dealing with Saddam Hussein now, that will be seen as a green light by every rogue state and terrorist group around the world”.

18. Mr Charles Kennedy, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, referred to the extent of public anxiety about developments and “a sense that we seem to be hastening into war ahead of the events”. He stated that the Government had “still to make a credible case”, and: “That case, for any fair-minded person viewing it, has to be based on credible evidence, which has not so far been forthcoming.”

19. Mr Blair responded that, after 12 years of trying to get disarmament, resolution 1441 offered Saddam Hussein a final opportunity. That was “hardly hastening into a war”. It was a response to Saddam Hussein’s “point blank” refusal to do what the United Nations had asked. If, as Dr Blix had said, Saddam Hussein was “carrying on in breach of his obligations, that was “credible evidence” that he was not co-operating. The United Nations had decided that Saddam Hussein was in breach of its resolutions and he had “got to produce the evidence that he is now co-operating fully – and he is not doing so”.

20. Mr Blair added that the inspectors’ task was “not to engage in an elaborate game of hide and seek”. That was the game Saddam Hussein had been playing for 12 years; and it was “unacceptable”. The US had chosen to go through the UN process, “but that process should be a way of dealing with this issue once and for all, not of kicking it into the long grass again and avoiding it altogether”.

21. In response to a question from Mr Donald Anderson, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC), about whether he feared that Russia, France or China might “unreasonably” veto a second resolution, Mr Blair responded that he was:

“... working on the basis that people hold to both the spirit and the letter of resolution 1441. The process has integrity. Saddam has a final opportunity and he must co-operate fully. If he does not, a fresh resolution will be issued. The logic of that will take people along with us, especially when there are further inspectors’ reports to come.”

22. Asked by Mr David Heath (Liberal Democrat) whether he disagreed with a view that war would be a potent recruiting tool for terrorist groups, Mr Blair responded: “If we are taking action where we are obviously and clearly enforcing the will of the UN”, that view was “not right”.

23. Mr Blair added:

“... the people who will be most delighted to see the end of Saddam are the people who are his first and primary victims – his own people. In those circumstances, I do not believe that it will recruit people to the cause of terrorism ... what will recruit people to the cause of terrorism is a belief among these fanatics that the will of the international community is weak, that it does not have a determination to confront these issues, and that, when faced with the challenge, we will fail to meet it.”

24. In response to a question from Mr James Paice (Conservative) about the need to explain to the British public “the conjunction between the Iraqi situation and international terrorism”, Mr Blair stated that “we have constantly tried to explain to people” that the two issues of WMD and terrorism were “not separate”. Both represented “the threats of the fanatical over the rational ... [T]hreats to the civilised world from acts of barbarity.” The fact was that the two issues were:

“... intimately linked ... without a doubt, if we do not deal with both these issues at some point ... [they] will come together. It is simply not possible to have a situation in which states are developing and trading in this stuff, with their scientists being hired by the top bidder, and in which terrorist groups are well-financed and able to recruit ... It is not possible to have those two threats operating and for them not to come together at a certain point, and the consequences would then be devastating.”

25. Mr Blair stated that he was taking a risk politically on Iraq because he did not “want to be the Prime Minister to whom people point the finger in history and say, ‘You knew perfectly well that these two threats were there, and you didn’t do anything about it. In the end, you took the easy way out ...’ We know that those threats are there and we have got to deal with them.”

26. Asked by Mr Ian Lucas (Labour) to confirm that he would support military action against Iraq only if the UN weapons inspectors certified that there was a continuing material breach of UN resolution 1441, Mr Blair responded: “That is exactly the position I have outlined. If the inspectors continue to certify that Iraq is not co-operating fully, that is a material breach. It is precisely so that the inspectors can make those findings a fact that we put them there.”

27. Mr Blair’s statement was repeated in the House of Lords by Lord Williams of Mostyn, the Lord Privy Seal.²

28. Lord Strathclyde (Conservative) supported the need for action, stating that a second resolution was highly desirable but it “should not be used as an excuse for delay”. He also asked for further information about the specific danger Saddam Hussein posed to the UK. He concluded that Saddam Hussein had been given “a second chance once

² House of Lords, *Official Report*, 3 February 2003, columns 20-33.

too often”; and that while no one wanted to go to war, “the dangers of stopping now may be greater than going ahead”.

29. Lord Wallace of Saltaire (Liberal Democrat) stated that the Liberal Democrats supported Mr Blair’s efforts “to ensure that containment of Iraq” continued to be managed multilaterally, and noted the “very careful balancing act” with the unilateral language used by the US Administration. Questioning a linkage between rogue states, WMD and terrorism, Lord Wallace concluded:

“What worries us most on these Benches is the extent to which the questions of rogue states, weapons of mass destruction and terrorism are conflated, as they are again in this statement. Terrorism is a real, long-term problem, and it will not be resolved by military intervention in Iraq or by disarming Iraq. What worries many of us about what we hear from Washington at the moment is what we perceive as a lack of understanding about the long-term nature of the terrorist problem in the Muslim world. We need to be sure that we are standing up for universal values and not simply Western values, let alone American values ... An upsurge of terrorism after an invasion of Iraq is a possibility for us.”

30. Mr Alastair Campbell, Mr Blair’s Director of Communications and Strategy, wrote that Mr Blair “felt ... we had finally got the focus where it needed to be, on the issue of co-operation with Blix”.³

3 and 4 February 2003

31. When Sir David Manning, Mr Blair’s Foreign Policy Adviser and Head of the Cabinet Office Overseas and Defence Secretariat (OD Sec), spoke to Dr Condoleezza Rice, President Bush’s National Security Advisor, on 3 February. They agreed that a second resolution should be “pursued energetically”.⁴ The UK and US approaches should be carefully co-ordinated. Following a discussion of the positions of various members of the Security Council, Dr Rice agreed with Sir David’s conclusion that, “we would undoubtedly have to work hard to get our nine votes; but it did not look impossible”.

32. Mr Blair told Mr José María Aznar, the Spanish Prime Minister, that President Bush favoured a second resolution “in principle”.⁵ They agreed that the UK and Spain should work together on a resolution.

³ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

⁴ Letter Manning to McDonald, 3 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

⁵ Letter Rycroft to Sinclair, 3 February 2003, ‘Iraq and MEPP: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Aznar, 3 February’.

33. Mr Blair telephoned Mr Vladimir Putin, the Russian President and Mr Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian Prime Minister (who was in Moscow).⁶ Mr Blair also spoke to a number of his other counterparts, with similar messages.

34. On 4 February, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the UK Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, told Mr Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, that the UK “had not won as much further time as we wished” in the meeting between Mr Blair and President Bush on 31 January, but “we still had the whole of February and a bit of March to work with” and “the Americans would work actively for a second resolution”. The UK wanted the UN inspectors to “deliver further results, because this would make it more likely that the international non-proliferation system remained in control”.⁷

35. Sir David Manning told Dr Rice on 5 February that, while the UK would want Sir Jeremy Greenstock’s advice before taking a firm view, his preference was to start discussing a second resolution after the report to the Security Council on 14 February by Dr Blix.⁸

36. At the Franco-British Summit on 4 February, Mr Jacques Chirac, the French President, made clear that inspections should continue unless the inspectors reported that they could not do their job. War would be the worst possible solution.

37. Sir John Holmes, British Ambassador to France, reported on 1 February that, in a conversation about the forthcoming summit, Mr Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, President Chirac’s Diplomatic Adviser, had emphasised that France had never been a pacifist country, and was certainly not one now, and it was not anti-American and never would be.⁹ But it was:

“... not acceptable for Europe simply to be dragged along in the US wake when our interests did not fully coincide. In the case of Iraq, there was no disagreement on the need to disarm Iraq, but all the options short of war had not been explored properly yet, and we were being forced to march to an artificial US timetable which was not in our interests. It remained to be seen whether Powell [Mr Colin Powell, US Secretary of State] would produce much ... [at the Security Council meeting on 5 February]. For the moment the French were still not convinced there were really major things for the inspectors to find, or that Iraqi non-co-operation was sufficient to say they were in breach of 1441.”

38. Sir John wrote that he judged President Chirac was “finally beginning to think that France is in danger of finding herself in a false position”, but he was “not yet ready to move towards us very significantly”.

⁶ Letter Rycroft to Sinclair, 3 February 2003, ‘Iraq and Middle East: Prime Minister’s Phone Call with Putin and Berlusconi’.

⁷ Telegram 204 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 5 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Discussions on 4 February’.

⁸ Letter Manning to McDonald, 5 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

⁹ Email Holmes to Manning, 1 February 2003, ‘Franco-British Summit’.

39. Mr Blair told President Chirac on 3 February that he had agreed with President Bush that if Dr Blix continued to report Iraqi non-co-operation there should be a second UN resolution “within weeks”.¹⁰

40. There was little movement on Iraq at the Franco-British Summit on 4 February. Mr Blair stressed the value of uniting around a second resolution to put pressure on Saddam Hussein to go without war. President Chirac’s view was that the inspectors should be allowed to continue their work, with more resources if they said they needed them. The issue of a second resolution would not arise until the inspectors said they could no longer do their work. He was concerned about the regional implications of any military action and the potential consequences of trying to introduce democracy in Iraq.¹¹

41. The No.10 record of the discussion reported that President Chirac doubted that Secretary Powell’s presentation the following day:

“... would contain anything new. If it did, the inspectors should verify it ... A second resolution would be necessary for a war, but one was not needed yet since the inspections should continue. If the inspectors said they could not continue their work, there could then be a second resolution. If the inspectors reported continued non-co-operation, perhaps a High Commissioner for Disarmament could visit Baghdad, and the inspections could be strengthened.”¹²

42. President Chirac’s public comments focused on the need to let the inspectors do their job; he stated that war was the worst possible solution.¹³

43. **Mr Campbell reported that, after the meeting, Mr Blair said his strategy was to get Saddam Hussein out without a war, by obtaining a second resolution then persuading him to go.**

44. Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries that Mr Blair had called him late on 4 February, following the Franco-British Summit, to say that “he could now see a way of getting to the same place as Chirac”. In response to Mr Campbell’s comment that the “best thing” for President Bush “was to get Saddam out without a war”, Mr Blair had replied:

“... that was his whole strategy, get the Blix report, then a second resolution, then get the Arabs to press him to go.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Letter Rycroft to Sinclair, 3 February 2003, ‘Iraq and UK/France: Prime Minister’s Phone Conversation with Chirac, 3 February.’

¹¹ Telegram 058 Paris to FCO London, 5 February 2003, ‘Franco-British Summit, 4 February’.

¹² Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 4 February 2003, ‘UK/France Summit, 4 February: Prime Minister’s Bilateral Meeting with Chirac and Raffarin’.

¹³ Telegram 65 Paris to FCO London, 5 February 2003, ‘Franco-British Summit at Le Touquet – Press Reactions’.

¹⁴ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

Secretary Powell's presentation to the Security Council, 5 February 2003

45. Secretary Powell gave a long and detailed presentation to the Security Council on 5 February setting out the US position on the threat posed by Iraq and its failure to comply with resolution 1441.

46. President Bush wrote in his memoir that he had agreed to pursue a second resolution if Mr Blair wanted one at their meeting in Washington on 31 January; and that “the best way to get a second resolution was to lay out the evidence”.¹⁵ He asked Secretary Powell to make a presentation to the UN:

“He had credibility as a highly respected diplomat known to be reluctant about the possibility of war. I knew he would do a thorough, a careful job. In early February, Colin spent four days and nights at the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] personally reviewing the intelligence to ensure he was comfortable with every word in his speech.”

47. In his presentation to the Security Council on 5 February, Secretary Powell stated that he had asked for the meeting for two purposes:

- The first was to support the “core assessments” made by Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei on 27 January that:
 - “... Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance – not even today – of the disarmament that was demanded of it”; and
 - “... did not provide any new information relevant to certain questions that have been outstanding since 1998”.
- The second was to provide “additional information and to share ... what the United States knows about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction, as well [as] Iraq’s involvement in terrorism”.¹⁶

48. Secretary Powell stated that the information, “when combined with what all of us have learned over the years,” was “deeply troubling”. There was “an accumulation of facts and disturbing patterns of behaviour” that demonstrated that Saddam Hussein and his regime had “made no effort to disarm as required by the international community” and was “concealing their efforts to produce more weapons”.

49. Secretary Powell provided tapes of intercepted conversations and satellite imagery which he interpreted as demonstrating Iraq’s attempts to conceal activity to “clean up” facilities before visits by the inspectors.

¹⁵ Bush GW. *Decision Points*. Virgin Books, 2010.

¹⁶ UN Security Council, ‘4701st Meeting Wednesday 5 February 2003’ (S/PV.4701).

50. Secretary Powell also stated that human sources had told the US that:

- The Iraqis were moving “not just documents and hard drives but also weapons of mass destruction to keep them from being found by inspectors”.
- “In early December, Saddam Hussein had all Iraqi scientists warned of the serious consequences that they and their families would face if they revealed any sensitive information to the inspectors. They were forced to sign documents acknowledging that divulging information is punishable by death.”
“Saddam Hussein also said that scientists should be told not to agree to leave Iraq. Anyone who agreed to be interviewed outside Iraq would be treated as a spy.”
- A “false death certificate” had been issued for one scientist, and he was sent into hiding, and a “dozen experts have been placed under house arrest ... at one of Saddam Hussein’s ‘guest houses’.”

51. Secretary Powell added that the “information and intelligence” pointed to “an active and systematic effort on the part of the Iraqi regime to keep materials and people from the inspectors”.

52. Secretary Powell stated that Iraq had failed the test of providing an honest declaration and the conclusion that Iraq was now in further material breach of its obligation was “irrefutable and undeniable”. Iraq had “placed itself in danger of the serious consequences called for in resolution 1441”. The Council placed itself “in danger of irrelevance” if it allowed “Iraq to continue to defy its will without responding effectively and immediately”.

53. Secretary Powell set out the “real and present dangers” posed by Iraq’s WMD, in particular its ability using mobile production facilities to produce biological agent and its ability to disperse biological agents “indiscriminately” (see Section 4.3). Secretary Powell also described intelligence and information on Iraq’s chemical weapons, nuclear weapons and long range missile programmes.

54. Secretary Powell concluded by setting out the US position on the activities in Iraq of Al Qaida and Ansar al-Islam. Iraq’s denial of those links and its support for terrorism was “a web of lies”. The US was not prepared to run the risk of Saddam Hussein using his weapons of mass destruction.

55. Secretary Powell said that Iraq was not taking its last chance and the Council had an obligation to ensure that its resolutions were complied with.

56. During his presentation, Secretary Powell also drew attention “to the fine paper that the United Kingdom distributed yesterday which describes in exquisite detail Iraqi deception activities”.

57. Secretary Powell was referring to the No.10 document, ‘Iraq – Its Infrastructure of Concealment, Deception and Intimidation’, which is addressed in Section 4.3.

58. Mr Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, stated that Iraq was now in further material breach of resolution 1441. If that continued, the Security Council should meet its responsibilities.

59. In a discussion of 29 January about the Security Council on 5 February, Mr Straw told Secretary Powell that he had considered the idea that the UK should publish a dossier alongside the US presentation but he “did not think it was a good idea since it could only be an echo of his”.¹⁷ They also discussed how to address Iraq’s human rights record.

60. In his statement to the Security Council, Mr Straw described Secretary Powell’s presentation as “a most powerful and authoritative case against the Iraqi regime” and thanked him for “laying bare the deceit practised by the regime of Saddam Hussein, and worse, the very great danger which that regime represents”.¹⁸

61. Mr Straw stated that resolution 1441 had given Iraq “a final opportunity to rid itself of its weapons of mass terror, of gases which can poison thousands in one go; of bacilli and viruses like anthrax and smallpox which can disable and kill by the tens of thousands; of the means to make nuclear weapons which can kill by the million”.

62. Resolution 1441 had strengthened inspections but without Iraq’s “full and active co-operation” they could never be sure of finding all WMD in a country the size of Iraq. But the inspectors’ reports on 27 January and Secretary Powell’s presentation could leave “no illusions”. Saddam Hussein held resolution 1441 in contempt and was defying the Council. He was questioning “our resolve” and was “gambling that we will lose our nerve rather than enforce our will”.

63. The resolution had “set two clear tests for a further material breach by Iraq”:

- not to make “false statements” or “omissions” in its declaration; and
- “to comply with, and co-operate fully in the implementation” of resolution 1441.

64. In relation to the first, Mr Straw stated that Iraq’s declaration of 7 December was “not full, nor accurate, nor complete”:

- It was “a false statement. Its central premise – that Iraq possesses no weapons of mass destruction – is a lie.”
- “The declaration also has obvious omissions, not least a failure to explain what has happened to the large quantities of chemical and biological weapons materiel and munitions unaccounted for by UN weapons inspectors in 1998.”
- There was “no admission of Iraq’s extensive efforts to develop WMD since the last round of UNSCOM [UN Special Commission] inspections ended”.

¹⁷ Letter Straw to Manning, 29 January 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Conversation with Colin Powell, 29 January 2003’.

¹⁸ UN Security Council, ‘4701st Meeting Wednesday 5 February 2003’ (S/PV.4701).

65. Mr Straw stated that it was “clear that Iraq has failed” the second test. The briefings to the Council had:

“... confirmed our worst fears, that Iraq has no intention of relinquishing its WMD, no intention of following the path of peaceful disarmament set out in UNSCR [UN Security Council resolution] 1441. Instead of open admissions and transparency, we have a charade, where a veneer of superficial co-operation masks wilful concealment, the extent of which has been devastatingly revealed this morning by Secretary Powell.”

66. Mr Straw stated that there was “only one possible conclusion ... Iraq is in further material breach” of resolution 1441. The Council faced a difficult choice. It would be “Easy but wrong” to hope for a change of heart by Iraq. That would be “repeating the mistakes of the last 12 years and empowering a dictator”.

67. Commenting on Secretary Powell’s description of reports about the presence in Iraq of “[Abu Musab] al- Zaraqawi [Leader of Al Qaida in Iraq], and other members of Al Qaida, and their efforts to develop poisons”, Mr Straw stated that: “It defies the imagination that all of this could be going on without the knowledge of Saddam Hussein. The recent discovery of the poison ricin in London has underlined again that this is a threat that all of us face.”

68. Mr Straw concluded:

“... time is now very short. The Council will have further reports from the inspectors on ... 14 February. If non-co-operation continues, the Council must meet its responsibilities.

...

“This is a moment of choice for Saddam and the Iraqi regime. But it is also a moment of choice for ... the United Nations ... the League of Nations ... failed because it could not create actions ... It could not back diplomacy with the credible threat and, where necessary, the use of force ... At each stage good men said, ‘Wait. The evil is not big enough to challenge’. Then before their eyes, the evil became too big to challenge. We slipped slowly down a slope, never noticing how far we had gone until it was too late. We owe it to our history, as well as our future, not to make the same mistake again.”

69. In response to Secretary Powell’s presentation, most members of Council stated that the information presented would require serious and thorough study and encouraged Iraq to co-operate with the inspectors and provide answers to the outstanding questions.

70. Mr Igor Ivanov, the Russian Foreign Minister, stated that the information Secretary Powell had provided required “very serious and thorough study”. It should be handed immediately to UNMOVIC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for on-site

verification. Baghdad must give the inspectors answers and inspections should continue; they alone could provide answers on the extent of Iraqi compliance.

71. Addressing the question of whether time was running out, Mr Ivanov stated that resolution 1441 contained no concrete timeframe: “The inspectors alone” could advise on how much time they needed “to carry out the tasks entrusted to them”. Further resolutions could not be ruled out, but efforts should continue to do “everything possible to facilitate the inspection process. That had “proven its effectiveness” and made it “possible to implement Council decisions by peaceful means”.

72. The international community was confronting new global threats and challenges, and “The unity of the world community” would “continue to be the principal guarantee of the effectiveness of the world’s action”.

73. Mr Dominique de Villepin, the French Foreign Minister, stated that the UN had chosen a policy based on:

“... three fundamental points: a clear objective on which we cannot compromise – the disarmament of Iraq ... a rigorous system of inspections that requires Iraq’s active co-operation and that affirms the Security Council’s central role at each a stage; and finally a requirement ... our unity.”

74. Inspections had already achieved “important results”. There had been good progress in understanding Iraq’s nuclear capacity and no chemical or biological agents had been detected, including in the empty warheads discovered on 16 January.

75. There were “still grey areas in Iraq’s co-operation” and the inspectors had “reported real difficulties”. The uncertainties reported by Dr Blix were “not acceptable”. France had evidence of Iraq’s capacity to produce chemical agents and the possible possession of significant stocks of anthrax and botulism toxin, and possibly a production capability. The absence of long range delivery systems reduced the threat of those weapons, but there were “disturbing signs of Iraq’s continued determination to acquire ballistic missiles” beyond the range permitted.

76. Mr de Villepin called for a “demanding démarche anchored in resolution 1441” from the Council. France did not rule out recourse to force but, before going down that road, consideration had to be given as to whether the nature and the scope of the threat justified force. The United Nations had to be “at the centre of the action to guarantee Iraq’s unity, ensure the region’s stability, protect civilians and preserve the unity of the world community”.

77. Mr de Villepin proposed arrangements to strengthen the inspections regime and to agree a list of unresolved disarmament questions and a “demanding and realistic timeframe” to address them. Iraq needed to do more. But France was convinced disarmament could succeed if the international community devoted all its energy to it and maintained its unity and cohesion.

78. Mr Mohammed Aldouri, Iraqi Permanent Representative to UN, challenged the “incorrect allegations” in Secretary Powell statement and reiterated that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction. He stated that inspectors had visited the sites identified in US and UK reports in September and October and “none of the allegations” were true. He also rebutted statements made by President Bush in his State of the Union Address on 28 January (see Section 3.6).

79. Mr Aldouri reaffirmed Iraq’s commitment to pro-active co-operation with the inspectors so that they could verify that Iraq was free of weapons of mass destruction, sanctions could be lifted, and progress could be made on regional security by ridding the whole Middle East of WMD.

80. Reporting on the discussion, Sir Jeremy Greenstock wrote that Mr Straw and Ms Ana Palacio, the Spanish Foreign Minister, had strongly supported Secretary Powell’s presentation and Mrs Soledad Alvear, the Chilean Foreign Minister, had made a “noticeably stronger intervention”.¹⁹ Most other countries had, however, argued for more time.

81. Sir Jeremy commented:

“A dramatic day. Powell’s presentation was impressive – at the higher end of expectations. It has pushed the rock further up the hill. It has also helpfully raised the bar of inspections by underlining that the Iraqis will need to answer real questions about their activities if they are to satisfy the inspectors ...

“But I do not think it was decisive. Most Council members reiterated familiar positions. The most significant shift was the ... Chileans. French ideas ... had an air of desperation about them. But they could be the straw which many in the Council attempt to grasp as the option other than war.”

82. Sir Jeremy told the Inquiry that Secretary Powell had given:

“... an extremely impressive presentation of the evidence we had of Iraqi WMD, but it was not decisive. There wasn’t a smoking gun there in the presentation. There hadn’t been a smoking gun presented by the inspectors to the Security Council, and it seemed to many members of the Security Council that Secretary Powell was trying too hard to establish a case for which there was no clear proof ... it didn’t convert the unconverted.”²⁰

83. President Bush wrote:

“Colin’s presentation was exhaustive, eloquent and persuasive. Coming against the backdrop of Saddam’s defiance of the weapons inspectors, it had a profound

¹⁹ Telegram 215 UKMIS New York to FCO London. 6 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Powell’s Presentation to the Council’.

²⁰ Public hearing, 27 November 2009, pages 86-87.

impact on the public debate. Later, many of the assertions in Colin's speech would prove inaccurate. But at the time, his words reflected the considered judgement of intelligence agencies at home and around the world."²¹

84. In his memoir, Mr Annan wrote:

"... I was impressed with his delivery but I was most concerned about the substance. He did not produce any evidence of the 'smoking gun' variety, despite effectively claiming to possess such evidence. Worse, I was not alone in thinking that Powell himself did not appear as though he entirely believed his own case."²²

85. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that, in private discussions over lunch, Mr Annan commented that the forthcoming visit to Baghdad by Dr Blix and Dr Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the IAEA, could be used to tell Iraq that the Security Council "unanimously insisted on much improved co-operation".²³

86. Sir Jeremy reported that Dr Blix had said he was grateful for the information provided by Secretary Powell, which he would study carefully. If there were things hidden in Iraq, the inspectors would try to find them. He had welcomed the Council's wish to stay united and the message that Iraq must co-operate actively:

"This could not be a game of catch-as-catch-can. Co-operation had to be spontaneous. UNMOVIC could do a lot with more resources and improved equipment. But Iraq was a big country. What really counted was active co-operation on the South Africa model."

87. Dr ElBaradei had "echoed" most of what Dr Blix had said: "There were plenty of things to be clarified by the Iraqis ... Iraqi co-operation must improve in a dramatic way."

88. Asked by Secretary Powell to explain his idea of reinforced inspections, Sir Jeremy reported that Mr de Villepin stated he believed:

"... there was space between fully active co-operation and war for other options ... The Middle East was complex. A broader strategy was needed. Force had to be the very last resort, and then only with the legitimacy of the UN. To win the peace after the war, the involvement of the UN was essential. The inspection regime under 1441 allowed the Council this further possibility. Only if they [the inspectors] met a deadlock would we need to come back to 1441. We could not afford to go to a bloody, long, expensive war on the basis of impatience. Other states would draw the conclusion that you needed nuclear weapons to avoid attack: compare North Korea. Such crises had to be solved by the international community collectively.

²¹ Bush GW. *Decision Points*. Virgin Books, 2010.

²² Annan, K. *Interventions: A Life In War And Peace*. Allen Lane, 2012.

²³ [Telegram 214 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 6 February 2003, 'Iraq: 5 February Security Council Lunch'](#).

“So the answer ... was to use 1441 fully. Reinforce the inspectors. If after a time it did not work, then force could be considered. The problems of the world had to be solved through collective responsibility ... If the route he had set out proved unsuccessful, then France would assume its responsibilities with the rest.”

89. Other points made during the discussion included:

- Mr Joschka Fischer, the German Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister, supported Mr de Villepin’s proposals for strengthened inspections.
- Ms Palacio said that it was the message to Saddam Hussein that a change of will was needed that had to be strengthened, not the inspections.
- Mr Straw said that more inspectors and equipment would not solve anything. The fundamental point was that “Iraq was not complying. If there was co-operation, there was no need for greater numbers. If there was no co-operation, higher numbers could not help.” The inspectors needed intellectual evidence, “Yet Iraqi scientists had been terrorised into silence.” Mr de Villepin’s proposal was “a chimera, a false message. And it would lead to split in the Council.” The key was co-operation.
- Mr Ivanov stated that there were complaints, but the inspectors had to continue and Russia would help. President Putin had asked him to set out a list of the current problems and work with the Iraqis to solve them. “Baghdad could hardly change overnight ... Pressure would be needed. But the opportunities for a political settlement were far from being exhausted.”

90. Sir Jeremy reported that, as Council President, Mr Fischer had tried to sum up that:

“There was agreement the Council should send out the message that a very serious point had been reached. This was a major crisis with widespread consequences. War would be very damaging. 1441 had to be implemented fully. Inspections must continue: there was no contradiction between that and the presence of sharp instruments. The message to Baghdad had to be that they now had to deliver.”

91. Secretary Powell had not, however allowed that to stand. He had listened to the arguments for a peaceful solution but the Council had “so far been denied that”. The US:

“... was not fixated on war ... But he would not accept the premise that the world could not accept the risks. He hoped it would not come to war. But war could even produce good results. If it came to that point, the US would be happy to act with a coalition of the willing under the authority of the UN, in the full understanding of the risk of unintended consequences and of the overall situation in the Middle East. Too much time had already gone by.”

92. In his memoir, Mr Annan recounted the exchanges during that lunch in some detail, commenting that it captured:

“... as few other moments do in that year of extraordinary drama and diplomatic maneuvering [sic], the depth of passions, and the way in which the question of Iraq became about something far larger: the foundations of peace and security, and the place of the United Nations as the sole legitimate authority to endorse the use of force except in cases of self-defense.”²⁴

93. Sir Christopher Meyer, British Ambassador to the US, reported that the US Administration:

- was satisfied with the impact of Secretary Powell’s presentation;
- hoped that it might help to capture the swing vote in the Security Council; and
- believed that the session had shown that the US had gone the extra mile along the UN route.²⁵

94. President Bush had announced that the US would welcome and support a new resolution “which made clear that the Security Council stood behind its previous demands”; and that he had “repeated his resolve to lead a coalition of the willing if necessary to disarm the Iraqi regime”.

95. Sir Christopher also reported that support for action was growing. An *NBC* poll published on 5 February showed that 60 percent of Americans supported military action in Iraq, and the number of Americans who would strike without UN support had increased from 29 percent in January to 37 percent.

Cabinet, 6 February 2003

96. Mr Blair told Cabinet on 6 February that if Iraq’s non-compliance continued, a fresh resolution would be sought from the Security Council.

97. Mr Straw told Cabinet it should be possible to gain consensus on such a resolution.

98. Cabinet agreed that Ministers should actively make the case for the Government’s position on Iraq.

99. Mr Blair told Cabinet on 6 February that “the Government’s policy on Iraq was on track”.²⁶ If the UN inspectors continued to report Iraqi “non-compliance with its obligations”, a fresh resolution would be sought from the Security Council. There was “mounting impatience on the part of Arab countries” with Saddam Hussein and their opinion would be “more favourable to military action if the US pushed the Middle East

²⁴ Annan, K. *Interventions: A Life In War And Peace*. Allen Lane, 2012.

²⁵ Telegram 174 Washington to FCO London, 6 February 2003, ‘Iraq: US Thinking’.

²⁶ Cabinet Conclusions, 6 February 2003.

Peace Process forward so that the agenda of the international community did not appear one-sided". Following his discussion with President Bush, on 31 January, Mr Blair reported US willingness to re-engage.

100. Mr Blair said that the next step was for Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei to return to Baghdad:

"It was possible that Saddam Hussein would show some movement towards compliance; the Coalition military build-up would continue in the Gulf; and planning for the aftermath of military action and humanitarian relief needed greater emphasis."

101. France had "proposed more resources to support the inspectors", but Mr Blair said that "the issue was rather the lack of Iraqi co-operation, including their failure to explain the weapons of mass destruction material which had been logged as missing in 1999, and the intimidation of scientists whom the inspectors wished to interview".

102. Mr Blair also stated that it was important to use the UN process to address the agenda of the international community more broadly, such as on North Korea and the proliferation of WMD more generally. The "likely identity of interest between rogue states and terrorists who wanted to acquire weapons of mass destruction" was "of particular concern". The "presence of Al Qaida terrorists in Iraq was a reality which was part of the changing picture".

103. Mr Straw said that Secretary Powell's presentation to the Security Council had been made "forensically and calmly, with well chosen examples from intelligence of Iraqi mendacity". The "true colour and substance of the Iraqi regime had been highlighted".

104. Mr Straw's view was that "it should be possible to gain consensus for a further resolution" if the inspectors returned "without real concessions on Iraqi compliance". The focus "had to remain" on the UN route: "We could now be entering the final phase" with the next report to the Council on 14 February.

105. Mr Straw also said that the aftermath was "being discussed intensively" with Ms Clare Short, the International Development Secretary, and Mr Geoff Hoon, the Defence Secretary.

106. The points made in discussion included:

- The use of the word "aftermath" was "ill-chosen: it incorrectly implied that Iraq would be utterly destroyed by military conflict whereas we should gear our thinking around the future of the people of Iraq and their interests".
- The reconstruction and development of Iraq would "provide opportunities for British companies to be involved".

- The focus after hostilities “had to be on civil society which had suffered 35 years of tyranny that had reduced the country to the point where 60 percent of the population relied on United Nations food programmes”.
- The US inter-agency process to address Iraq’s redevelopment after any military action was being led by the Pentagon.
- It was “essential” that the UN should be involved in Iraq’s redevelopment after any military action “to avoid the military coalition being viewed as an army of occupation”.
- The nature of a further resolution “would depend on the circumstances at the time, but it was likely that there would be a period between the adoption of a resolution and the start of any military action so that a final ultimatum could be given for the departure of the current Iraqi regime”.
- International consensus in support of military action would “encourage public support” in the UK.
- Some people “did not recognise the lessons we had learned from not confronting tyranny in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and now Iraq”.
- Briefing on the Government’s position on Iraq “should be improved and disseminated widely; it was clear that colleagues were operating at different levels of knowledge, and it would be helpful if the best possible information about the facts were available to enable them to advance the best possible arguments”.
- Parliament would need an opportunity to debate any further UN resolution.

107. Summing up the discussion, Mr Blair said that:

“... Ministers needed to be active with their supporters, both inside and outside Parliament, to make the case. Briefing material had to be improved so that the facts were drawn together in a coherent form under various headings: the Iraqi regime; the United Nations’ involvement; non-compliance by Iraq with the weapons inspectors; the humanitarian angle, all of which would need to be updated regularly.”

108. The UK would continue to pursue the UN route. That was “important in respect of Iraq, but it was also necessary in dealing with a dysfunctional world where a broad agenda had to be addressed to deal with poverty, the Middle East Peace Process, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction”.

109. In his diaries, Mr Campbell wrote that:

- Mr Blair had “put a pretty optimistic face” on the reports of his meetings with President Bush and President Chirac.
- Mr Robin Cook, then Leader of the House of Commons, had quizzed on the Parliamentary process.

- Dr John Reid, Minister without Portfolio and Labour Party Chair, “said he was troubled about the lack of domestic consensus, that there was a sense of people losing their moral compass about the nature of the Iraqi regime”.
- Ms Tessa Jowell, the Culture, Media and Sport Secretary, “didn’t know anyone under twenty five who supported action and we had to do better at countering the scepticism”.²⁷

110. Following Cabinet, Mr Blair asked Mr John Scarlett, Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), “to provide a confidential and intelligence based briefing on Iraq for small groups of Ministers attending Cabinet”. The briefing would “take as its starting point Part 1 of the Government’s dossier published last September” and cover:

- the “latest assessment of Iraq’s holding of weapons of mass destruction”;
- the Iraqi response to resolution 1441;
- “recent developments in Iraq and our current assessment of the cohesion of the regime”;
- “Iraq and terrorism”.²⁸

Four “briefing sessions” were offered the following week.

111. The content of those briefings is addressed in Section 4.3.

Meetings with Dr Blix and Dr EIBaradei, 6 February 2003

112. In meetings on 6 February, Mr Blair told Dr Blix and Dr EIBaradei that he doubted Saddam Hussein would co-operate. He argued that a second resolution would provide a basis for mobilising the international community to persuade Saddam Hussein to leave. A tough line was the best way to avoid conflict.

113. Mr Straw told Dr EIBaradei that Saddam Hussein would choose exile only if he thought it was his last chance of survival.

114. Dr Blix stated that UNMOVIC’s next quarterly report, due on 1 March, would identify “clusters” of issues that could be used to pose sharp questions for Iraq, possibly as part of an ultimatum.

115. Dr Blix reminded Mr Blair that the material described as “unaccounted for” in UNSCOM’s report of 1999 was not necessarily present in Iraq; and that it would be “paradoxical to go to war for something that might turn out to be very little”.

116. Dr Blix told Mr Straw he thought Iraq had prohibited programmes, and it “definitely possessed the ability to jump-start BW programmes”.

²⁷ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

²⁸ Minute PS/Chairman JIC to Prout, 7 February 2003, ‘Intelligence Briefing on Iraq’.

117. Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei met Mr Blair and Mr Straw on 6 February, before a visit to Baghdad on 8 to 9 February.²⁹

118. The FCO briefing note stated that:

“Since the Prime Minister last saw Blix on 17 January, he has hardly put a foot wrong. His statement to the UN Security Council (UNSC) on 27 January was stronger than many expected: in particular he helpfully made clear that Iraq was not offering the full and active co-operation that the UNSC expected, and there were serious unanswered questions, and that Iraq still did not accept that it had to disarm.”³⁰

119. In the meeting with Mr Blair, Dr Blix registered a number of questions about Secretary Powell’s briefing to the Security Council the previous day.³¹ He also said that intelligence leads had so far produced only one success.

120. The record of the meeting stated that Dr Blix:

“... would seek to resolve three relatively minor points related to process: U2 overflights, interviews, and Iraqi domestic legislation. His approach would be that the Iraqis had better come up with co-operation on substance ... If Saddam decided to be as helpful on substance as he was on process, fine.”

121. Mr Blair doubted that Saddam Hussein would co-operate:

“He would try some trick to divide the Security Council. Retaining his WMD was essential to his own view of his grip on Iraq.”

122. Dr Blix reminded Mr Blair that: “UNSCOM had not reported that the 1999 left-overs were present in Iraq, just that they were unaccounted for.” UNMOVIC was more cautious than the UK, but Dr Blix agreed that if Iraq did not have documents it should be more eager to allow interviews to go ahead. There was a stalemate on the issue. The inspectors might have to ask for interviews without minders, but Dr Blix was uneasy about risking people’s lives.

123. Dr Blix was reported to have informed Mr Blair that his report to the Security Council on 14 February would probably contain a “balance sheet”. His last assessment had been “honest but harsh”; the next might have to say that the inspectors “had not found any WMD”.

²⁹ Letter Rycroft to Owen, 6 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Meetings with Blix and El-Baradei, 6 February’.

³⁰ Minute Owen to Rycroft, 5 February 2003, ‘The Prime Minister’s Meeting with Hans Blix, UNMOVIC, and Mohamed El-Baradei, IAEA’.

³¹ Letter Rycroft to Owen, 6 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Meetings with Blix and ElBaradei, 6 February’.

124. Dr Blix suggested that the next quarterly report under resolution 1284, due on 1 March:

“... might be the moment to set out clear, crisp questions based on the clusters ... If he surfaced those ... questions now, Iraq would simply demand six months to answer them. It would be better to use them as part of an ultimatum ...”

125. In response to a comment by Mr Blair that containment “was not a long term policy, and sanctions caused misery to the Iraqi people”, Dr Blix “commented that it would be paradoxical to go to war for something that might turn out to be very little”. Mr Blair replied that “if Saddam had no or little WMD he should prove it”.

126. Mr Matthew Rycroft, Mr Blair’s Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, reported that Sir David Manning had:

“... underlined we were confident of our judgements on Iraq’s CBW. If the inspectors had difficulty finding it, this was because Saddam was not co-operating.”

127. In response to a question from Dr Blix about when Saddam Hussein might crack, Mr Blair:

“... thought the moment of maximum pressure might be after a second resolution (following a clear Blix report) when the Arab world might encourage Saddam and his immediate entourage to leave Iraq. The logic was that Iraq was not co-operating; we should have a second resolution saying he was in breach; and then we should mobilise the international community to try and get him to leave so that we did not have to resort to military action. The best way to avoid a conflict would be to take a very tough line.”

128. Mr Campbell wrote that Dr Blix felt that Secretary Powell had done well but was avoiding comment.³² Dr Blix was “pretty cagey” and had “made clear his job was to be sceptical”. Dr Blix was talking to Iraq about enhanced co-operation and trying to resolve the issues of anthrax and VX: “On the remnants of old programmes they should be able to tell us.”

129. Dr Blix had told Mr Blair that South Africa was sending a delegation to Iraq to tell them how to give up WMD. The inspectors had been to some of the places named in the dossier, “and it could be that they had been sanitised, but they found nothing”. By 14 February, Dr Blix “would be saying they had not found WMD but there was no real co-operation. He didn’t want to name scientists for interview for fear that they would be killed.” Dr Blix “felt ... 14 February was a little early to report to the UN [Security Council]”.

³² Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

130. Mr Campbell added that Mr Blair “said he felt Iraq would come up with some surprise to split the international community, that intelligence showed he would regard giving up WMD as a total humiliation, and it was essential to his internal grip”.

131. Mr Campbell commented that Dr Blix “was a lot less bullish than last time and clearly fed up with the feeling he was being bullied by America”.

132. In his subsequent meeting with Mr Straw, Dr Blix was reported to have told Mr Straw that his next report to the Security Council might include what the Iraqis had not yet proved they did not have, rather than much evidence of what UNMOVIC had found.³³

133. Dr Blix had clear indications that anthrax had been weaponised and his personal judgement was that Iraq did have programmes and definitely possessed the ability to jump-start BW programmes. The trick would be to find evidence.

134. Dr Blix also told Mr Straw that if the Al Samoud missiles were found to be illegal, they would be destroyed. That could force a real confrontation with the Iraqis who were not keen to lose billions of dollars of armaments at a time when they were threatened with military action.

135. Dr ElBaradei was reported to have told Mr Straw that he would press Iraq hard on possible uranium imports and interviews. He did not expect much movement from Iraq and tough messages from the international community could only help the inspectors.

136. When Dr ElBaradei raised the possibility of building an option for exile into the second resolution, Mr Straw responded that Saddam Hussein would “choose exile (if at all) only if he was convinced that was his only chance of survival”. Mr Straw did not favour including it in a second resolution. If a strong resolution was passed, there would be “enough time [for Saddam Hussein] to consider his options” and for “high level envoys to help him make the right choice”.

137. Mr Straw encouraged Dr ElBaradei to focus on interviews; the UK had portable “safe rooms” and could provide them to the IAEA and UNMOVIC if it helped. Dr ElBaradei reported that the scientists he had interviewed were clearly extremely nervous, but he saw great difficulties with conducting interviews overseas.

138. The record of the discussion with Mr Blair reported that Dr ElBaradei thought opinion was moving towards a second resolution.³⁴

³³ Telegram 79 FCO to UKMIS New York, 7 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Meetings with Blix and El-Baradei, 6 February’.

³⁴ Letter Rycroft to Owen, 6 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Meetings with Blix and El-Baradei, 6 February’.

139. Dr ElBaradei told Mr Blair:

“Not all members agreed with the US timing ... Iraq was not co-operating. Unless there were clear signs of an Iraqi change of heart on co-operation, (both process, including interviews, and substance), UNSCR 1441 would have to be implemented. Not allowing interviews was a lack of full co-operation ... dribbling out concessions was not full co-operation ... His 14 February report would be as clear as possible.”

140. In Dr ElBaradei’s view, CBW was the key.

141. On nuclear issues, the inspectors continued to assess the aluminium tubes. Reports of the possible import of uranium were: “Much more disturbing ... There could only be one reason for such an import.”

142. Dr ElBaradei told Mr Blair:

“If satisfactory co-operation was not forthcoming, the next best outcome would be to force Saddam ... out ... [He] did not oppose more time for inspections. Any war would risk radicalising the region. It should be UN-controlled. As should the future Iraq ...”

143. The No.10 record stated that Mr Blair had made clear to both Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei “the importance of putting Iraqis on the spot with some sharp questions, to show whether they were co-operating fully or not”. He had “also emphasised the importance of interviews”.

144. In Mr Blair’s view: “Our best chance of avoiding war was a clear verdict from the inspectors followed by a massive international effort to get Saddam to go.”

145. Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries that Mr Blair had told Dr ElBaradei that:

“... we had to sort out Saddam in as peaceful way as possible, but above all sort out MEPP. Saddam’s duty was one hundred per cent co-operation, not hide and seek ... [I]f there was a breach, there would be second resolution and then we could build pressure on him to go.”³⁵

146. Mr Campbell also wrote that Dr ElBaradei:

- had said the Iraqis claimed they never tried to get uranium but it wasn’t true;
- did not think many tears would be shed in the Arab world if Saddam went;
- was worried that Iraq would claim it was being attacked not because of weapons but because they were a Muslim country;
- felt it would be better if Mr Blair and President Bush could say it was part of a vision of a zone free of nuclear weapons;

³⁵ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

- said the IAEA strategy was to force Saddam Hussein into co-operation, though he doubted it was possible;
- came back again and again to the theme that American public diplomacy wasn't working; and
- said we needed intrusive inspections but it could not be done without active co-operation.

147. At the FCO Iraq morning meeting on 7 February, it was reported that Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei had both expressed concern that plans for a second resolution should factor in the need to allow the weapons inspectors time to get out of Iraq.³⁶

President Bush's statement, 6 February 2003

148. In a statement on 6 February, President Bush said that Saddam Hussein was throwing away his final opportunity to disarm voluntarily.

149. President Bush reiterated that he would “welcome” a second resolution, as he stated in the press conference with Mr Blair on 31 January, “which made clear the Security Council stands behind its previous demands”.

150. The “game” was “over” and the US was resolved to take whatever action was necessary to defend itself and to disarm the Iraqi regime.

151. On 5 February, Sir David Manning and Dr Rice discussed President Bush's statement and the possibility that he might “lean forward” on a second resolution.³⁷ President Bush would not seek a second resolution for its own sake, but he was open to one if others wanted it.

152. In a statement on 6 February, President Bush emphasised the challenges of uncovering secret information in a totalitarian society.³⁸ He stated that Iraqi violations of Security Council resolutions were “evident, and they continue to this hour”. The Iraqi regime had “never accounted for a vast arsenal of deadly biological and chemical weapons” and it was “pursuing an elaborate campaign to conceal its weapons materials, and to hide or intimidate key experts and scientists”, directed “from the very highest levels”.

153. President Bush set out examples of Iraq's violations, including:

- “Firsthand witnesses have informed us that Iraq has at least seven mobile factories for the production of biological agents” that “could produce within just months hundreds of pounds of biological poisons”.

³⁶ Minute Tanfield to PS/PUS [FCO], 7 February 2003, ‘Iraq Morning Meeting: Key Points’.

³⁷ Letter Manning to McDonald, 5 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

³⁸ The White House, 6 February 2003, *President Bush: “World Can Rise to this Moment” – Statement by the President*.

- The possibility of unmanned aerial vehicles with spray tanks for biological agents being “launched from a vessel off the American coast” which “could reach hundreds of miles inland”.
- Iraq might pass weapons of mass destruction to terrorists, had “provided Al Qaida with chemical and biological weapons training”, and was “harbouring a terrorist network, headed by a senior Al Qaida terrorist planner”. That network ran “a poison and explosive training center in northeast Iraq”, was “responsible for the murder ... of an American diplomat”, and “was caught producing poisons in London”.

154. President Bush stated that resolution 1441 had given Saddam Hussein a final chance, and that he was “throwing that chance away”. Having made its demands, the Security Council “must not back down, when those demands are defied and mocked by a dictator”.

155. Referring to a second resolution, President Bush stated:

“The United States would welcome and support a resolution which makes clear that the Security Council stands behind its previous demands. Yet resolutions mean little without resolve. And the United States, along with a growing coalition of nations, is resolved to take whatever action is necessary to defend ourselves and disarm the Iraqi regime.

“... We will not wait to see what terrorists and terrorist states could do with chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons. Saddam Hussein can now be expected to begin another round of empty concessions, transparently false denials. No doubt, he will play a last-minute game of deception. The game is over.

“All the world can rise to this moment ... The United Nations can renew its purpose and be a source of stability and security in the world. The Security Council can affirm that it is able and prepared to meet future challenges ... And we can give the Iraqi people their chance to live in freedom and choose their own government.

“... Saddam Hussein has the motive and the means and the recklessness and hatred to threaten the American people. Saddam Hussein will be stopped.”

Mr Blair’s interview on *Newsnight*, 6 February 2003

156. In his interview on *Newsnight* on 6 February 2003, Mr Blair said that the UK would act without a second resolution only if the inspectors reported that they could not do their job and a resolution was vetoed unreasonably.

157. Mr Blair also stated that the UK would not take military action without a majority in the Security Council.

158. Mr Blair gave an extended interview about Iraq and public services on *BBC Television's Newsnight* on 6 February.³⁹

159. During the interview Mr Jeremy Paxman challenged Mr Blair on a number of issues, including:

- whether Iraq posed a clear and imminent danger to the UK or was a potential future threat;
- what had changed since Mr Blair had stated in November 2000 that Saddam Hussein was being effectively contained;
- that the inspectors had not been “thrown out” of Iraq in 1998, but had withdrawn;
- whether, if the inspectors were present in Iraq, it would be “impossible for Saddam Hussein to continue developing weapons of mass destruction”;
- what evidence there was of Iraqi concealment;
- how much time and space the inspectors needed to do their job;
- whether Mr Blair would “give an undertaking” that he would “seek another UN resolution specifically authorising the use of force”;
- the absence of links between Baghdad and Al Qaida; and
- why action against Iraq was the priority, not other states with WMD.

160. The key elements of Mr Blair’s responses to Mr Paxman and related questions from a panel of voters are set out below.

161. Explaining his position on a second resolution, Mr Blair stated that “the only circumstances in which we would agree to use force” would be with a further resolution “except for one caveat”. That was:

“If the inspectors do report that they can’t do their work properly because Iraq is not co-operating there’s no doubt that under the terms of the existing United Nations resolution that that’s a breach of the resolution. In those circumstances there should be a further resolution.

“... If a country unreasonably in those circumstances put down a veto then I would consider action outside of that.”

162. Pressed whether he considered he was “absolutely free to defy the express will of the Security Council”, Mr Blair responded that he could not “just do it with America”, there would have to be “a majority in the Security Council”:

“[The] issue of a veto doesn’t even arise unless you get a majority in the Security Council. Secondly, the choice ... is ... If the will of the UN is the thing that is most important and I agree that it is, if there is a breach of resolution 1441... and we do nothing then we have flouted the will of the UN.”

³⁹ *BBC News*, 6 February 2003, *Transcript of Blair's Iraq Interview*.

163. Asked if he was saying that there was already an authorisation for war, Mr Blair responded:

“No, what I am saying is ... In the resolution [1441] ... we said that Iraq ... had ... a final opportunity to comply.

“The duty of compliance was defined as full co-operation with the UN inspectors. The resolution ... say[s] any failure to co-operate fully is a breach of this resolution and serious consequences i.e. action, would follow ... [W]e then also put in that resolution that there will be a further discussion in the Security Council. But the clear understanding was that if the inspectors say that Iraq is not complying and there is a breach ... then we have to act.

“... if someone ... says ... I accept there’s a breach ... but I’m issuing a veto I think that would be unreasonable ... I don’t think that’s what will happen. I think that ... if the inspectors do end up in a situation where they’re saying there is not compliance by Iraq, then I think a second resolution will issue.”

164. Asked whether he agreed it was “important to get France, Russia and Germany on board”, Mr Blair replied, “Yes ... That’s what I am trying to get.”

165. Asked if he would “give an undertaking that he wouldn’t go to war without their agreement”, Mr Blair replied:

“... supposing in circumstances where there plainly was breach ... and everyone else wished to take action, one of them put down a veto. In those circumstances it would be unreasonable.

“Then I think it [not to act] would be wrong because otherwise you couldn’t uphold the UN. Because you would have passed your resolution and then you’d have failed to act on it.”

166. Asked whether it was for the UK to judge what was “unreasonable”, Mr Blair envisaged that would be in circumstances where the inspectors, not the UK, had reported to the Council that they could not do their job.

167. Asked if the US and UK went ahead without a UN resolution would any other country listen to the UN in the future, Mr Blair replied that there was “only one set of circumstances” in which that would happen. Resolution 1441 “effectively” said that if the inspectors said they could not do their job, a second resolution would issue: “If someone then ... vetoes wrongly, what do we do?”

THE UK'S POSITION, 7 FEBRUARY 2003

168. The FCO sent guidance on “key UN aspects” of the UK’s policy on Iraq to diplomatic posts on 7 February.⁴⁰ Extracts from the guidance are summarised in the Box below.

FCO guidance on the UK’s position, 7 February 2003

Can anyone launch military action without a further Security Council resolution?

- Mr Straw had said that, if there was a material breach, the Government’s preference was for a second resolution. So far the Security Council had “faced up to its responsibilities”. The UK believed it would continue to do so, but had to “reserve our position in the event it does not”.
- Any failure by Iraq to comply would have serious consequences. The action necessary to bring Iraq into compliance would “depend on the circumstances at the time”.

Does Iraq’s declaration of 7 December mean that Iraq is co-operating?

- The declaration did not contain “any new evidence that would eliminate the outstanding disarmament questions or reduce their number”; and it was “not the full and complete declaration required by resolution 1441”.
- Mr Straw had published a list of “10 outstanding questions, identified by Dr Blix, that Iraq must answer”.⁴¹
- “Saddam and his officials would do well to remember that concealment is not compliance. Only declarations supported by evidence will give confidence in a country with such a long history ... of avoiding disclosures.”

Is Iraq co-operating with inspectors?

- Dr Blix’s update of 27 January had “highlighted a number of instances of Iraqi non-co-operation ...: failing to answer outstanding issues, identified by UNSCOM; obstructing U2 reconnaissance flights; hindering interviews; some instances of harassment of the inspectors”.

Is Iraq in material breach?

- Resolution 1441 was clear: “false statements or omissions in the declaration and failure to co-operate fully with the inspectors shall constitute a further material breach of Iraq’s obligations”.
- Mr Straw had made clear “Iraq has failed both tests”. The “inescapable conclusion” was that Iraq was “now in material breach”. War was “not inevitable. But the responsibility to avoid conflict rests with Saddam Hussein.”

⁴⁰ [Telegram 65 FCO London to Abidjan, 7 February 2003, ‘Iraq: UN Aspects’](#).

⁴¹ The National Archives, 28 January 2003, *Iraq is in Material Breach of Resolution 1441*.

Did Mr Straw's judgement that Iraq is in material breach mean the UK is taking the issue to the Council under paragraph 4 of the resolution and "going for a second resolution authorising military action"?

- "The Council, through its meetings last week, and in future meetings such as those scheduled for 5 and 14 February, is continuously assessing Iraq's compliance."
- "Resolution 1441 warned that Iraq would face 'serious consequences' if it failed to comply. We expect the Security Council to live up to its responsibilities."

How much time is left?

- "It is not a matter of time it is a matter of attitude. And the attitude we're getting from the Iraqis at the moment is just not sufficient for the eradication of the programmes we know about."

What chance is there of Security Council agreement to authorise the use of force?

- The unanimous adoption of resolution 1441 showed the "clear determination" of the Council to ensure Iraq fulfilled its obligations; it was "the toughest resolution on Iraq for years. Iraqis and others should be in no doubt that members of the Council are determined to ensure its implementation."

UNMOVIC's powers/chances of success?

- The UK Government was "committed" to giving UNMOVIC the necessary support.
- Iraq was "concealing WMD programmes ... including through the use of mobile facilities and hindering inspectors' efforts to interview personnel".
- "Inspectors are not meant to be detectives. While they will verify the accuracy, completeness and credibility of Iraq's declarations, the onus is on Iraq to show they have no WMD. It is up to them to co-operate ... and to demonstrate to the international community that they are committed to eliminating the threat of WMD ..."

Timetable?

- Iraq had submitted its declaration by the deadline required.
- Inspections had started on 27 November, "ahead of the 23 December deadline required by resolution 1441" and Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei had updated the Council 60 days later. They had offered another update on 14 February.

Mr Annan's speech, 8 February 2003

169. In a speech on 8 February, Mr Annan stated that Iraq had not yet satisfied the Security Council that it had fully disarmed, and that success in getting Iraq to disarm by inspections would be a great prize.

170. Mr Annan also stated that the United Nations had a duty to exhaust all the possibilities for a peaceful settlement before resorting to the use of force; but if that time came the Council "must face up to its responsibilities".

171. Mr Annan called for unity and warned of the consequences of the use of force without the legitimacy provided by the Security Council.

172. In a speech in Williamsburg, Virginia, on 8 February 2003, Mr Annan addressed the “anxiety, in this country and throughout the world about the prospect of war in Iraq”.⁴² He stated:

- The UN had been founded “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”, which “We all – and, first and foremost, the leaders of Iraq itself – have a duty to prevent it if we possibly can.”
- But “there would be times when force must be met with force”; and there were provisions in the UN Charter “to enable the world community to unite against aggression and defeat it”.
- Iraq had “not yet satisfied the Security Council that it has fully disarmed itself of weapons of mass destruction”.
- That was “an issue not for any State alone, but for the international community as a whole. When States decide to use force, not in self-defence but to deal with broader threats to international peace and security, there is no substitute for the unique legitimacy provided by the United Nations Security Council. States and peoples around the world attach fundamental importance to such legitimacy, and to the international rule of law.”
- It was “vitally important” that the whole international community acted in a “united way – so as to achieve greater security by strengthening, and not weakening or undermining, the multilateral treaties on disarmament and non-proliferation. Only a collective, multilateral approach can effectively curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and make the world a safer place.”
- The UN had “the duty to exhaust all the possibilities of peaceful settlement, before resorting to the use of force”.
- It was “thanks in large part to the firm challenge issued by President Bush – and the pressure that followed it – that the inspectors are back in Iraq”.
- There was “total unanimity” that “Iraq must disarm, and must do so pro-actively”.
- Success in getting Iraq to disarm “by effective and credible inspections” would be a great prize.
- If Iraq failed to make use of the “last chance” provided in resolution 1441, and continued its defiance, the Council would “have to make another grim choice, based on the findings of the inspectors ... And when that time comes, the Council must face up to its responsibilities.”
- In his experience, the Council met its responsibilities “best and most effectively when its members work in unison. The Council should proceed in a determined, reflective and deliberate manner. Its measures must be seen as firm, effective,

⁴² UN Security Council Press Release, 10 February 2003, *Secretary-General says United Nations has duty to exhaust all possibilities of peaceful settlement before resorting to use of force* (SG/SM/8600).

credible and reasonable not only by the Council members, but by the public at large.”

- What happened in Iraq would “not take place in a vacuum”; it had “implications – for better or worse – for other issues of great importance to the US and to the world. For instance, it will greatly affect the climate in which we conduct our struggle against international terrorism.”
- The UN and the US were successful when there was “strong US leadership, exercised through patient diplomatic persuasion and coalition-building”. The UN was “most useful to all its Members, including the US” when it was “united, and works as a source of collective action rather than discord”.

Discussions in Baghdad, 8 to 9 February 2003

Dr Blix’s account of the discussions in Baghdad on 8 and 9 February recorded that they had been “professional and had shed some new light, but had not really brought any new evidence”.⁴³ He and Dr ElBaradei had been given new assurances that people would be “encourage[d]” to provide interviews without minders or recording equipment and the mandate for the special commission appointed to search for any remaining chemical weapons was extended to cover any prohibited items, but the questions about U-2 flights remained unresolved until shortly after the visit.

Dr Blix concluded that they “had obtained much less than we felt was needed” but their “overall impression” had been that the Iraqis were genuinely rattled”. The Iraqis continued to do “too little, too late”.

Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei reported the discussion to the Security Council on 14 February.

The impact of military action on the terrorist threat to the UK

173. The Security Service warned on 6 February that Al Qaida would use an attack on Iraq to step up activity in the UK.

174. Mr Blair had a meeting with Mr Hoon, Mr Straw, Admiral Sir Michael Boyce (Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS)), Sir Richard Dearlove (Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS)), Ms Eliza Manningham-Buller (Director General of the Security Service), Mr Scarlett, Air Commodore Mike Heath (Head of the MOD Directorate of Targeting and Information Operations), and No.10 officials on 6 February, during which he was briefed on the targeting aspects of an air campaign, for his meetings with Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei, and on the terrorist threats to UK interests.⁴⁴

175. Mr Campbell wrote:

“C [Sir Richard Dearlove] reported that Blix was making clear there could be no aggressive inspections in mosques and cemeteries. He also said that no serious interviews had taken place at all because there had been so much intimidation.

⁴³ Blix H. *The Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction: Disarming Iraq*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2005.

⁴⁴ [Letter Rycroft to Watkins, 6 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Meeting, 6 February’](#).

“Eliza [Manningham-Buller] gave a very gloomy picture of the terrorist scene here, said that even though Al Qaida were not directly linked to Iraq, they would use an attack on Iraq to step up activity here. TB [Mr Blair] was looking really worried at that point.”⁴⁵

176. Mr Campbell added that Mr Blair had “said he had no doubt that trying to remove Saddam quickly in the event of action was the best way, but he wanted to know what he was in for”. C and Mr Scarlett had “said that there were suggestions that the Republican Guard were to be kept out of Baghdad because Saddam didn’t trust them fully”.

JIC ASSESSMENTS, 10 AND 19 FEBRUARY 2003

177. The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) Assessment of 10 February reiterated earlier warnings, described in Section 3.5, that:

- **Al Qaida and associated networks would remain the greatest terrorist threat to the UK and its activity would increase at the onset of any military action against Iraq.**
- **In the event of imminent regime collapse, Iraqi chemical and biological material could be transferred to terrorists, including Al Qaida.**

178. At the request of the MOD and the FCO, on 10 February the JIC assessed “broader terrorist activity that would be triggered by war with Iraq”.⁴⁶

179. The JIC’s Key Judgements were:

- The threat from Al Qaida will increase at the onset of any military action against Iraq. They will target Coalition forces and other Western interests in the Middle East. Attacks against Western interests elsewhere are also likely, especially in the US and UK, for maximum impact. The worldwide threat from other Islamist terrorist groups and individuals will increase significantly.
- Al Qaida associates and sympathisers may well attempt chemical or biological terrorist attacks in the Gulf, including against UK civilian targets there, in the event of war with Iraq. While individual attacks are likely to be small-scale they may be numerous. Individual attacks might inflict relatively few casualties, but will cause significant alarm.
- Al Qaida associated terrorists in Iraq and in the Kurdish Autonomous Zone in Northern Iraq could conduct attacks against Coalition forces and interests during, or in the aftermath of, war with Iraq. But Al Qaida will not carry out attacks under Iraqi direction.

⁴⁵ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

⁴⁶ [JIC Assessment, 10 February 2003, ‘International Terrorism: War with Iraq’.](#)

- Saddam's own capability to conduct terrorist attacks is limited, especially outside the Middle East. But the threat of terrorism conducted or directed by Iraqi Intelligence, including the use of chemical or biological material, cannot be discounted.
- In the event of imminent regime collapse, Iraqi chemical and biological material could be transferred to terrorists including Al Qaida, whether or not as deliberate regime policy.
- Al Qaida and associated networks will remain the greatest terrorist threat to the UK. The risk of attacks will increase following any Coalition attack on Iraq.
- Hizballah's terrorist wing will not conduct attacks in support of Saddam. But it may attack US forces in Iraq following a campaign, if it judges that the US intends to act against Hizballah, Syria or Iran. [...] Individual Palestinian terrorists may attack Western interests, without sanction from parent groups."

180. Other key elements from the Assessment are set out in the Box below.

JIC Assessment, 10 February 2003: 'International Terrorism: War with Iraq'

Al Qaida and other Islamist terrorists

- There was "continuing determination by Al Qaida and other Islamist terrorists to attack Western interests around the globe".
- The JIC had "previously judged that Al Qaida and other Islamist terrorists may initiate attacks in response to Coalition military action against Iraq, and that Al Qaida will use an attack on Iraq as further justification for terrorist attacks in the West and Israel".
- Some reports indicated that Usama Bin Laden had "instructed that there should be no terrorist attacks before the start of a conflict".
- Al Qaida intended "to exploit both anti-Western sentiment within the Muslim world, and the preoccupation of the US and UK that would come from action against Iraq".
- Al Qaida or associated groups might "also seek to conduct attacks against Israel, intended to provoke a reaction that would further inflame feeling within the Islamic world".
- The JIC believed that Islamist terrorists had manufactured and stockpiled chemical and biological (CB) material intended for attacks against both UK and US targets in the Gulf, and that: "Instructions for production of similar CB materials" had been "distributed by Gulf-based terrorists to extremists".
- The JIC had "**some doubts about the viability of the proposed attack methods**", but judged there was "**a serious intention to use CB weapons**".
- "Even if successful, individual attacks might inflict relatively few casualties. But attacks could be numerous and cause significant alarm."
- The use of CB materials was "an increasing aspiration of Islamic extremists globally, including in Europe".
- "Such material may be manufactured locally or provided by production facilities such as that operating in the Kurdish Autonomous Zone (KAZ) in Northern Iraq."

- There was “no intelligence” that Iraq had “provided CB materials to Al Qaida”.
- The JIC continued “to judge that **in the event of imminent regime collapse there would be a risk of transfer of such material, whether or not as deliberate Iraqi regime policy**”.
- The JIC also judged that Al Qaida retained “its long-standing interest in acquiring a nuclear device”, but had “no convincing intelligence that it has done so”.

Al Qaida in Iraq

- There was “no intelligence” to suggest that Al Qaida planned to carry out attacks under Iraqi direction.
- Intelligence showed “the presence of Al Qaida associated extremists in Baghdad. [...] We do not know what the current presence is, its purpose, or what relationship it has to Saddam’s regime, if any.”
- The JIC judged that it was “unlikely that the Iraqi regime” were “unaware” of the Al Qaida presence but it did not know whether those terrorists planned to conduct activities in or from Iraq.
- Intelligence suggested “the presence of [...] Al Qaida-linked terrorists in North Eastern Iraq, in the KAZ, with safe haven provided by Ansar al-Islam, an Al Qaida-associated extremist group”.
- “Some of these individuals” were “involved in production and distribution of CB materials”.
- Intelligence showed that extremists continued to arrive in the region.
- The terrorists might “re-locate in the event of imminent Coalition action” but “equally they **could conduct terrorist activities (including possible use of CB materials) or guerrilla actions against Coalition forces in Iraq**”.

Iraqi terrorism

- The JIC had previously judged that Saddam Hussein “would aspire to conduct terrorist attacks against Coalition interests in the event of military action against him, or possibly if he believed an attack was inevitable”.
- Authoritative reporting suggested that “**Iraqi Intelligence (DGI) has little reach or capability outside Iraq**”.
- The JIC had “no intelligence of Iraqi intentions to conduct CB terrorist attacks using DGI or its agents; but such activity remains a possibility”.
- Iraqi plans for terrorist activity in the event of conflict would be:
 - “... dependent on individual operatives’ willingness to implement them, which will be in doubt if they perceive regime change to be certain. **But the threat from terrorism conducted or directed by DGI cannot be discounted.**”

181. Addressing the prospects for the future, the JIC Assessment concluded:

“Despite a significant body of intelligence on Iraq’s preparations to conduct terrorism against Western interests, [...], we have seen no persuasive evidence that these efforts will be effective. **Al Qaida and associated groups will continue to represent by far the greatest terrorist threat to Western interests, and that**

threat will be heightened by military action against Iraq. The broader threat from Islamist terrorists will also increase in the event of war, reflecting intensified anti-US/anti-Western sentiment in the Muslim world, including among Muslim communities in the West. And there is a risk that the transfer of CB material or expertise, during or in the aftermath of conflict, will enhance Al Qaida's capabilities."

182. On 11 February, Usama Bin Laden issued a call for Muslims everywhere to take up arms in defence of Iraq.⁴⁷ That was followed on 16 February by a call for "compulsory jihad" by Muslims against the West.

183. A Security Service report in February 2003 concluded:

"Iraq is unlikely to use terrorism to attack the worldwide interests of the US and its allies prior to military action."⁴⁸

184. A further JIC Assessment on 19 February predicted that the upward trend in the reports of threats to the UK was likely to continue.

185. On 19 February, the JIC updated the December 2002 Assessment of the continuing threat posed by Al Qaida and associated extremists, including to the UK.⁴⁹

186. The JIC's Key Judgements were that:

- A high impact, spectacular, attack is a priority for Al Qaida, most likely against American or British interests in the Gulf, US or UK. Al Qaida will also seek to conduct frequent, perhaps multiple, small-scale attacks.
- The threat from Islamist terrorists, including Al Qaida, will increase in the event of war with Iraq.
- Attacks in the UK could include use of chemical and biological agents, probably on a small-scale (though potentially causing significant alarm). But conventional attacks remain more likely. UK interests are now on a par with US targets for some Islamist terrorists, although the US is likely to remain the priority for most.
- Both large and small-scale attacks overseas could include use of chemical, biological (or radiological) materials.
- Bin Laden's 11 February statement is probably linked to Al Qaida's intent to attack Coalition targets in the event of war with Iraq, rather than intended to trigger attacks before then.
- There are differences within the leadership of Al Qaida over strategy, although these do not so far appear to indicate any diminution of the threat."

⁴⁷ [JIC Assessment, 19 February 2003, 'International Terrorism: The Current Threat from Islamic Extremists'](#).

⁴⁸ Report Security Service, 18 February 2003.

⁴⁹ [JIC Assessment, 19 February 2003, 'International Terrorism: The Current Threat from Islamic Extremists'](#).

187. Other key elements from the Assessment were:

- There were suggestions that UK interests were “**on a par with US targets** for some Islamist terrorists” although it was “likely that the US” would “remain the priority for most”.
- The threat of a “conventional’ attack” in the UK remained “a major concern”.
- The “**threat of CB attacks in the UK**” remained; they “would probably be small-scale (but potentially high impact)”.
- There had been “a particularly high number of threat reports” during the previous “two months”, although “only a small proportion” would “materialise into terrorist action”.
- The “upward trend” was “likely to continue” as a possible conflict with Iraq approached.
- Usama Bin Laden’s statement of 11 February was “unlikely to be the trigger for attacks by Islamist extremists”, although it would “enable him to take credit for attacks conducted in response to a war with Iraq”.

188. An update of the 10 February Assessment, of terrorist activity which would be triggered by military action in Iraq, was produced by the JIC on 12 March.⁵⁰ That is addressed in Section 3.8.

UK consideration of the timing and tactics for a second resolution

189. The FCO advised No.10 on 10 February that only four votes in the Security Council could be counted on for a second resolution. It would be impossible to obtain support for a resolution explicitly authorising the use of “all necessary means” to disarm Iraq.

190. The key element in the resolution would be a sufficient link to resolution 1441 to establish that the Security Council has concluded that Iraq had failed to take its final opportunity.

191. The FCO identified three options and planned to discuss the approach with the US before tabling a draft resolution following Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei’s report to the Security Council on 14 February.

192. On 7 February, Mr Peter Ricketts, FCO Political Director, reported to Mr Straw that the UK’s strategy on Iraq was approaching “the critical phase”.⁵¹ Sir Jeremy Greenstock had advised that here was “no prospect” of getting an explicit “all necessary means” provision in a resolution. Lord Goldsmith had been consulted about more implicit options.

⁵⁰ [JIC Assessment, 12 March 2003, ‘International Terrorism: War with Iraq: Update’](#).

⁵¹ Minute Ricketts to Private Secretary [FCO], 7 February 2003, ‘Iraq Strategy’.

193. Mr Ricketts advised Mr Straw that possible elements for a resolution included an ultimatum (to allow the possibility of persuading Saddam Hussein to leave to be explored) and a possible reference to a further resolution authorising post-conflict work.

194. Mr Ricketts suggested that the right channel for discussing text with the US would be through the UN Missions in New York, and highlighted the need for an intensive campaign, in close co-ordination with the US, to lobby other members of the Security Council.

195. Mr Straw endorsed the recommendations.⁵²

196. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that he had reassured Mr Annan that it was unlikely that the UK would circulate a draft resolution the following week.⁵³ There were likely to be difficulties in the Council.

197. In a discussion with Ambassador John Negroponte, US Permanent Representative to the UN, Sir Jeremy had emphasised the importance of a draft which “helped bring people on board”. That would determine whether to include an ultimatum and whether to mention “serious consequences” or “all necessary means”.

198. Mr Straw’s Private Office forwarded advice on the timings and tactics for a second resolution to Sir David Manning on 10 February.⁵⁴

199. The FCO advised:

- Only four votes in the Security Council (the US, UK, Bulgaria and Spain) could be “counted on” for a second resolution.
- Russia, Chile and Pakistan could be “moving in our direction” and China also seemed “to be moving away from a veto”.
- France, Germany and Syria remained “strongly opposed” and Mexico was “highly sceptical”. The position of France and President Chirac was described as “heavily dependent on strength of evidence”.
- Guinea, Cameroon and Angola might be “coming round to supporting a second resolution but needed working on”.

200. The FCO provided a more detailed matrix summarising the positions of the UN Security Council members with proposals for further lobbying by the UK and others, but concluded that “without more dramatic evidence of Iraqi non-compliance, most members of the UNSC will remain non-committal”.

201. On the text of a second resolution, the FCO advised that it would be “impossible to obtain support for a second resolution explicitly authorising ‘all necessary means’”.

⁵² Manuscript comment Straw on Minute Ricketts to Private Secretary [FCO], 7 February 2003, ‘Iraq Strategy’.

⁵³ Telegram 228 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 8 February 2003, ‘Personal Iraq: 7 February’.

⁵⁴ [Letter Owen to Manning, 10 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Second Resolution’](#).

202. The FCO identified three options which, it believed, met the legal requirements and reflected Lord Goldsmith's advice, that "the key element of any resolution would be a sufficient link back [to] resolution 1441, to establish that the [Security] Council has concluded that Iraq has failed to take its 'final opportunity'".

203. All three options included a first operative paragraph (OP) stating that the Security Council decided that:

"Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it in resolution 1441 (2002) by submitting a declaration pursuant to that resolution containing [false statements and] omissions and by failing to comply with and co-operate fully in the implementation of, that resolution".

204. The options also included a final OP determining that the Council had decided "to remain seized of the matter".

205. The difference between the three options was whether to include an additional OP containing an "ultimatum", "couched in general terms".

206. To avoid the risk of opening up the debate about whether a further determination that Iraq had failed to comply with the ultimatum was needed from the Security Council, the FCO proposed "a formula which would, in effect, authorise action against Iraq unless the Council took the decision that Iraq had decided to come into compliance".

207. The FCO draft proposed: "unless ... the Council concludes before 5 March that the Government of Iraq has taken an unconditional and irreversible decision [at the highest levels] to come into compliance with its obligations under resolution 1441 (2002) and previous relevant resolutions" either:

- "the final opportunity granted to Iraq in resolution 1441 (2002) will expire on 5 March 2003"; or
- "Iraq will face the serious consequences it has been repeatedly warned of, including in paragraph 13 of resolution 1441 (2002)".

208. The draft provided for the decision to be "based on" reports from Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei.

209. The FCO explained that it was:

"... possible to imagine more explicit options, particularly those which include an explicit finding that Iraq is in 'material breach'. This would not be strictly necessary from a legal point of view. But, as a matter of tactics, we will need to consider with the Americans whether we should start with a more ambitious text ..."

210. The FCO aim was to agree the text and tactics with the US in New York “in the course of next week”, but not to “float” the ideas with other Council members until after Dr Blix’s report to the Security Council on 14 February, although that might depend on events.

211. Copies of the letter were sent to Lord Goldsmith and to Mr Hoon’s Private Office as well as to Sir Jeremy Greenstock and Sir Christopher Meyer.

212. Lord Goldsmith’s advice, that the key element of a second resolution would be the provision of a sufficient link back to resolution 1441 to establish that the Security Council had concluded Iraq had failed to take the final opportunity to disarm provided by the resolution,⁵⁵ is addressed in Section 5.

Tripartite declaration, 10 February 2003

213. *Der Spiegel* published an article on 10 February, entitled *The Mirage Project*, reporting that French and German officials had been holding secret talks aimed at installing a disarmament regime in Iraq monitored by aircraft patrolling Iraqi airspace and “thousands” of armed UN peacekeepers to “secure a victory without bullets”.⁵⁶

214. Mr Jonathan Powell, Mr Blair’s Chief of Staff, sent a translation of the article to Mr Blair suggesting that the UK needed to produce an ultimatum in a UN resolution along the lines that:

- Iraq was not co-operating or disarming.
- The international community intended to ensure that resolution 1441 was “implemented in full”.
- Iraq would face serious consequences if by 28 February it did not accept and begin full implementation of the following steps:
 - a “No-Fly Zone covering the whole country”, patrolled by international aircraft;
 - an international ground force to “enforce disarmament”, comprising an “international coalition of the willing headed by a British general with approx 40,000 troops”;
 - a “UN mandate for governance of Iraq while the international force is there making Iraq a UN protectorate under a UN permanent co-ordinator”; and
 - establishment of a “special UN court of justice” to “punish infringements of the resolutions and human rights infringements”.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ [Letter Adams to Grainger, 6 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Second Resolution’](#).

⁵⁶ *Der Spiegel*, 10 February 2003, ‘Translation – Extract from an article entitled *The Mirage Project* in *Der Spiegel*, 10 February 2003, attached to Note (handwritten), Powell to PM, [undated], [untitled].

⁵⁷ Note (handwritten) Powell to PM, [undated], [untitled], attaching Paper ‘UN Resolution: Ultimatum’.

215. France, Germany and Russia issued a tripartite declaration on 10 February, reaffirming the objective of disarming Iraq as soon as possible but stating that potential of resolution 1441 for peaceful disarmament had not yet been fully explored.

216. Sir John Holmes described the declaration as “a symbolic act” which was “significant”.

217. In a press conference in Paris on 10 February, President Chirac and President Putin issued a tripartite declaration on behalf of the Governments of France, Germany and Russia which stressed the alternatives to the use of force, and the need to give peaceful disarmament every opportunity.⁵⁸

218. The main points of the declaration were:

- Reaffirmation that disarmament of Iraq in accordance with a series of resolutions following resolution 687 (1991) remained the common aim of the international community and must be achieved as soon as possible.
- The solution “must be inspired” by the principles of the UN Charter as stated recently by Mr Annan in his speech of 8 February.
- Resolution 1441 (2002) offered a framework but its “possibilities” had “not yet been fully explored”.
- Inspections had “already yielded results”.
- The three countries favoured “the continuation of the inspections and the substantial strengthening of their human and technical capacities by all possible means”.
- There was “still an alternative to war”.
- The use of force could “only be considered as a last resort”.
- The three countries were “determined to give every chance to the peaceful disarmament of Iraq”.
- Iraq had to “co-operate actively” with the inspectors and “face up to its responsibilities in full”.
- The position expressed reflected that “of a large number of countries, particularly within the Security Council”.

219. Sir John Holmes, told the Inquiry that the tripartite declaration was: “a symbolic act ... to say something very different from what we and others were saying at the time”, which “was, of course, significant”.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Embassy of the Republic of France in the UK, *Joint declaration by Russia, Germany and France on Iraq, Paris 10.02.03*.

⁵⁹ Public hearing, 29 June 2010, page 37.

220. The British Embassy Moscow reported on 13 February that, during the visit to France, President Putin had said “so far we see no need to exercise our right of veto”; and it was also reported that he had then said that “with France or alone”, Russia would veto an “unreasonable use of force”.⁶⁰ He had described the tripartite declaration as “the first attempt since the Second World War to settle a serious and acute international issue outside the regime of blocs”; and “if we want the world to be more predictable, and easier to forecast, and therefore a safer place, it should be a multipolar world”.

221. The Embassy also reported that, referring to the veto in a subsequent conversation with journalists in Bordeaux, President Putin had said: “We have used this right more than once, and we can do it again.” He had also warned against “fuelling controversy over this issue”, and stressed that “Russia will never return to the state of conflict with its partners either in Europe or North America.”

222. The Embassy commented that President Putin’s remarks in France had “had a harder edge to them. But this is probably in part a negotiating tactic in advance of the series of key events ... over the next few days; and in part a desire to please his host.” The French Embassy in Moscow continued to “believe that Russia would not veto” a second resolution.

The US position, 10 and 11 February 2003

223. After consultations in New York on 10 February, Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that the US priority was to “pour cold water” on the tripartite proposals.

224. The US was “very hesitant” about the UK’s ideas for an ultimatum.

225. Following discussions in New York on 10 February, Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that the US had agreed there should be no action in the Security Council until after 14 February; the immediate priority was “to pour cold water on the latest Franco-German ideas”.⁶¹

226. Sir Jeremy also reported that France had written to Dr Blix to expand its ideas for strengthening the inspection regime, drawing on the tripartite declaration, but had declined to share the text until Dr Blix had responded.

227. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that the US was “still very hesitant about any variant of the ultimatum”, because it would give the Security Council a second chance to consider whether the ultimatum had been implemented. By putting the onus on the reports of the inspectors, it could also give them an effective veto. Sir Jeremy had informed Ambassador Negroponte that the UK needed “a second stage of Council action beyond 1441, and a determination, even implicit, of material breach. After further

⁶⁰ [Telegram 53 Moscow to FCO London, 13 February 2003, ‘Putin in France and DUMA Activity’.](#)

⁶¹ [Telegram 236 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 11 February 2003, ‘Iraq: 10 February Bilaterals’.](#)

discussion, Negroponte had “conceded the possibility of issuing an ultimatum provided that we had the lock in our favour”.

228. Separately, Sir Jeremy Greenstock provided a revised draft resolution.⁶² The draft, which had been agreed with the US, recalled the provisions of previous resolutions including resolution 1441 and, anticipating the reports from Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei on 14 February, added a draft preambular paragraph (PP) suggesting that the Security Council was “Deeply concerned” that the reports had “made clear” that Iraq had “not co-operated fully with inspections nor addressed deficiencies in the declaration” submitted pursuant to resolution 1441.

229. The draft resolution proposed that the Security Council should decide that “Iraq’s submission of a declaration containing false statements and omissions and continuing failure to comply with, and co-operate fully in the implementation of, resolution 1441 (2002)” constituted “a further material breach of Iraq’s obligations under relevant resolutions of the Council and that Iraq accordingly has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it by the Council in resolution 1441 (2002)”.

230. The draft did not contain a deadline, but stated that “Iraq alone” was “fully responsible for the serious consequences it must now face as a result of its continued violations of its obligations under the resolutions of the Council”; and that the Council had decided “to remain seized of the matter”.

231. Sir Christopher Meyer advised that President Bush would not tolerate another two months of negotiations. Washington was getting ready for war in mid- to late March, although it did not want to act alone.

232. In preparation for a visit to Washington by Mr Hoon (see Section 6.2), Sir Christopher Meyer advised overnight on 10/11 February that: “Washington is getting ready for war.”⁶³

233. Sir Christopher wrote:

“For the Administration and the Hill the time has come to go to war. Powell’s presentation to the UNSC has boosted public support for war, including support for action without UN approval, provided that some Allies join in. In Congress it has silenced most of those who were asking for more evidence. The cautious multilateralists of both parties now accept that the case has been made ...

“The Administration would go to war without a further UNSCR, but knows that others need one. For the time being Bush is following the UN route and has said publicly that he would support a second resolution. But he will not tolerate another two months’ negotiation. Everything points towards early action, possibly by

⁶² [Telegram 237 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 11 February 2003, ‘Iraq: 10 February’.](#)

⁶³ [Telegram 189 Washington to FCO London, 11 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Defence Secretary’s Visit to Washington – 11-12 February’.](#)

mid- to late March. The military will be fully in place, and, the White House believes, political support, both domestically and within the region, will wane, the longer Bush is seen to prevaricate.”

234. Sir Christopher commented that the US Administration considered that Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei’s visit to Baghdad had achieved “next to nothing”. It knew:

“... full well that some in the UNSC will seize on the faintest glimmer of hope of Iraqi co-operation as a reason to delay decisions. The US bottom line remains full Iraqi co-operation ...”

235. Sir Christopher also commented:

“Although militarily capable of doing so, the US does not want to go it alone. On the Sunday talk shows, Powell and Rice highlighted the support of eighteen European allies and of Turkey and Jordan ...”

236. Referring to the “shenanigans in NATO over precautionary planning for the defence of Turkey”, Sir Christopher added:

“These tussles with the international system will only deepen US scepticism about a role for the UN in managing the aftermath in Iraq.”

237. Mr Blair suggested to President Bush on 11 February that a second resolution might include a decision that Iraq was in material breach, an ultimatum that Saddam should leave, and a timeline.

238. When he telephoned President Bush on 11 February, Mr Blair discussed opinions in the UK and international community, including the reports of a Franco-German “plan” which had appeared in *Der Spiegel* and the forthcoming European Council.⁶⁴

239. Mr Blair suggested that a second resolution might include three main points:

- a decision that Iraq was in material breach of UNSCR 1441;
- an ultimatum that Saddam should leave; and
- a timeline.

Even if the ultimatum failed, it would show that the UK had been prepared to resolve the issue peacefully right to the end.

240. Mr Blair and President Bush also discussed the need for US action if a second resolution was to be achieved.

⁶⁴ Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 11 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Bush, 11 February’.

241. Mr Campbell wrote that, during the telephone call, President Bush had been “very solicitous” about Mr Blair’s political position and had “said he was determined to help” get a second resolution.⁶⁵

242. The record of the discussion confirms Mr Campbell’s comment.⁶⁶

243. Mr Campbell also wrote that President Bush had been “livid with the French and Germans, less so with the Russians.⁶⁷ But he was just as worried as TB was.” Mr Blair “said the problem was everyone accepted Saddam was bad, evil, and a threat, but they didn’t necessarily believe that gave you a reason to go to war. We had to be the people putting forward one last push for peace.”

244. In a subsequent conversation with Dr Rice, Sir David Manning said that in his report on 14 February, Dr Blix would need to answer the questions which had been raised at the end of January. They were central to the issue of non-co-operation.⁶⁸

245. In a discussion on public opinion, Sir David Manning said that the position in the UK was:

“... a great deal more difficult ... There was a strong wish to find a peaceful way of disarming Saddam and avoid taking military action. French and German claims that this was still possible were seized on eagerly, however implausible the proposals ...”

246. Sir David and Dr Rice also discussed the possibility of public statements from President Bush emphasising that resolving the Iraq crisis through the UN was critical to the future of the Security Council. Sir David encouraged Dr Rice to consider whether President Bush would be willing to speak out strongly about the need to give new impetus to the MEPP: “That would have a great impact” on international opinion.

247. Mr Campbell wrote that, on 11 February, Mr Blair had “decided that maybe we took the wrong line” on the *Der Spiegel* report, “maybe we should say it was interesting because it accepted conventional inspections wouldn’t work and was effectively arguing for taking the country over without saying so”. Mr Blair and No.10 officials had “grasped our way to a plan that was basically wait for Blix, then surface the elements of a second resolution that included the ultimatum, then Saddam to go, and if he didn’t we were going to go for it”.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

⁶⁶ Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 11 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Bush, 11 February’.

⁶⁷ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

⁶⁸ Letter Manning to McDonald, 11 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

⁶⁹ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

248. Sir John Holmes reported that he had been informed that little more had been discussed between Presidents Putin and Chirac than had appeared in the declaration; the report in *Der Spiegel* was “extravagant”; and France had never raised the idea of UN peacekeeping forces.⁷⁰

Mr Straw’s speech, 11 February 2003

249. Mr Straw set out a detailed case for confronting the challenge posed by Iraq in a speech to the International Institute for Strategic Studies on 11 February.

250. In a speech made at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) on 11 February, Mr Straw set out “the disturbing outcome of a failure to act decisively to secure Iraq’s disarmament” and the need, “for the sake of the Iraqi people, long-term stability in the Middle East, the credibility of the UN and the cause of international law and collective security”, to confront the challenge posed by Iraq.⁷¹

251. Mr Straw argued that international terrorism and the proliferation of WMD were the “crucial strategic questions of our time” and the response to those threats would “determine the stability of the world for generations to come”. That was “an awesome responsibility” which called for “courageous leadership” and required “the vision and foresight to act decisively and – if necessary – with military force before our worst nightmares are realised”.

252. Saddam Hussein’s regime typified the threat in which rogue regimes sheltered individuals plotting “mayhem and mass murder in our streets”. Mr Straw stated:

“Weapons of mass destruction have been a central pillar of Saddam’s dictatorship since the 1980s. He has amassed poisons and viruses both to suppress his own people, and to threaten his neighbours. He has relentlessly pursued his ultimate ambition, the acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability, in flagrant disregard of SCRs and Iraq’s obligations as a non-nuclear weapons state under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. His pursuit of these weapons has lain at the heart of the UN’s stand-off with Iraq for the past 12 years.”

253. Examining “six of the most commonly expressed arguments about the UK Government’s approach”, Mr Straw argued that:

- **The Iraqi threat to Europe and the US was not “overstated”.** Resolution 1441 recognised the “singular menace” from Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction. UNSCOM had had some successes, including overseeing the destruction of “significant quantities” of weaponry, but when the inspectors left in 1998, it was “clear that the regime continued to hold vast stocks of deadly weaponry”. The absence of inspectors since 1998 had “allowed Saddam to

⁷⁰ Telegram 77 Paris to FCO London, 11 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Chirac and Putin in Paris’.

⁷¹ The National Archives, 11 February 2003, *Iraq: A challenge we must confront*.

accelerate his weapons programmes”. The report published in autumn 2002 (the September dossier) had “demonstrated determined efforts” to enhance Iraq’s nuclear, biological and chemical capabilities. Dr Blix’s report to the Security Council in January had “underlined these concerns”. Diplomacy, intelligence co-operation, reinforced export controls, and interdiction and disruption of supplies were options being used to “frustrate the ambitions” of other regimes. But “in respect of Iraq”, those options had been “exhausted ... over 12 long years”. It was the “deadly combination of capability and intent” which made Saddam Hussein “uniquely dangerous”. Rogue regimes which showed “total disregard for the rule of law, and share the terrorists’ hatred of our values” were the “most likely source of materials and know-how”. Given Saddam Hussein’s “longstanding support for terrorist causes”, the “terrifying possibility that his poisons and diseases” would “find their way into the hands of Al Qaida and its sympathisers” could not be ruled out.

- **Backing diplomatic efforts with the credible threat of force did not undermine international law.** Law required enforcement and Iraq’s failure to comply with “23 out of 27 separate obligations under Chapter VII of the UN Charter” had “done great harm to the UN’s credibility”. Failure “to back our words with deeds” would “follow one of the most catastrophic precedents in history”: the failure of the League of Nations to face up to the challenges of the 1930s. If the weapons inspectors confirmed “the behaviour which has put Iraq in continuing material breach, then the case for a second resolution will be overwhelming”.
- **Disarmament by force could be needed even if containment was working.** The key was Iraq’s immediate compliance with resolution 1441 and its active co-operation to ensure its disarmament. The “proposals” for a No-Fly Zone covering the whole of Iraq and for thousands of UN troops to assist and protect the inspectors were “simply not feasible in the absence of complete Iraqi co-operation” and “not necessary” if there was “co-operation”. If the weapons inspectors were “unable to provide” a guarantee that Iraq was complying with its obligations, Iraq would “have to face the ‘serious consequences’” defined in resolution 1441; disarmament by force. The UK did not want war and hoped that “Saddam Hussein would recognise the gravity of the situation and embark on the pathway to peaceful disarmament”, but “the time had arrived to back our demands with the credible threat of force”.
- **Military action would not have a disproportionate effect on the Iraqi people or the wider region.** The UK had to “strain every sinew, even at this late stage, to avoid war; to force Saddam to face the fact that he has to comply; to offer, as we have already, an escape route to exile for him and his entourage”. But if military action did “prove necessary”, “huge efforts” would “be made to ensure that the suffering of the Iraqi people” was “as limited as is possible”. The Iraqi people deserved “the chance to live fulfilling lives free from the oppression and terror of Saddam”; and to “choose their own destiny and government, and

to pursue a prosperous life within a safe environment”. The UK’s first objective was disarmament, but the “next priority would be to work with the United Nations to help the Iraqi people recover ... and allow their country to move towards one that is ruled by law, respects international obligations and provides effective and representative government”.

- **Control of Iraq’s oil was not the motivation for action.** The mission was disarmament. Iraq’s oilfields would be protected from any acts of environmental terrorism, and the revenue generated would be used to benefit the Iraqi people.
- **The UK was not guilty of double standards in relation to the conflict between Israel and Palestine.** The UK was “working tirelessly” to achieve the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions in respect of Israel/Palestine; a conflict that had “long provided terrorists with a convenient rallying point”. As long as that dispute was unresolved, collective security would “remain elusive”.

Discussions on the timing and content of a second resolution

254. Mr Straw told Secretary Powell that the UK wanted to delay tabling a resolution until after a special European Council which would take place on 17 February.

255. The US continued to resist UK proposals for a draft resolution containing either an ultimatum to Saddam to leave or a timetable for a decision.

256. Mr Straw and Secretary Powell spoke three times on 11 February.

257. In the first conversation, they discussed US reservations about including an ultimatum in the resolution and the timing of a draft.⁷²

258. Following a discussion with Mr Blair, Mr Straw telephoned Secretary Powell to set out concerns that tabling a resolution before the European Council would be interpreted as pre-empting the meeting.⁷³ Mr Straw stated that the “critical thing” on both timing and content would be “what tactically was most likely to ensure nine votes and no veto”. He had asked Sir Jeremy Greenstock for a menu of options.

259. Secretary Powell had asked whether Mr Blair really wanted an ultimatum in the resolution; it might be better for it to be delivered personally by President Bush or Mr Blair.

260. The record of the FCO Iraq evening meeting on 11 February reported that Mr Blair and Mr Straw had agreed that the UK would run with the text of a draft resolution agreed

⁷² Letter McDonald to Manning, 11 February 2003, ‘Foreign Secretary’s Conversation with Colin Powell, 11 February’.

⁷³ Letter McDonald to Manning, 11 February 2003, ‘Foreign Secretary’s Second Conversation with Colin Powell, 11 February’.

between the US and UK Missions to the UN in New York which did not include any ultimatum or deadline.⁷⁴

261. In a third conversation, Mr Straw and Secretary Powell again discussed the timing and the US reservations about including an ultimatum.⁷⁵

262. Mr Straw reported that he had argued in favour of inclusion, but it had subsequently occurred to him that it might be possible to table a simple resolution and discuss the merits of an ultimatum with partners. If that attracted a consensus, it could be adopted. That could be less difficult than starting off with an ultimatum and then dropping it from a resolution.

263. Sir Jeremy Greenstock advised that the US wanted to keep the option of tabling the resolution immediately after the reports to the Security Council on 14 February to send the message that the US and UK were not going to wait around.

264. Sir Jeremy also stated that Security Council members would be very reluctant to grant cover for military action within weeks and the draft resolution might not secure nine positive votes.

265. The FCO instructions to the UK Permanent Mission to the UN in New York (UKMIS New York) on 11 February set out the questions the UK wanted Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei to address: “to ensure that the 14 February update ... is as uncomfortable as possible for the Iraqis ... and ensure the Iraqis cannot avoid the hard questions.”⁷⁶

266. Following consultations with Ambassador Negroponte on 11 February, Sir Jeremy Greenstock advised that Washington was coming to the conclusion that it might be necessary to table the draft resolution on 14 February to keep a priority place for the US/UK language, provide an alternative to the Franco-German proposals and create an “implication that the US/UK were not going to wait around”.⁷⁷

267. Sir Jeremy reported that Dr Rice’s response to the UK “ultimatum ideas” had been “reluctant”.

268. Sir Jeremy also reported that, in a conversation between Mr John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister, and Mr Annan, Dr Blix had said “there was no evidence of a fundamental shift in the Iraqi approach, though he ‘detected the possibility of a shift in the future’”. Mr Annan was reported to have:

“... given ... the impression that he accepted the inevitability of military action at some point, but was focused on gaining more time: not for the inspectors, because

⁷⁴ Minute Tanfield to PS/PUS [FCO], 11 February 2003, ‘Iraq Evening Meeting: Key Points’.

⁷⁵ Letter McDonald to Manning, 12 February 2003, ‘Foreign Secretary’s Third Conversation with Colin Powell, 11 February’.

⁷⁶ Telegram 82 FCO London to UKMIS New York, 11 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Blix and ElBaradei’.

⁷⁷ [Telegram 239 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 12 February 2003, ‘Iraq’.](#)

he realised the limitations; more for the Security Council, as he saw that more than a few days would be needed to find language that brought people together.”

269. Commenting on the debate in London on ideas for the final stages of diplomatic activity, Sir Jeremy advised that the Franco-German proposals for reinforced inspections would be:

“... recognised by the Security Council middle ground as a delaying tactic and unlikely to make a difference on complete disarmament ... But Council members remain very reluctant to grant cover for military action within weeks ... The Americans may be upbeat about the likely effect of their lobbying and cajoling. But I cannot say at this point that we would definitely get nine votes for a material breach resolution on the basis of what seem to be the Blix/EI Baradei intentions for the 14 February report.

“Injecting an ultimatum ... might possibly help at the margins ... though I would hesitate to bank on it. If the ultimatum was directed at Saddam’s departure ... that would be a clearer criterion than offering up elements of WMD. But the Americans are right that the Council majority are expressly opposed to the idea of regime change ...”

270. Sir Jeremy suggested consideration of “a more radical halfway-house plan”:

“If the UK has to be sure of recapturing the initiative, we may have to think bolder. We should test the Franco-German model to destruction. A Chapter VII resolution authorising all necessary means for the specific purpose of hunting down hidden WMD is worth considering. The objective has to be to place enough Coalition troops on the ground, with No-Fly and No-Drive Zones declared by the Security Council throughout Iraq, for mobile WMD transports etc to be tracked down, revealed and destroyed. Baghdad and other major cities would be left to one side, at least for the first stage. There could be arrangements for interviews offering greater protection than the present.”

271. Sir Jeremy thought that, when faced with the alternatives, Council members would “rally to this approach”. But it might not “readily fit” the American “military preferences”. Sir Jeremy wrote:

“... the most important aspect ... would be Saddam’s reaction. He would bitterly oppose a UN-authorised take-over of parts of Iraq. If it were imposed on him, he might quickly break the no-resistance conditions. In that case, the ‘last resort’ would have been much more clearly established.”

272. Sir Jeremy concluded:

“This plan does not have to be used immediately. We could go through the stages of presenting and arguing for the second resolution of the kind we have been discussing, before coming to a final decision. But the prospects of a 15-0 SCR

(even the Arabs might see the advantages, provided the end-objective was an Iraq for Iraqis), and of a stronger consensus in the EU and NATO, needs to be weighed against all the lateral implications of the wave we are riding at present.”

273. Sir David Manning told Dr Rice that there was a need to regain the political and public relations initiative.

274. Mr Blair was considering the approach to a second resolution.

275. Mr Blair had also identified the need to make the case publicly that the US and the UK were making ‘one last push for peace’.

276. On 12 February, Sir David Manning and Dr Rice discussed the progress of inspections, including the outcome of the visit by Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei to Baghdad.⁷⁸ Sir David commented that the inspectors only needed intelligence because Iraq was not co-operating.

277. Sir David Manning also gave Dr Rice an account of the UK’s current thinking on a second resolution, which he described as “very much work in progress”. He reported that Mr Blair had “yet to take any decisions”; the UK and US now had to regain the political and public relations initiative.

278. Mr Blair would be making a major speech that weekend to “set out the arguments again, but to do so in the context of one last pitch for peace”. Mr Blair “would probably say that the time had come to accept that Saddam was in breach of 1441 and that we should now table a second resolution insisting that he must go or face the consequences”. Sir David said that the ultimatum need not be in the resolution itself, but that “we must indicate our readiness to allow to Saddam to leave within a short, specified period so offering the chance of avoiding war”.

279. Sir David also outlined Mr Blair’s plan to write to Mr Costas Simitis, the Greek Prime Minister in advance of the European Council, and the need to generate momentum to attract support.

280. Commenting on the position after the call, Sir David wrote that the UK would need to think further about the timing for tabling the draft resolution over the next 24 hours.

281. The UK decided to continue to explore the possibility of including an ultimatum in the resolution with the US.

282. The FCO informed Sir Jeremy Greenstock on 12 February that Ministers were “broadly content” with the draft resolution he had provided the previous day (following discussions on 10 February) but had decided, before receipt of his later advice, that

⁷⁸ Letter Manning to McDonald, 12 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

the UK should continue to explore with the US the possibility of adding an ultimatum, aimed particularly at getting Saddam to step down, to the draft resolution.⁷⁹

283. Two possible options for an ultimatum in a draft resolution were set out:

“Decides that unless the Council concludes before x March 2003 that a government has emerged in Iraq which [intends to] [has demonstrated its intention to] [has taken an unconditional and irreversible decision to] come into compliance with its obligations under resolution 1441 (2002) and previous relevant resolutions, Iraq will face the serious consequences it has been repeatedly warned of, including in para 13 of resolution 1441 (2002).”

Or:

“Decides that unless the Council concludes before x March 2003 that the government of Iraq has taken an unconditional and irreversible decision to come into compliance with its obligations under resolution 1441 (2002) and previous relevant resolutions, Iraq will face the serious consequences it has repeatedly been warned of, including in para 13 of resolution 1441 (2002).”

284. The telegram also set out the option, identified by Mr Straw following his third conversation with Secretary Powell on 11 February, of taking soundings before tabling an ultimatum.

285. In relation to Sir Jeremy’s own suggestions, the FCO took the view that there would be “serious obstacles”. It did not think that authorising all necessary means to hunt down WMD would meet the disarmament objectives, particularly if Baghdad and other cities were left aside. The key was:

“... co-operation rather than resources. For example work on BW can be very easily concealed under legitimate guises ... Without full access to documents and full co-operation from personnel, it would be impossible to guarantee success.”

286. The FCO also identified difficulties with providing scientists “adequate protection while they remain under Saddam’s regime”, and practical problems with assembling and protecting a UN force.

287. The record of the FCO Iraq evening meeting on 12 February reported concerns that some members of the US Administration were “increasingly inclined” to table the resolution straight after Dr Blix’s report to the Security Council on 14 February.⁸⁰

288. Sir Jeremy Greenstock told Dr Blix that the US was worried about losing backing and momentum and saw only one way to deal with Iraq’s non-co-operation.

⁷⁹ Telegram [number unknown] FCO London to UKMIS New York, 12 February 2003, ‘Iraq – Second Resolution’.

⁸⁰ Tanfield to PS/PUS [FCO], 12 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Evening Meeting: Key Points’.

289. Sir Jeremy recommended that in the Security Council meeting on 14 February, the UK should seek to draw out the truth about non-co-operation.

290. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that he had told Dr Blix on 12 February that an ultimatum remained an option and that they had discussed how to create a concrete ultimatum which required Iraqi co-operation on substance.⁸¹

291. Sir Jeremy had set out the UK position that:

“... pushing for reinforced inspections was a mistake. The Security Council needed to realise that Saddam was in denial of 1441 and there had to be a firm decision that he either gave up his WMD or left Iraq, or faced military action.”

292. In response to Dr Blix’s questions about the issue coming to a head after only two and a half months and the timing of military action, Sir Jeremy had replied that, “more than the climate”, the “US was worried about losing backing and momentum and saw only one way to deal with Iraqi non-co-operation. That was why we were running out of time”. He had “added” that he had “always felt that the best way to keep the UN together was through a WMD find which demonstrated the Iraqi lie”. In Sir Jeremy’s view, “by distracting from the main issue of Iraqi co-operation and giving the Iraqis false hope, the French ideas could make war more likely”.

293. Sir Jeremy reported that Dr Blix had also raised the possibility of using UNMOVIC expertise in a post-war scenario.

294. Commenting on the conversation, Sir Jeremy reported that Dr Blix “genuinely believes that inspections still have something to contribute, but could not claim that he had acquired anything of substance out of the recent period”. Dr Blix was:

“... torn between time for more peaceful disarmament through inspections and helping to pile on the pressure to make the Iraqis crack. He would have been more inclined to follow the latter course if he felt less certain that the Americans were hell-bent on war anyway.”

295. Sir Jeremy suggested that Mr Straw should use his intervention in the Council meeting on 14 February to pose questions for Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei “that draw out the non-co-operation truths”.

PRIME MINISTER’S QUESTIONS, 12 FEBRUARY 2003

296. Mr Blair told the House of Commons on 12 February that the Security Council should be the judge of whether there was full and complete co-operation from Iraq with the inspectors.

⁸¹ [Telegram 247 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 13 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Dr Blix’.](#)

297. Mr Blair also emphasised the costs to the Iraqi people of continuing the policy of containment.

298. Mr Blair was asked several questions on Iraq during Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) on 12 February.⁸²

299. In response to questions about whether he would support Dr Blix if he asked on 14 February for more time for inspections, Mr Blair said that the UK would "take full account of anything" Dr Blix said, but the issue was about Iraq's co-operation and the time needed to make a judgement about whether that was happening:

"... the judgement that has to be made in the end is one by the Security Council as to whether there is full and complete co-operation by Iraq with the United Nations inspectors."

300. Mr Blair warned that there was a:

"... danger that we get sucked back into delays of months then years, with the inspectors playing a game of hide and seek with Saddam and we are unable then to shut down the weapons of mass destruction programme ... that everyone accepts is a threat and a danger to the world."

301. Asked whether military action would make peace in the Middle East more likely and Britain less of a target for terrorists, Mr Blair replied that if Saddam Hussein had "complied fully" with resolution 1441, conflict would not be an issue. The choice was Saddam's, but:

"... if we fail to implement resolution 1441, and if we lack the determination and resolution to make sure that that mandate is carried, the consequence will be that Saddam is free to develop weapons of mass destruction. Also there will be an increasing risk that the threat of those weapons of mass destruction and the existing terrorist threat will join together. This country will then be less secure and safe."

302. Asked why people were not persuaded of the threat, Mr Blair replied that it would "be different if there is a second resolution". People believed that Saddam Hussein was "evil" and that there was "a threat to this country from his accumulated weapons of mass destruction", but they asked if there was an alternative to war. That alternative was "full and complete co-operation".

303. Asked what new, proven or imminent threat there was to justify war, Mr Blair said that had been identified in resolution 1441 and the preceding 12 years and that there were two ways to deal with it, disarmament or sanctions. If there was a decision to go to war, the morality of that "should weigh heavily on our conscience because innocent people die as well as the guilty in a war". But the way in which Saddam Hussein had

⁸² House of Commons, *Official Report*, 12 February 2003, columns 857-860.

implemented the policy of sanctions meant that too was “a moral choice with bad and devastating consequences for the Iraqi people”.

304. Asked about the origins and accuracy of the dossier produced by No.10, (‘Iraq – Its Infrastructure of Concealment, Deception and Intimidation’ – see Section 4.3), Mr Blair said that the part of the document that dealt with intelligence was from intelligence sources and was accurate, as was the document as a whole.

305. In his memoir, Mr Cook wrote:

“What was novel ... was the way in which Tony has shifted the terms in which he justifies military intervention. For the first time he argued that war would be preferable to sanctions because of the suffering and malnutrition that comes in the wake of sanctions.”⁸³

UK views on UNMOVIC inspections

306. At Sir Richard Dearlove’s request, his Private Secretary sent an update on the progress of inspections to Sir David Manning on 12 February.⁸⁴

307. Sir David was told that the strike rate in relation to the UK intelligence-led inspections was low, but it had been responsible for two out of three UNMOVIC finds to date, from more than 550 inspections. In addition, “even where there is no WMD, something else has often been concealed [...] Our inspections have revealed the Iraqi game.”

308. Sir Richard’s update also stated that “we needed to keep going in the expectation that an intelligence-led inspection would lead to a find or a solid refusal of entry”.

309. Sir David sent the letter to Mr Powell with the comment: “More inspections ahead – but time getting very short.”⁸⁵

310. The UK used about 30 separate pieces of intelligence from human sources and satellite imagery covering 19 sites to provide leads for the UN inspectors. UNMOVIC visited seven of those sites, made a partial examination of one more and subjected one further site to an inspection by ground-penetrating radar.⁸⁶

311. In a ‘Note’ produced on 12 February, the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) Counter Proliferation Support Group reported that UNMOVIC and the IAEA had conducted over 550 site visits or inspections.⁸⁷

⁸³ Cook R. *The Point of Departure*. Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2003.

⁸⁴ Letter PS/C to Manning, 12 February 2003, ‘Update on Intelligence-Led UNMOVIC Inspections’.

⁸⁵ Manuscript comment Manning to Powell, 12 February 2003, on Letter PS/C to Manning, 12 February 2003, ‘Update on Intelligence-Led UNMOVIC Inspections’.

⁸⁶ *Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction* [“The Butler Report”], 14 July 2004 HC 898, paragraph 357.

⁸⁷ Note DIS Counter Proliferation Support Group, 12 February 2003, ‘The Effectiveness of UN Weapons Inspections in Iraq’.

312. UNMOVIC had moved more quickly to establish the inspection process than originally envisaged. It had begun work on 27 November 2002, almost a month earlier than the deadline of 23 December in resolution 1441. It had also been able to establish the Baghdad Ongoing Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Centre (BOMVIC) and a temporary centre at Mosul more quickly than the 60 days it thought would be needed before entering Iraq.

313. Most of the site visits conducted during the first six weeks were “intended [to] familiarise inspectors with the sites, and inspection techniques”. In addition, inspectors checked the equipment which had been tagged by UNSCOM, examined remote cameras and asked about work carried out at sites since 1998. Some visits had been superficial. From early January, “the inspections had become longer and more intrusive”.

314. Initially UNMOVIC had been hampered by a lack of support equipment, personnel and experience. It had taken UNMOVIC until mid-December to get to near full strength with 100 inspectors. The inspectors were on short contracts with “a consequent loss of expertise” and “few” had experience of operating in Iraq.

315. UNMOVIC had acknowledged the problems. By the beginning of February, it had “visited or inspected all but one of the UK’s recommended sites”, and continued to be receptive to UK advice on potential targets. “Fatigue” was, however, “becoming a significant factor” which had been “reflected in an increasing number of accidents” during inspections. Fatigue was the result of:

“... a combination of the pace of the inspection programme; Iraqi pressure; the perceived need for a ‘success’; and concern for personal safety in the event of war.”

316. During January and early February, “a total of 22 biological associated scientists and missile experts refused to meet inspectors in private”. The three scientists who had agreed to interviews were “selected by the Iraqi National Monitoring Directorate”. Even if Baghdad did concede interviews, all the scientists would be “concerned that anything they say will become known to the Iraqi authorities”.

317. Finds had included:

- “nuclear-related documents hidden at the home of [...] an Iraqi scientist” on 16 January, although “the general perception has been that these do not constitute a ‘smoking gun’”;
- “CW associated rocket warheads at Ukhaider ammunition depot” the same day. The liquid in one warhead was “awaiting the delivery of chemical sampling equipment”. That had arrived but was “not yet operational”;
- a “small quantity of ... CW precursor chemicals at a Laboratory”;
- “aluminium nozzles for 80mm rockets that Iraq had recast, but not declared” were discovered by the IAEA on 31 January; and
- “parts” from a “suspected ... biological or chemical sub-munition” were found “at the al-Numan factory”.

318. The Iraqis realised that some inspections had “been mounted on the basis of intelligence,” and had “increased even further” the measures being taken to prevent damaging material being uncovered by either UNMOVIC or the IAEA. That included “ensuring that WMD material only remains at a particular location for an absolute maximum of 24 hours, and contingency plans to ensure that ‘crowds’ will always be available to disrupt an inspection that might prove successful”.

319. The DIS report concluded that:

“While UNMOVIC is gaining in confidence, the inspectors are under increasing pressure at a time when consideration is having to be given to a possible evacuation. Internally, despite the full inspection programme having been under way for only some five weeks, there is already a sense that time is running out.

“UNMOVIC and the IAEA are capable of conducting thorough inspections; however, mistakes have resulted in at least two inspections failing to uncover concealed material ...

“UNMOVIC and IAEA remain very receptive to UK intelligence. On balance, however, in the absence of Iraqi cooperation, we assess that the discovery of a ‘smoking gun’ will probably be the result of intelligence information, skill on the part of the inspectors, an Iraqi mistake, and an element of luck.”

320. Mr Blair told Mr John Howard that the inspectors’ reports of 28 February should be the final reports to the Security Council.

321. A *BBC* poll published on 13 February found that 60 percent of people questioned thought that the UK and US Governments had failed to prove their case that Iraq had WMD, and 45 percent said that the UK should play no part in a war on Iraq, whatever the UN decided. Fewer than 10 percent said that they would back a war with Iraq without a second resolution.⁸⁸

322. Mr Blair and Mr Howard discussed Dr Blix’s forthcoming report and the prospects for a second resolution in a breakfast meeting on 13 February.⁸⁹

323. Sir David Manning advised that there would be a need to challenge Dr Blix’s likely assessment that there had been some movement on process and some movement on interviews; and to focus in public “on the underlying message that there was no fundamental change in attitude, and the key questions remained unanswered”. International opinion should not be allowed “to be distracted by nuances about process”.

⁸⁸ *BBC News*, 13 February 2003, *Blair puts ‘moral’ case for war*.

⁸⁹ Letter Lloyd to Owen, 13 February 2003, ‘Prime Minister’s Breakfast with John Howard’.

324. Other points which Mr Blair and Mr Howard discussed included:

- Dr Blix was writing his report on the presumption that there would be more time and it was implicit in his approach that there would be more time.
- Concern that the report would be critical of Secretary Powell’s presentation to the UN on 5 February.
- Russia and China were likely to abstain in a vote on a second resolution and France and Germany might put forward a rival text.

325. Mr Blair told Mr Howard that:

“... people in the UK were suspicious that the US were eager to use force and did not want the inspections to work. They could accept the need for war, but not for war *now*. If Blix came up with a firm report that could change. The report on the 28th [of February] should be the final report. The US needed in parallel to ensure the support of the Security Council.”

326. In response to Mr Howard’s assessment that a second resolution was not needed for legal reasons, Mr Powell said that UK lawyers were studying the issue. Mr Blair said it was needed for political reasons.

327. In the subsequent press conference, Mr Blair stated that the discussion had been “dominated” by Iraq.⁹⁰ He and Prime Minister Howard had agreed that Iraq needed to disarm and resolution 1441 had to be upheld.

328. Prime Minister Howard praised Mr Blair’s “strong and principled stance” and his “strong and effective leadership” and stated that he believed:

“... very strongly that if the whole world speaking through the United Nations Security Council said with one clear voice to Iraq that it had to disarm then that would more than anything else be likely to bring forth the faint hope of a peaceful solution.”

329. In reply to a question, Mr Howard stated that the problem was not time, it was Iraq’s attitude.

330. Mr Blair was asked whether Iraq’s ballistic missiles were enough to justify military action; and whether the news overnight of a North Korean threat that its missiles could hit US targets anywhere in the world “presented a more urgent and larger threat to international stability”. He replied that the judgement on Iraq had to be “made in the round” in the context of resolution 1441. In relation to the need to confront the threat from North Korea, albeit “by different means”, Mr Blair emphasised that the United Nations would be “tremendously weakened and undermined” if it showed “weakness and uncertainty over Iraq”. That was “the key issue”.

⁹⁰ Australian Government – Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 13 February 2003, *Joint Press Conference with Prime Minister, Tony Blair*.

Cabinet, 13 February 2003

331. Mr Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced on 12 February that he was allocating a further £750m to help meet the costs of potential military action in Iraq.⁹¹

332. Mr Blair convened a meeting on humanitarian issues with Mr Straw, Mr Hoon, Ms Short, Adm Boyce and No.10 officials in the margins of Cabinet on 13 February.⁹² That meeting is addressed in Section 6.5.

333. In Cabinet on 13 February, Mr Straw stated that Iraq was not co-operating on substance and its Al Samoud missiles and engines could be further evidence of a material breach of resolution 1441. The authority of the UN was at stake.

334. Mr Hoon stated that the second resolution needed to provide straightforward legal justification for taking military action.

335. Mr Blair concluded that there was no point in conceding more time for inspections if the lack of co-operation did not permit the inspectors to do their job. The “best course was to keep our nerve and persevere”.

336. Mr Straw told Cabinet on 13 February that the UN inspectors were likely to tell the Security Council on 14 February that:

“... the Iraqis were co-operating a bit more on the process but not on the substance. One issue of significance could be the inspectors’ attitude to the Al Samoud missiles and the 223 new Volga engines, which they could decide were in breach of Iraq’s obligations. That would be further evidence of material breach.”⁹³

He would report to the House of Commons later that day that Iraq had been, and continued to be in material breach; and that further confirmation of the facts by the inspectors “would lead logically to a Security Council resolution”.

337. Mr Straw also reported difficulties in NATO over a request from Turkey for support. That was “a serious situation which was pulling NATO apart”. The Presidency of the EU had called a summit [meeting of the European Council] for 17 February.

338. Mr Straw told his colleagues that:

“... the authority of the United Nations was at stake. There was a parallel with the failure of the League of Nations in the 1930s to enforce international law ... The best chance of avoiding military action was to hold our nerve in keeping to the United Nations process.”

⁹¹ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 12 February 2003, column 883.

⁹² [Letter Cannon to Bewes, 13 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Humanitarian Issues’](#).

⁹³ Cabinet Conclusions, 13 February 2003.

339. Reporting on his visit to the US, Mr Hoon told Cabinet that the US Administration “had a good appreciation” of the Government’s political situation. In his view, it would be “important politically” that any further resolution “should be simple” and “provide straightforward legal justification for taking military action”; “obscurity or justification relying on bureaucratic references back to earlier resolutions” should be avoided.

340. The points made in discussion included:

- the authority of the UN “could be undermined both by a failure to act and by action taken without its sanction”;
- the tone of public communications “should not give the impression of a rush to war: there was a benefit in a distinctively British approach”;
- while public opinion “did not seem persuaded of the necessity of war, it appeared to support military action when combined with a further Security Council resolution”;
- emphasis had to be given to the future welfare of the Iraqi people as well as the re-invigoration of the MEPP;
- work “had started” in the US to “put in place structures for the recovery and reconstruction of Iraq in the event of military conflict”.

341. Summing up the discussion, Mr Blair said that the Government “should maintain the integrity” of the UN process. That “did not mean allowing Iraq to prolong inspections indefinitely”. Iraq had:

“... been given a final chance to comply and full co-operation was required, otherwise the issue returned to the Security Council for discussion. There was no point in conceding more time for inspections if the lack of co-operation did not permit the inspectors to do their job.”

342. Mr Blair expected public opinion “to shift before we got to the point of military action. Some polling showed that there would be support both in the event of a further Security Council resolution and if the majority of the Security Council supported action despite a veto”. Strenuous efforts were being made to avoid the alienation of France and Germany. The UK would stand up for itself and had support in Europe. The international community need to be engaged in dealing with the humanitarian consequences of Saddam Hussein’s rule in Iraq. The “best course was to keep our nerve and persevere”.

343. Mr Campbell wrote that Mr Cook had “really played up the extent of the opposition” on Iraq, and that he might be “putting down a marker” about his departure: “He was clearly very offside and had become more so.”⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

344. In his memoir, Mr Cook wrote that he had offered three suggestions for how “we should conduct ourselves if we are going to reconnect with the public”:

“We could stop appearing to force the pace on the war. The public will only follow us if they believe we are reluctant about conflict ...

“We need to find a distinctive British tone in which we address the Iraq crisis. We should stop appearing as the US and UK axis.

“We should stick to the UN like glue. If tomorrow Hans Blix asks for more time for inspectors, he must get it. If we depart from the UN process we shall be committing suicide ...”⁹⁵

345. Mr Campbell wrote that there was also a meeting with Mr Straw on tactics for the second resolution and whether it should be tabled before the European Council.⁹⁶

346. Sir David Manning and Dr Rice discussed the next steps and tactics and timings on 13 February, including concerns about a possible Franco-German initiative.⁹⁷

347. Sir David told Dr Rice that the UK preference was to wait to table a second resolution until after the special EU Council on Iraq, unless circumstances dictated an earlier date.

348. In the meeting of the Security Council the following day, the UK aim was to move the discussion away from process and focus it on substance: “The best bet seemed to be to put a series of very tough questions to Blix about Iraqi performance and insist on very clear answers.” The UK did not want “Saturday’s headlines being about calls in the Security Council to give the inspectors more time”.

349. In his record of the discussion, Sir David commented: “We should also have a draft resolution in our back pockets, ready to put down at a moment’s notice.”

350. Mr Tony Brenton, Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy Washington, wrote to Sir David Manning on 13 February stating:

“Sitting in on Mr Hoon’s meetings with Condi Rice and Don Rumsfeld [Mr Donald Rumsfeld, US Secretary of Defense] yesterday I was very struck by how the military timetable is now driving the diplomatic end game.”⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Cook R. *The Point of Departure*. Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2003.

⁹⁶ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

⁹⁷ Letter Manning to McDonald, 13 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

⁹⁸ Letter Brenton to Manning, 13 February 2003, ‘Iraq: The Timetable’.

Mr Straw's statement, 13 February 2003

351. Mr Straw told the House of Commons on 13 February that the conclusion that Iraq was in further material breach of resolution 1441 was “inescapable”.

352. A peaceful outcome to the crisis depended on maintaining unrelenting pressure on Saddam Hussein to disarm, and a decision by him to co-operate.

353. Because the House of Commons would be in recess the following week, Mr Straw made a statement on 13 February.⁹⁹

354. Mr Straw said that the reports presented by Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei on 27 January had “painted a disturbing picture”. “Most damning of all” was Dr Blix’s observation that Iraq appeared “not to have come to a genuine acceptance” of the demand for disarmament. Mr Straw added that the central premise of Iraq’s “so-called disclosure”, that Iraq possessed no WMD “was, and remains, a lie”. “Nor was there any admission of Iraq’s extensive efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction since ... December 1998” when the inspectors were “effectively excluded from Iraq”.

355. Mr Straw stated that the briefings on 27 January and Secretary Powell’s presentation to the Security Council on 5 February left “no doubt that Iraq had failed to meet” the “two clear tests for further material breach” set out in resolution 1441. Mr Straw added : “The conclusion is therefore inescapable: Iraq is in further material breach ...”

356. The points made by Mr Straw included:

- He still hoped and prayed “for a peaceful outcome to the crisis”, but that would only be possible if “unrelenting pressure” was maintained on Saddam Hussein, “including the threat of force, rather than casting around for excuses to delay”.
- If the international community “lost its nerve”, that would “significantly undermine the UN’s authority and make the world a much more dangerous place, as dictators got the message that international law consisted of mere words and nothing else”.
- French and German calls to “bolster the inspections regime” would not “deliver the assurance the world needs” and were “unrealistic and impractical”. They shifted “the burden of proof from Iraq ... to the inspectors”; and sent “Saddam the signal that defiance pays”.
- Armed intervention was not inevitable and a peaceful resolution of the crisis remained in Saddam’s hands. But the inspectors would “not be able to fulfil their mandate to verify Iraqi disarmament” without Iraq’s compliance. In that event, resolution 1441 warned Iraq to expect “serious consequences”: “By now, even Saddam Hussein must be under no illusions: that can only mean disarmament by force.”

⁹⁹ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 13 February 2003, columns 1056-1071.

357. The points made by Mr Alan Duncan (Conservative) included:

- Diplomatic relations between the US and France and Germany were “to put it mildly, scratchy”, but relations between Western democracies should not “slide into disarray”.
- The Conservative Party shared the judgement, enshrined in resolution 1441, that the cost of doing nothing was greater than the cost of doing something”. The UK should not resile from implementing resolution 1441.
- Given “the doubting mood of public opinion”, the Government should focus on Saddam Hussein’s arsenal of weapons, not other issues such as links with terrorism and the publication of an “utterly substandard dossier” which diverted attention from the main issue and dented the Government’s credibility.
- Was a second resolution, which a “fortnight ago” had “seemed a dead cert”, now touch and go?

358. Mr Mark Oaten (Liberal Democrat):

- Expressed concerns about the impact on the unity of the international community of ignoring a veto by one of the Permanent Members of the Security Council.
- Asked why Mr Straw was dismissing the options of further UN inspection and containment. If the inspectors believed that “with more time, co-operation and space, progress could be made, they should be given more time”.

359. In response to those points, and subsequent questions, which included both support for action and concerns, points made by Mr Straw included:

- It would be the Government’s decision whether or not to move a resolution. It would make decisions after the inspectors’ reports to the Security Council the following day; decisions would be reported to the House of Commons as quickly as possible.
- The Government was asking all the members of the Security Council, when they assessed the inspectors’ reports, “to follow through the true meaning of the language to which every single member ... signed up”. The UK and other members of the Security Council could not be in a position where they believed the “conclusions following from the true meaning of 1441” were “inescapable, but one member, for example”, sought “to avoid those conclusions”.
- Resolution 1441 was “a sufficient mandate” for military action because it spelled out “with complete clarity” that there were “obligations on Iraq that it must follow through”, which were “very straightforward”.

- It had been suggested during the negotiation that a requirement for a second resolution “if military force was to take place” should be written into resolution 1441. That had been “dropped from the final draft”.
- The UK should “seek to lower, not raise the temperature of relations” with friendly nations. It did not want to be, and would not be, involved in recriminations between friendly members of UN.
- If the inspectors asked for more resources, that would be considered, but the UK could not “be drawn into the argument from outside the inspectors’ ranks, which seeks to imply that, in the absence of co-operation, more inspectors will resolve the matter. They will not. Procrastination is not the solution to the problem; co-operation is.”
- The evidence in respect of Iraq’s possession of “chemical and biological weapons and weapons programmes, and its readiness to develop a nuclear programme” was “overwhelming”. Iraq had been “found guilty” in 1991 and had to “prove its innocence”. The “absence of evidence in a huge country where there are only 100 inspectors” did “not prove the absence of a programme ... other circumstantial evidence” had to be examined. Iraq had had a highly developed nuclear programme in 1991.
- No one was “exaggerating the problem” and “no one had invented the fact that Iraq had the programme [of weapons of mass destruction]”. Until Iraq proved otherwise, the evidence suggested that Iraq continued to have “the programme”.
- There was no evidence of links between Al Qaida and Iraq in respect of the attacks on the US on 11 September 2001, although he “would not be surprised if such evidence came forward”. There was “some evidence of links between the Al Qaida organisation and Iraq, in terms of the Iraq regime allowing a permissive environment for Al Qaida operatives”.
- There had been “very active co-operation between the intelligence agencies in the United States and the United Kingdom, and the weapons inspectors”.
- He “shared the anxieties” about military action which “should only ever be a last resort”, but “on occasions” it was “essential to enforce law by force, otherwise the world becomes extremely dangerous”.
- It “would have been better, in a way” to include the words “disarmament by force” in the resolution, “but in diplomatic speak the choice was between ‘all necessary means’ and ‘serious consequences’”. Everybody in the diplomatic community knows that ‘serious consequences’ means the use of force”.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 13 February 2003, column 1068.

Security Council, 14 February 2003

360. The third Ministerial-level meeting of the Security Council to discuss Iraq took place on 14 February.

Dr Blix's report, 14 February 2003

361. Dr Blix reported that UNMOVIC had not found any weapons of mass destruction and the items that were not accounted for might not exist, but Iraq needed to provide the evidence to answer the questions, not belittle them.

362. Dr Blix pointed out that the evidence that Iraq had prepared for inspections by cleaning up sites and removing evidence, presented to the Security Council by Secretary Powell on 5 February, could have a different interpretation.

363. Dr Blix told the Security Council that:

- The total number of UNMOVIC staff in Iraq had increased to more than 250. The regional office in Mosul was “fully operational” and plans for a regional office in Basra were “being developed”. UNMOVIC had conducted more than 400 inspections covering more than 300 sites.
- “All inspections were performed without notice, and access was almost always provided promptly. In no case have we seen convincing evidence that the Iraqi side knew in advance that the inspectors were coming.”
- Inspections were “effectively helping to bridge the gap in knowledge” that had arisen because of the absence of inspectors between December 1998 and November 2002.
- UNMOVIC had informed the Iraqi authorities that it planned to start U-2 surveillance flights early the following week and was still expanding its capabilities.
- Intelligence information provided to UNMOVIC had been “gradually increasing”. But there were “limitations” and “misinterpretations” could occur.
- Three persons who had previously refused interviews on UNMOVIC's terms had given “informative” interviews just before the visit to Baghdad by Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei. Dr Blix hoped that Iraq's commitment to encourage persons to accept interviews would mean further interviews would be accepted.
- UNMOVIC had begun the process of destroying approximately 50 litres of mustard gas declared by Iraq.
- More than 200 chemical and more than 100 biological samples had been collected. Three-quarters of the samples had already been tested and the results were consistent with Iraq's declarations.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ UN Security Council, ‘4707th Meeting Friday 14 February 2003’ (S/PV.4707).

364. Addressing how much, “if any” was left of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction, Dr Blix stated that UNMOVIC had not found any so far, “only a small number of empty chemical munitions, which should have been declared and destroyed”. UNMOVIC had destroyed the “laboratory quantity” of a “mustard gas precursor” that had been found. Many proscribed weapons and items had not been accounted for, but:

“One must not jump to the conclusion that they exist. However that possibility is also not excluded. If they exist they must be presented for destruction. If they do not exist, credible evidence to that effect should be presented.”

365. Referring to his warning on 27 January that Iraq should not brush aside questions on significant outstanding issues of substance, including on anthrax, the nerve agent VX and long range missiles, Dr Blix stated that the fact that Iraq had, in its declaration of 7 December 2002, “missed the opportunity to provide the fresh material and evidence needed to respond to the open questions” was “perhaps the most important problem we are facing”. He added:

“Although I can understand that it may not be easy for Iraq in all cases to provide the evidence needed, it is not the task of the inspectors to find it. Iraq itself must squarely tackle this task and avoid belittling the questions.”

366. Some papers had been provided in Baghdad on 9 February. Dr Blix stated that “could be indicative of a more active attitude” but there were problems verifying the quantities of anthrax and two precursors for VX which Iraq had unilaterally destroyed: “Documentary evidence and testimony by staff who dealt with the items still appears to be needed.” Iraq’s initiative to identify 83 participants “in the unilateral destruction in the chemical field” appeared “useful and pertain[ed] to co-operation on substance”. Dr Blix trusted that Iraq would put together a “similar list of names of persons who participated in the unilateral destruction of other proscribed items”.

367. Dr Blix also welcomed the extension of the mandate of an Iraqi commission to look for any proscribed items and the appointment of a second commission to search for documents relevant to the elimination of proscribed items and programmes. But they would “evidently need to work fast and effectively to convince us, and the world, that it is a serious effort”.

368. Experts had “concluded unanimously” that the two variants of the Al Samoud 2 missile declared by Iraq were capable of exceeding the range of 150km. Those, and any of the 380 SA-2 (Volga) engines which had been imported in contravention of resolution 687 (1991) and converted for use in the Al Samoud missile system, were proscribed. The casting chambers for missile motors were also proscribed. Clarifications were needed before decisions could be made on the capabilities of the Al Fatah missile and the al-Rafah engine test stand.

369. In response to urgings that Iraq should implement the requirement in resolution 687 to enact legislation implementing the UN prohibitions on WMD, Iraq had told UNMOVIC and the IAEA earlier that day that it had issued a Presidential Decree. The text was being studied.

370. Addressing the role of intelligence, Dr Blix stated that in the closed society of Iraq, and the history of inspections, “other sources of information, such as defectors and government intelligence agencies” were “required to aid the inspection process”. International organisations then needed to analyse such information critically.

371. Dr Blix added that intelligence had been useful for UNMOVIC, and in one case had led to the discovery of documents relating to laser enrichment of uranium:

“In other cases, intelligence has led to sites where no proscribed items were found. Even in such cases, however, inspection of these sites were useful in proving the absence of such items and in some cases the presence of other items – conventional munitions. It shows that conventional arms are being moved around the country and their presence is not necessarily related to weapons of mass destruction.”

372. Referring to Secretary Powell’s presentation on 5 February, and in particular the suggestion that “Iraq had prepared for inspections by cleaning up sites and removing evidence of proscribed weapons programmes”, Dr Blix stated that he wanted to comment on “the trucks identified by analysts as being for chemical decontamination at a munitions depot”. That depot was a declared site, and one that Iraq would have expected UNMOVIC to inspect. Dr Blix stated that: “We have noted that the two satellite images of the site were taken several weeks apart. The reported movement of munitions at the site could just as easily have been a routine activity as a movement of proscribed munitions in anticipation of imminent inspection.” He added that: “Our reservation on this point does not detract from our appreciation of the briefing.”

373. Concluding his report, Dr Blix commented that:

“UNMOVIC is not infrequently asked how much more time it needs to complete its task in Iraq. The answer depends on which task one has in mind ... the disarmament task – or the monitoring that no new proscribed activities occur ...

“... Regrettably the high degree of co-operation required of Iraq for disarmament through inspection was not forthcoming in 1991 ...

“If Iraq had provided the necessary co-operation in 1991, the phase of disarmament ... could have been short and a decade of sanctions could have been avoided. Today, three months after the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002) the period of disarmament through inspection could still be short if ‘immediate, active and unconditional cooperation’ with UNMOVIC and the IAEA were to be forthcoming.”

374. Sir Jeremy Greenstock commented that Dr Blix’s presentation had been “more equivocal than 27 January, highlighting progress on process and other ‘hopeful’ signs (e.g. new documents, the Iraqi commissions and the Iraqi decree on WMD)”.¹⁰²

375. In his memoir, Mr Blair wrote that it paid to re-read Dr Blix’s reports of 14 February:

“It was clear that compliance was stepped up significantly as the prospect of military action became more real, but it was also clear that the problem was unlikely to be resolved unless those running Iraq had a genuine and not transitory change of heart ...

“They [UNMOVIC] were hopeful that Iraq could be disarmed; but the report still concluded compliance had yet to conform to the requirement of the UN resolution [1441] ...”¹⁰³

Dr ElBaradei’s report, 14 February 2003

376. Dr ElBaradei reported that the IAEA had found no evidence of ongoing prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities in Iraq, although a number of issues were still under investigation.

377. Dr ElBaradei reported that:

- The IAEA had conducted an additional 38 inspections at 19 locations since his report to the Council on 27 January.
- Iraq had continued to provide immediate access at all locations.
- The IAEA had continued to interview key personnel and had recently been able to conduct four interviews in private, although the interviewees had recorded their interviews. In the meeting in Baghdad, Iraq had “reconfirmed its commitment to encourage its citizens to accept interviews in private, both inside and outside of Iraq”.
- Iraq had expanded the list of relevant personnel to more than 300 to include higher-level key scientists; IAEA continued to ask for information about personnel of lesser rank.
- The IAEA intended to increase the numbers of inspectors and support staff and to “expand and intensify the range of technical meetings and interviews”.¹⁰⁴

378. Iraq had provided documentation relating to the reported attempt to import uranium, the attempted procurement of aluminium tubes, the procurement of magnets and magnet production capability, and the use of HMX. The IAEA was pursuing the

¹⁰² [Telegram 265 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 15 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Blix and ElBaradei Presentations: Open Debate’.](#)

¹⁰³ Blair T. *A Journey*. Hutchinson, 2010.

¹⁰⁴ UN Security Council, ‘4707th Meeting Friday 14 February 2003’ (S/PV.4707).

acquisition of uranium and examining issues in relation to aluminium tubes and magnets. On HMX, the IAEA might be unable to reach a final conclusion:

“While we have no indication that this material was used for any application other than declared by Iraq, we have no technical method of verifying ... the declared use ...”

379. In relation to “documents found on 16 January in the private residence of an Iraqi scientist”, the IAEA had “completed a more detailed review”. The documents related “predominantly to lasers, including the use of laser technology to enrich uranium”. “Nothing” in the documents altered “the conclusions previously drawn by the IAEA” about the extent of Iraq’s laser enrichment programme.

380. Iraq had also provided documentation about questions and concerns which had remained since 1998 about weapons and centrifuge design, but the documents contained “no new information”. Dr ElBaradei hoped that “the new Iraqi commissions ... will be able to discover documents and other evidence that could assist in clarifying remaining questions and concerns”.

381. Dr ElBaradei stated that the IAEA would continue to expand its capabilities to “strengthen and accelerate” its ability to investigate matters of concern, and to “reinstate and reinforce” its monitoring and verification system.

382. Dr ElBaradei had “reported on numerous occasions” that the IAEA had:

“... by December 1998 ... concluded that it had neutralised Iraq’s past nuclear programme and that therefore no unresolved disarmament issues remained ... Hence, our focus since the resumption of inspections ... has been verifying whether Iraq revived its nuclear programme in the intervening years.

“We have to date found no evidence of ongoing prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities in Iraq. However ... a number of issues are still under investigation ... we intend to make full use of the authority granted to us ... to build as much capacity into the inspection process as necessary.

“In that context, I would underline the importance of information that States may be able to provide to help us in assessing the accuracy and completeness of information provided by Iraq.”

383. Dr ElBaradei concluded that it was:

“... possible with an intrusive verification system, to assess the presence or absence of a nuclear weapons programme ... even without the full co-operation of the inspected State.

“However, prompt, full and active co-operation by Iraq as required under resolution 1441 (2002) will speed up the process. More importantly, it will enable us to reach the high degree of assurance required by the Security Council in the case of Iraq

in view of its past clandestine programmes of weapons of mass destruction and its past pattern of co-operation. It is my hope that the commitments made recently in Baghdad will continue to translate into concrete and sustained action.”

Security Council discussions, 14 February 2003

384. In the discussion which followed the reports, significant differences between members of the Security Council remained.

385. Mr de Villepin stated that the inspectors should be given time to fulfil their mission and a further meeting to assess the situation should be held on 14 March.

386. France did not exclude a resort to force but it could be justified “only” if inspections failed. The Council would “have to take a decision” if the inspectors reported it was impossible to continue.

387. The reports from Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei were followed by a discussion in the Security Council on 14 February.¹⁰⁵

388. The points made by Mr de Villepin included:

- In adopting resolution 1441 the Council had collectively agreed two stages: “disarmament through inspections and, if this strategy should fail, consideration by the Security Council of all the options, including resorting to force”. A second resolution could be justified “only” if inspections failed.
- France did not believe the option of inspections had “been exhausted”, it could “provide an effective response to the imperative of disarming Iraq”.
- The use of force would “have such heavy consequences for the people, the region and international stability that it should be envisaged only as a last resort”.
- Inspections were producing results, although each member of the Council “would like more” and pressure on Baghdad should be maintained to achieve that.
- Real progress was being made. Aerial reconnaissance had been agreed. Iraq had allowed interviews without minders. Draft legislation barring activities linked to programmes for weapons of mass destruction was being adopted. Iraq was providing a list of experts who witnessed the programmes of destruction in 1991.
- France had set out proposals to enhance the efficiency of inspections and would be providing additional resources.
- War might seem to be the swiftest option in ensuring Iraqi compliance, but building peace would be long and difficult. No one could maintain that war would “lead to a safer, more just and more stable world”; war was “always the outcome of failure”.

¹⁰⁵ UN Security Council, ‘4707th Meeting Friday 14 February 2003’ (S/PV.4707).

- The inspectors should have “the time that is necessary for their mission to succeed”. The Council should meet again at Ministerial level, on 14 March, to “assess the situation”.
- The use of force was “not justified at this time” and “premature recourse to the military option would be fraught with risks”. It would call the unity of the Council into question, and that would: “... remove its legitimacy and, in the long run, its effectiveness. Such intervention could have incalculable consequences for the stability of a scared and fragile region. It would compound the sense of injustice, would aggravate tensions and would risk paving the way for other conflicts.”
- The priority was fighting terrorism. France had no intelligence of the links between Al Qaida and the Baghdad regime alleged by Secretary Powell on 5 February. Military action would exacerbate the divisions that nurtured terrorism.
- France did not exclude recourse to force if the inspectors reported that it was “impossible for inspections to continue”. In that case, the “Council would have to take a decision, and its members would have to shoulder all of their responsibilities”.

389. Sir Jeremy Greenstock commented that Mr de Villepin’s “impassioned plea for continued inspections” had won “unprecedented applause from the gallery”.¹⁰⁶

390. Mrs Alvear called for the inspections process to be continued and enhanced.

391. Chile was dismayed by the divisions in the Council and called for a return to co-operation and unity to achieve Iraq’s disarmament.

392. Mrs Alvear stated that indications of progress raised “some hopes for a decisive change of attitude” from Iraq towards the demands of the international community, but other attitudes revealed “an intention not to co-operate” and gave rise to “suspicions about the presence of weapons of mass destruction”.¹⁰⁷ Iraq was not fully implementing the resolutions and pressure on Saddam Hussein’s regime had to be maintained “relentlessly and without relaxation”.

393. Chile believed that the “inspections process must be continued, strengthened and expanded to make it accurate, intrusive and capable of thwarting any effort at deception or evasion”.

394. The Security Council had a “key role” and Chile had “noted with dismay over the past month a growing division within the Council”. While that was “rooted in positions” that were “legitimately different”, it had been “fuelled by a lack of willingness to listen and to propose”. Chile wished to contribute to a “return to the path of debate and to a method

¹⁰⁶ [Telegram 265 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 15 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Blix and ElBaradei Presentations: Open Debate’.](#)

¹⁰⁷ UN Security Council, ‘4707th Meeting Friday 14 February 2003’ (S/PV.4707).

of work that combines conviction with respect for the concerns of others, the capacity of persuasion with tolerance and, above all, patience”. Unity of the Council was:

“... the basis of any international action that seeks to be both legitimate and effective. Only a united Council could credibly adopt the appropriate decisions for achieving the objective of the disarmament of the Iraqi regime.”

395. Chile wholeheartedly accepted Mr Annan’s invitation, in a recent speech, “to take the necessary time to continue to seek the broadest possible consensus for achieving a comprehensive solution”. That was the only way to exhaust all means to settle the conflict peacefully and reserve the use of force “until the moment when it becomes clear to all that peaceful means have failed”.

396. China also called for the pursuit of a political settlement.

397. Mr Tang Jiaxuan, the Chinese Foreign Minister, urged Iraq to recognise the importance and urgency of inspections and to co-operate more pro-actively. China, “in agreement with the majority opinion among Council members”, believed that the inspections process was working. The Council had to “step up its efforts”. “Only by pursuing a political settlement” could the Council “live up to the trust and hope that the international community places in the Security Council”.

398. Spain questioned Iraq’s will to co-operate.

399. Ms Palacio pointed out that active, immediate and complete co-operation from Iraq was not yet forthcoming and all the areas of non-compliance and unresolved issues mentioned in Dr Blix’s report of 27 January remained. Spain saw no need for more inspections or an increase in capability. Peace and security were “ensured through respect for and compliance with Security Council resolutions”. If there was no change in the political will of Saddam Hussein to co-operate, the Council would be “obliged to assume its responsibilities in the interests of the peace and security of the world”.

400. Mr Straw also questioned whether Iraq had decided to co-operate and stated that Iraq’s material breaches still existed.

401. The authority of the United Nations and the responsibility of the Council for peace and security were at issue from Iraq’s continued defiance.

402. The UN Charter required the diplomatic process to be backed by the credible threat of the use of force and its use if necessary.

403. Mr Straw thanked Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei for “their great efforts in the face of what I think is still very clear: Iraq’s failure, fully and actively to comply with resolution 1441”.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ UN Security Council, ‘4707th Meeting Friday 14 February 2003’ (S/PV.4707).

404. Mr Straw stated that the issue, which “could not be graver”, was “about the authority of the United Nations and about the responsibility of the Security Council for international peace and security”. All the members of the Council knew that Iraq had “had these weapons [of mass destruction and long-range missiles]”; Iraq had been “found guilty” in 1991. The issue was whether Iraq was “actively co-operating to get rid of them”.

405. Mr Straw stated that Iraq had lied, had concealed weapons and played games. As Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei had:

“... spelled out in their report of 27 January, Iraq has failed to account for thousands of tons of chemical weapons and precursor chemicals, of shells and bombs for anthrax, for mustard gas, for VX nerve agent. They have failed to make a full and complete disclosure as required of them ... They have failed to co-operate fully and actively on substance, as well as on process with the inspectors, and failed substantively to meet the obligations imposed on them.”

406. Mr Straw added:

“... nobody who has spoken so far ... has suggested for a second that Iraq is fully and actively complying with the obligations that we imposed ... So Iraq’s material breaches ... are still there.”

407. Mr Straw posed a number of questions for the inspectors including:

- What were Iraq’s motives for refurbishing prohibited equipment destroyed by UNSCOM?
- How many interviews had taken place, and how many could the inspectors be sure were not subject to Iraqi surveillance?
- Had the “outstanding material identified by UNSCOM” been “satisfactorily dealt with”?
- How many “open issues” in the nuclear dossier had the IAEA been able to close?

408. Mr Straw stated that he interpreted Dr Blix’s report as meaning that “Iraq has yet to be forthcoming with ... immediate, active and unconditional co-operation”. Picking up a phrase from Dr Blix’s report of 27 January, Mr Straw asked whether Dr Blix believed Iraq had “yet come to a genuine acceptance of the disarmament that has been demanded of it”.

409. “Like every other member” of the Council, Mr Straw hoped and believed that a peaceful solution to the crisis might “still be possible”. But that would require a “dramatic and immediate change by Saddam” which would be achieved only if the Council held its nerve.

410. Mr Straw concluded by stating that the period since resolution 687 (1991) had been passed had “frankly been a period of humiliation” for the Council and the UN as “games have been played with the Council’s authority”. The Charter required the Council to “back the diplomatic process with a credible threat of force and also, if necessary, to be ready to use that force”. If the Council decided to:

“... back away ... to give unlimited time for little or no co-operation on substance – then the disarmament of Iraq and the peace and security of the international community, for which we are responsible, will not get any easier, but very much harder.

“This issue is not just about Iraq ... If we send out the message to proliferators ... that defiance of the United Nations pays, then it will not be peace that we have secured.”

411. Secretary Powell stated that the Council should consider whether it was time to consider the serious consequences intended by resolution 1441.

412. The points made by Secretary Powell included:

- The inspectors had reported progress, but it was on process not substance, and tricks were being played by Iraq.
- Resolution 1441 was about disarmament, not inspections. It stated that Iraq was in material breach of its obligations and must now come into compliance.
- The requirement in the resolution for a full, complete and accurate declaration of its activities had been “an early test of Iraq’s seriousness; the answer in its declaration [of 7 December] was that it was not going to co-operate”.
- Connections between Iraq and terrorist organisations were “now emerging”. We could not wait for weapons of mass destruction to show up in our cities. The weapons “could kill tens of thousands of people” if they “got into the wrong hands”.
- If Iraq had been co-operating, documents would be flooding in and there would be a queue of interviewees.
- Iraq did not need time to decide to co-operate. Iraq’s recent actions were not responsible, they were “continued efforts to deceive, to deny, to divert, to throw us off the trail”.
- Resolution 1441 had anticipated Iraq’s response. The improvements in process, more inspections and a longer inspection period would not move the position that Iraq had “failed to comply”.
- The threat of force “should always be a last resort”, but it “must be a resort”. The process could not be “endlessly strung out”, as Iraq was trying to do, until the world’s attention moved in other directions.
- Iraq could not “be allowed to get away with it again”. The Council had to think through the consequences of walking away or the reality of facing

the problem and the choice of whether or not it was time to consider the serious consequences intended by 1441.

413. Secretary Powell concluded that:

“The security of the region, the hopes for the people of Iraq, and our security rest upon us meeting our responsibilities and, if it comes to it, invoking the serious consequences called for in resolution 1441 ...”

414. Mr Igor Ivanov stated that Iraq should be set clear tasks to provide objective criteria by which to assess progress and the threat posed by Iraq.

415. The debate in the Council demonstrated that remedies other than the use of force to achieve Iraq’s disarmament had not yet been exhausted.

416. Mr Igor Ivanov stated that the Council should be guided by the professional data provided by the inspectors to, “without making a mistake, come to the correct conclusion”.

417. Substantial progress had been made and could not be ignored. The Council should urge Baghdad to increase co-operation and the work of the inspectors “must be made more systematic and focused”. Iraq should be set clear tasks, including through the submission of the UNMOVIC and IAEA work programme and the list of key disarmament tasks required by resolution 1284 (1999). Adoption of such a programme would provide “objective criteria” to assess both the degree of Baghdad’s co-operation and whether Iraq was “a threat to international peace and security”.

418. Russia’s position, “shared by the overwhelming majority of States in the world, including within the Security Council”, was that inspections “must continue”. There was:

“... a unique opportunity to reach agreement on how to solve this ... problem through political means, in strict accordance with the UN Charter. This is a real opportunity, and it must not be missed. Force may be resorted to, but only when all other remedies have been exhausted. As may be seen from today’s discussion, we have not yet reached that point ...”

419. Other members of the Security Council emphasised the need for Iraq to co-operate actively and unconditionally to disarm; the need to exhaust the inspections route; and the importance of Council unity.

420. Mr Luiz Derbez, the Mexican Foreign Minister, stated that the Iraqi Government continued to evade its international responsibilities and the Council was united about the goal of disarmament. But the Council was “increasingly divided as [to] the most effective and least costly manner by which it may be achieved”. Mexico’s view was that the “Security Council’s primary task” was to ensure the inspectors fulfilled their mission.

421. Mr Mamady Traoré, Guinean Permanent Representative to the UN and President of the Council, advocated continued inspections although they “should not be continued indefinitely”. Guinea was “concerned at the abrupt rise in tension within the international community” over the Iraq crisis and appealed “for a swift beginning of direct and constructive dialogue among Security Council members so that we can move beyond this climate of tension which could deal a harsh blow to the United Nations system”. Iraq must “finally agree” to co-operate and end its delaying tactics.

422. Mr Munir Akram, Pakistani Permanent Representative to the UN, stated that it was “understandable that the patience of some important members of the Security Council is running out”. The call in resolution 1441 “was credible because it was unanimous”. Pakistan believed that the “Security Council must maintain this unity of purpose and action”. It could still unite around:

- “a general preference, even at this late stage, to secure the elimination of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction through peaceful means”;
- Iraq’s “immediate, active and unconditional co-operation”; and
- “a readiness to allow more time”.

423. Mr Martin Belinga-Eboutou, Cameroonian Permanent Representative to the UN, stated that Cameroon wished to “emphasise ... the need for the Security Council to continue to safeguard ... its unity and cohesion”. He added: “The discord, the cacophony, indeed the confusion surrounding us in recent days can only harm our effectiveness.” Cameroon was “in favour of a peaceful settlement” and was “trying to take a pragmatic and realistic approach”. It had “raised the possibility of more robust inspections” which would require Iraq’s immediate, active and complete co-operation. It was “clear that further non-compliance by Iraq with the demands of the Security Council would be one violation too many”, which would leave the Council with “no other choice but to adopt, in unity and cohesion, appropriate measures to have its decisions respected within the provisions of the Charter”.

424. Referring to Mr Annan’s speech on 8 February, Mr Belinga-Eboutou appealed for unity and cohesion. He stated:

“The maintenance of peace and security is a very delicate and serious mission. It requires at all times those who are responsible for it [to] transcend their differences and act only in the interests of peace.”

425. Mr Ismael Gaspar Martins, Angolan Permanent Representative to the UN, stated that the Council was unable to say that Iraq was free from weapons of mass destruction, but:

“... we are equally unable to state unequivocally that Iraq is fully armed with weapons of mass destruction or other weapons that pose a clear and impending threat to international peace and security.”

426. Mr Gaspar Martins was “confident that the Council” represented “a unified coalition of the willing to secure international peace and security”. Whatever decision it reached, it was “pivotal” that it was “based on convincing and far-reaching information”. He warned that:

“Whatever decision we collectively take must be proportionate to the gravity of the issue before us. That decision need not be popular; but it must be justified. The consequences of a war clearly outweigh its benefits ...”

427. Mr Stefan Tafrov, Bulgarian Permanent Representative to the UN, stated that Bulgaria believed that Iraq’s co-operation was “unsatisfactory” and it was unfortunate, “as the statements made by the chief inspectors have confirmed”, that the Iraqi authorities were “still in material breach” of resolution 1441. Bulgaria hoped that France’s ideas would be one element of the overall Security Council strategy to disarm Iraq and believed that that goal could still be achieved through peaceful means. But the Council had repeatedly warned Iraq of serious consequences if it did not comply. Bulgaria appealed to the Council to “stand united”. That was “an essential condition for a peaceful outcome to the crisis and for averting future threats”.

428. Mr Fischer stated that Iraq “must not be allowed to possess any weapons of mass destruction and must disarm completely”. The inspectors had made “headway” and their presence had “substantially diminished the danger emanating from Iraq”. They “must be given the time to successfully complete their mission”. That required Iraq to co-operate fully, unconditionally and actively if a “looming tragedy” was to be averted.

429. Mr Fischer concluded:

“All possible means for resolving the Iraqi crisis by peaceful means must be thoroughly explored. Whatever decisions need to be made must be made by the Security Council alone. It remains the only body internationally authorised to do so.

“Military action against Iraq would, in addition to the terrible humanitarian consequences, above all endanger the stability of a tense and troubled region. The consequences for the Near and Middle East could be catastrophic. There should be no automatism leading to the use of military force. All possible alternatives need to be exhaustively explored.”

430. Iraq continued to state that it did not possess weapons of mass destruction.

431. Mr Aldouri stated that Iraq had agreed to act on resolution 1441 and had “provided everything that might fall within the concept of pro-active Iraqi co-operation”. The documents provided with the Iraqi declaration of 7 December 2002, required “in-depth study” because they contained “updated relevant information responding to many questions”. Iraq had “the right to wonder whether the declaration had been studied with due diligence and thoroughness”. Iraq had “begun to co-operate pro-actively”, and many speakers had called for that but there was a question about what that would mean.

432. Mr Aldouri pointed out that there was an “Arabic proverb that an empty hand has nothing to give. You cannot give what you do not have. If we do not possess such weapons, how can we disarm ourselves? How can such weapons be dismantled if they do not exist?”

433. Iraq agreed that the “best way to resolve these issues is through continuing pro-active co-operation with the inspectors”. Mr Aldouri stressed that Iraq had:

“... chosen the path of peace. We have opted for solutions that would satisfy the international community. We are prepared to provide all means to assist in making clear the true picture ...

“We hope the Security Council will heed the desire of the vast majority of States Members of the United Nations and allow the inspectors to fulfil their role ...”

434. In the subsequent private discussion, Mr Straw stated that there was overwhelming evidence that Iraq had had WMD; if there was no evidence to show that it had been destroyed, we had to work on the basis that it existed.

435. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that, in response to points raised during the private session of the Council:

- Dr Blix had clarified that it was too soon to say whether Iraq had come to a genuine acceptance of the disarmament required – there were some signs but no break through. Interviews were a mixed bag. In reality, the inspectors had had no one accept their conditions, though some people they had asked had subsequently come back and accepted. The Iraqi decree on WMD did not say anything about what Iraq would do in practice. UNMOVIC had expanded as much as it could; if it expanded too fast, there was a risk of mistakes.
- Dr ElBaradei had voiced concerns about Iraq’s approach to interviews and emphasised the importance of inspections as the cornerstone of the international disarmament regime. He had also questioned whether Iraq needed reassurance that a new item would not be regarded as a material breach.
- Mr Straw had stated that the reason that the Council had said Iraq’s WMD posed a threat was because there was overwhelming evidence that Iraq had had the material. If we had no evidence it had been destroyed, we had to work on the basis that it existed and that there was a danger to the region and to our national security. Oral cross-examination was the best way to get the truth. Interviewees were not saying anything and were insisting on tape recorders because they wanted to stay alive. Until Iraq allowed interviews outside Iraq and in free conditions, we would be naive to think that they were co-operating.

- Ms Palacio commented that “Iraqi progress had always been last minute and under pressure”. In her legal experience, she had “never seen a situation were [sic] witnesses did not speak freely unless they were threatened”.
- Secretary Powell questioned whether those who advocated reinforced inspections were serious or afraid to step up to the challenge of Iraq’s lack of compliance”.¹⁰⁹

436. Sir Jeremy commented that Dr Blix’s report was much more equivocal than that of 27 January. His, and Dr ElBaradei’s, answers in the closed session were:

“... more indicative of their underlying suspicions, as though they knew their prepared remarks had over-compensated. Tough exchanges with the Americans the day before may have made Blix more determined to assert his independence.

“We have to go on hammering away at the logic of SCR 1441: it is about Iraq’s approach, and not the inspections ... When the Council middle ground ... realise they have to face up to hard and final decisions, they may take more account of the responsibility they hold. So far, wishful procrastination continues to rule.”

437. Sir Jeremy Greenstock told the Inquiry that, following his report on 27 January, Dr Blix had “got a bit cross” with the US because they felt that might in itself amount to a material breach. As a result, in his report on 14 February, Dr Blix had:

“... within the scope that he felt he had for interpretation ... said, ‘They are actually beginning to cooperate ... So I feel I’m getting somewhere.’ The Americans were quite cross about that ...”¹¹⁰

438. Sir Jeremy added that, “in the lunch after”, Dr Blix “was tougher on the Iraqis and their lack of co-operation in private than he had been in public, and it was clear from my conversations with him ... that ... was affected by the reaction of the Americans to what he had said on 27 January”.

439. Asked if that was because Dr Blix did not want to provide an automatic trigger for action, Sir Jeremy replied: “Yes”.

440. Asked what Dr Blix had said about pressure from the US or UK, Sir Jeremy replied:

“Hans Blix complained more than once to me about the pressures from the Americans. ... [H]e felt the relationship with the British was much more reasonable and professional and we weren’t trying to distort the facts for political reasons.

“... I never heard a word of complaint from him about the pressure being put on him by the British ...”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Telegram 266 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 15 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Blix and ElBaradei Presentations: Private Session’.

¹¹⁰ Public hearing, 27 January 2009, pages 70-71.

¹¹¹ Private hearing, 26 May 2010, pages 18-19.

441. Mr Annan concluded that there were real differences on strategy and timing in the Security Council. Iraq's non-co-operation was insufficient to bring members to agree that war was justified; they would only move if they came to their own judgement that inspections were pointless.

442. The UKMIS New York record of a meeting between Mr Straw and Mr Annan reported that they had discussed the fact that the majority of Council members remained unpersuaded by the US and UK arguments.¹¹² The strong probability of Iraqi non-co-operation was not sufficient to bring them to agree that war was justified. There were real differences on strategy and timing and Council members would only move if they came to their own judgement that inspections were pointless.

443. Mr Straw had commented that Saddam Hussein's behaviour would be quite different if he really had zero WMD. The UK and US would look at the timing of a second resolution. The Council was more likely to be brought to a decision if we stuck to the game plan, but we also had to do the political arithmetic. The Americans would find it difficult to move forward if the Council majority really believed the inspections were working.

444. A separate record produced by the FCO reported that Mr Straw had commented that the public saw 200,000 troops in the region and heard belligerent language and thought we were determined to go to war tomorrow without good reason.¹¹³ He and Mr Annan had discussed the need to keep the pressure on Saddam Hussein; and that the threat of force could be more effective than its use. There was a possibility of building a consensus with time but if the pace was forced there was a risk of one or more vetoes. The problem was that the burden of evidence had shifted to those who wanted military action. The fact that resolution 1441 required Iraqi compliance was lost. Time was needed to get people to look at things differently, but different countries faced different time pressures. American time was very expensive; others felt it was natural to ask for more time. When asked to define "a little time", Dr Blix had answered "one year".

445. Asked by the Inquiry whether, after the report on 27 January, he had expected Dr Blix to be firm in his determination of a material breach, Mr Blair stated:

"... the whole point was that his [Dr Blix's] view was that Iraq was complying somewhat, but not fully and unconditionally, and as time went on, I became increasingly alarmed ... that we were just back into a game-playing situation with Saddam ... I think it is very clear from what we now know that he never had any intention of his people co-operating fully with the inspectors."¹¹⁴

¹¹² Telegram 268 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 15 February 2003, 'Foreign Secretary's Meeting with the UN Secretary-General: 14 February'.

¹¹³ Telegram 92 FCO London to UKMIS New York, 15 February 2003, 'Foreign Secretary's Meeting with UN Secretary General, New York, 14 February'.

¹¹⁴ Public hearing, 29 January 2010, page 108.

446. Asked if he had been disappointed by Dr Blix's report of 14 February, Mr Blair replied:

"It wasn't that I was disappointed. I was getting confused as to what he was really trying to tell us ... what particularly struck me ... and this then had a huge significance in what I then tried ... to construct a final way of avoiding the war, is, on page 26 of his briefing, he deals with the issue of interviews and he says that the Iraqi side ... are starting to move on interviews ... they have made a commitment that they will allow it, but then, when he actually comes to the interviews themselves, people are reluctant ..."¹¹⁵

Mr Blair's speech to the Labour Party conference, 15 February 2003

447. Mr Blair used his speech to the Labour Party conference on 15 February to continue to link the timetable for decisions on Iraq to a judgement about whether Iraq had decided to co-operate as required by resolution 1441.

448. Mr Blair also continued to emphasise the moral case for removing Saddam Hussein.

449. On 15 February, as part of a weekend of worldwide protests against military action in Iraq, a march organised by the Stop the War Coalition, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Muslim Association of Britain took place in London. The police described it as the UK's biggest ever demonstration, estimating that at least 750,000 people took part. The organisers put the figure closer to two million. There were also anti-war gatherings in Glasgow and Belfast.¹¹⁶

450. In the entry in his diaries for 13 February, Mr Campbell wrote that Mr Blair had decided to focus on a humanitarian theme to "at least give the marchers something to think about and something to put them on the defensive".¹¹⁷

451. Mr Campbell wrote the following day that Mr Blair had said Dr Blix's presentation was "a total disgrace, that he should have just told the truth, and the truth was Saddam was not co-operating". Mr Blair was in "a tough place", but "showed no signs of changing tack ... said we were doing the right thing. But whether we liked it or not, we were moving towards a regime change argument." Mr Blair "felt we had to make more of the moral case but we agreed we could not really set out the forward plan he had devised on the back of this, because it would look like weakness ..."

¹¹⁵ Public hearing, 29 January 2010, pages 110-111.

¹¹⁶ *BBC News*, 16 February 2003, "Million" march against Iraq war.

¹¹⁷ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

452. In the entry in his memoir for 14 February, Mr Cook wrote:

“The news from New York is electrifying. The latest report by Hans Blix registers a lot of progress in co-operation from Iraq, fails to identify any evidence of weapons of mass destruction and expresses confidence that with more time more progress can be made. What Hans Blix was in effect confirming was that the UK strategy of applying pressure on Saddam to co-operate on disarmament, through the dual track of inspectors on the ground and the threat of force across his border, is working rather well.”¹¹⁸

453. Mr Cook added his view that Mr Blair needed the inspectors:

“... to prove that Saddam will not co-operate and that he is therefore justified in going to war ... The ghastly dilemma he now faces is that without Hans Blix denouncing Saddam, there is little chance of getting a majority in the Security Council for military conflict, and therefore even less chance of getting a majority of the British people.”

454. In his speech to the Labour Party conference in Glasgow on 15 February, Mr Blair stated that the Labour Party would come through an uncertain time by holding firm to its beliefs and the United Nations was one of those beliefs. He wanted:

“... to solve the issue of Iraq and weapons of mass destruction through the UN. That is why last November we insisted on putting UN inspectors back into Iraq to disarm it.

“Dr Blix reported to the UN yesterday and there will be more time given to inspections. He will report again on 28 February. But let no one forget two things. To anyone familiar with Saddam’s tactics of deception and evasion, there is a weary sense of déjà vu. As ever, at the last minute concessions are made. And as ever it is the long finger that is directing them. The concessions are suspect. Unfortunately, the weapons are real.”¹¹⁹

455. Mr Blair continued that the inspections regime in resolution 1441 was tough because for 12 years Saddam Hussein had played a “game with the inspectors” and:

“The time needed is not the time it takes for the inspectors to discover the weapons. They are not a detective agency. We played that game for years in the 1990s. The time is the time necessary to make a judgement: is Saddam prepared to co-operate fully or not. If he is, the inspectors can take as much time as they want. If he is not, if this is a repeat of the 1990s – and I believe it is – then let us be in no doubt what is at stake.

¹¹⁸ Cook R. *The Point of Departure*. Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2003.

¹¹⁹ *Scoop World*, 15 February 2003, *Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Glasgow Party Speech*.

“By going down the UN route we gave the UN an extraordinary opportunity and a heavy responsibility. The opportunity is to show that we can meet the menace to our world together ... The responsibility, however, is indeed to deal with it.”

456. Referring to the failure of the League of Nations, Mr Blair stated:

“... Saddam would not be making a single concession without the knowledge that forces were gathering against him. I hope, even now, Iraq can be disarmed peacefully, with or without Saddam. But if we show weakness now, if we allow the plea for more time to become just an excuse for prevarication until the moment for action passes, then it will not only be Saddam who is repeating history. The menace, and not just from Saddam, will grow; the authority of the UN will be lost; and the conflict when it comes will be more bloody. Yes, let the United Nations be the way to deal with Saddam. But let the United Nations mean what it says; and do what it means.”

457. Referring to the threats posed by the proliferation of WMD and the threat from terrorism and their potential consequences, as well as Iraq’s past behaviour, Mr Blair stated:

“That is why Saddam and Weapons of Mass Destruction are important.

“Every time I have asked us to go to war, I have hated it ...

“At every stage, we should seek to avoid war. But if the threat cannot be removed peacefully, please let us not fall for the delusion that it can be safely ignored. If we do not confront these twin menaces of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, they will not disappear ...

“When people say if you act, you will provoke these people ... remember that Al Qaida attacked the US ...

“... Everyone agrees Saddam must be disarmed ...

“No-one seriously believes he is yet co-operating fully. In all honesty, most people don’t really believe he ever will ... It’s not really an issue of timing ... It is a moral purpose, and I respect that.

“... I abhor the consequences of war.”

458. Addressing the question of why he pressed “the case so insistently”, Mr Blair stated that he had set out:

“... the “geo political reason – the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction and its link with terrorism. And I believe it.

“If I am honest about it there is another reason why I feel so strongly ...

“The moral case against war has a moral answer: it is the moral case for removing Saddam. It is not the reason we act. That must be according to the United Nations mandate on weapons of mass destruction. But it is the reason, frankly, why if we do have to act, we should do so with a clear conscience.

“Yes, there are consequences of war. If we remove Saddam by force, people will die and some will be innocent. And we must live with the consequences of our actions, even the unintended ones.

“But there are also consequences of ‘stop the war’.

“If I ... did not insist on disarmament ... there would be no war. But there would still be Saddam ... ruling the Iraqi people ...

“This isn’t a regime with weapons of mass destruction that is otherwise benign. This is a regime that contravenes every single principle or value anyone of our politics believes in.

“There will be no march for the victims of Saddam ...

“I rejoice that we live in a country where peaceful process is a natural part of the democratic process ...

“I do not seek unpopularity as a badge of honour. But sometimes it is the price of leadership. And the cost of conviction.”

459. Mr Campbell wrote that Mr Blair’s speech was heard “in near silence ... It was well received, not least because it was so serious”. Mr Blair had been “confident and felt we had the right argument and we now needed a big strategy to put the case properly”.¹²⁰

460. In his memoir, Mr Blair wrote that he had been determined that “people should not be able to hide from the ghastly reality of Saddam continuing in power”.¹²¹

Decisions on the way forward

461. After the discussions in the Security Council on 14 February, Dr Blix proposed consideration of a “benchmark approach” using “clusters” of issues being identified as part of the work programme required by resolution 1284.

462. Mr Straw spoke briefly to Dr Blix about the next steps after the presentation on 14 February. The report of the discussion stated that Dr Blix:

- had decided that Iraq had to destroy the (Volga) missile engines;
- did not think it worth pursuing any ultimatum which required Saddam to quit Iraq;

¹²⁰ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

¹²¹ Blair T. *A Journey*. Hutchinson, 2010.

- was compiling a list of explicit questions about outstanding issues to “pin the Iraqis down”;
- was looking at establishing a No-Fly Zone for the whole of Iraq; and
- was looking at freezing movements in certain areas to improve the chances of catching a mobile “bio-lab”.¹²²

463. Dr Blix recorded that he told both Mr Straw and Secretary Powell about the document being prepared by UNMOVIC, as required by resolution 1284 (1999), which “contained ‘clusters’ of unresolved issues and indicated precisely what was required of Iraq” that could be used “as a basis for selecting key disarmament tasks for the work programme” in a “‘benchmark’ approach”.¹²³ Mr Straw and Secretary Powell were both “most interested” in the idea.

464. Dr Blix discussed the idea with both Dr Rice and Secretary Powell over the next two days. When he asked whether a deadline of 15 April was acceptable, Secretary Powell said that was too late.

465. Dr Blix also wrote that there was a lack of smoking guns that would impress the public; and that the British “who were most fervently in favour of a resolution embodying an ultimatum” had felt the resistance stiffen and “came to think that a change of focus might help. The new resolution could demand a declaration by Saddam showing that he had had a change of heart.”

466. Mr Straw and Sir David Manning agreed with Secretary Powell and Dr Rice that, over the next few days, the US and UK should reflect on what the next steps should be.

467. Sir David Manning suggested that military action should not start before late March.

468. Discussing the next steps with Secretary Powell after the Council discussion, Mr Straw raised the possibility of issuing an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and expressed caution on the timing of a second resolution. The US and UK had been on the back foot all day and needed to be clear about how they intended to play the end game before it began.¹²⁴

469. Sir David Manning and Dr Rice agreed on 14 February to reflect over the next two to three days on what the next move at the UN should be, including an ultimatum.¹²⁵ Stressing that he was speaking personally, Sir David suggested that one possibility

¹²² Telegram 89 FCO London to UKMIS New York, 15 February 2003, ‘Foreign Secretary’s Meeting with Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC, New York, 14 February’.

¹²³ Blix H. *The Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction: Disarming Iraq*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2005.

¹²⁴ Telegram 269 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 15 February 2003, ‘Foreign Secretary’s Meeting with Powell: 14 February’.

¹²⁵ Letter Manning to McDonald, 14 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

would be to use the French demand for a further meeting in a month to ask for another report from Dr Blix. It would also be important to leave time for an initiative to persuade Saddam to leave. That would mean delaying the start of military action until late March.

470. The British Embassy Washington reported that the US Administration was disappointed with Dr Blix's less than categorical verdict on Iraqi compliance.¹²⁶ A White House spokesman had downplayed the importance of the new avenues of co-operation identified by Dr Blix. The meeting had made securing a second resolution more difficult, but the Administration was determined to press ahead.

471. In the light of the position in the Security Council and the perception that the US would push for a vote by the end of February, FCO and No.10 officials proposed using the French proposal for a Ministerial discussion on 14 March to provide a deadline for a report from the inspectors on whether Iraq was co-operating.

472. Mr Ricketts wrote to Mr Straw on 15 February stating: "I know you want to cogitate over the weekend about how we adjust strategy." He set out the FCO's thinking "about how we might rally opinion in the Council through some version of an ultimatum and more time to give it effect".¹²⁷

473. Mr Ricketts sent Mr Straw a minute from Mr Edward Chaplin, FCO Director Middle East and North Africa, of 13 February and a minute from Mr Stephen Pattison, FCO Head of the UN Department, which set out ways to make specific demands of Iraq.

474. Mr Chaplin had written that it was:

"... probably the last opportunity to reflect on whether we can extract ... a better outcome ... than at present looks likely.

"The mood in Washington points to early tabling of a second SCR and a quick drive to adoption. At best this will secure 9-10 positive votes and 5-6 abstentions. There is a substantial risk ... that the text will be vetoed, at which point the US ... will go for military action ... I cannot imagine the Prime Minister then refusing to follow.

"... No SCR and a feeble, at best, legal basis for military action is a nightmare scenario. The domestic consequences (and increased risk of terrorism to British citizens and staff) are daunting enough for Ministers. But the ... longer term damage to UK interests would be more severe because longer lasting. The image of the UK, lone ally [...] of a rampant US in its assault on Iraq, will be the touchstone for Arab and Muslim attitudes for a generation – this is the real Suez effect. A quick collapse of the Iraqi regime (quite likely); subsequent clear proof, because we

¹²⁶ Telegram 209 Washington to FCO London, 14 February 2003, 'Iraq: Initial US reactions to the Blix/EIBaradei Report'.

¹²⁷ [Minute Ricketts to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 15 February 2003, 'Iraq: Rethinking Strategy'](#).

find the stuff, that we were right all along about the Iraqi WMD threat (questionable – what convinces the experts may not convince public opinion unless it is pretty spectacular); and a smooth transfer to a democratic and stable government (improbable, especially without UN cover) would reduce the damage. But this is a high risk route.

“Before we go down this route, we should have a last look at alternatives, as Jeremy Greenstock is urging.”¹²⁸

475. Mr Chaplin suggested that the UK should consider a deal with France, Germany and Russia, insisting on full Iraqi compliance with a short list of key disarmament tasks, backed by the maximum number of inspectors and increased air surveillance, with a short deadline (15 March). There should be a signal in advance that, short of full compliance, the five Permanent Members of the Security Council (P5) would vote for an “all necessary means” text. This would come into force 10 days after the passage of a Security Council resolution to give time for the Arabs to persuade Saddam Hussein to stand down. The “goal would be one more last chance for Saddam Hussein”.

476. Mr Chaplin and Mr Ricketts had agreed that the latter would discuss the idea with Mr Straw on their way to New York on 14 February.

477. Mr Pattison suggested two options to attract support from the “middle ground members”:

- encouraging Dr Blix to set specific tasks to demonstrate Iraqi compliance, building on his own ideas; or
- the Security Council to set specific tasks for Iraq with a deadline.¹²⁹

478. There would be difficulties with both approaches. The problem with the first option would lie in “getting the US to accept further delay and the likelihood that Iraq would do just enough to provoke future wrangling over the extent of their compliance”. In addition, the US might be hesitant about giving Dr Blix a greater role. The problem with the second option was that it “would create an expectation that the UNSC would need to take a further decision to authorise serious consequences and we would expect Iraq to do just enough to split the Council”.

479. Mr Ricketts advised Mr Straw:

“Each variant had pros and cons. The main difficulty could well be to bring the Americans to accept any specific ultimatum given the scope it would leave for Iraq to gain more time through minor concessions.”¹³⁰

¹²⁸ [Minute Chaplin to Ricketts, 13 February 2003, ‘Iraq: The Endgame’.](#)

¹²⁹ Minute Pattison to Ricketts, 15 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Options for UNSC Action’.

¹³⁰ [Minute Ricketts to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 15 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Rethinking Strategy’.](#)

480. Mr Ricketts wrote that he and Sir David Manning had discussed a variant of the approach Sir David had set out in his conversation with Dr Rice on 14 February. That was to use the French proposal for a ministerial discussion in the Security Council on 14 March to provide a deadline for asking Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei to state whether Iraq was “in full and active co-operation”, including a demand that Iraq destroy its prohibited rocket motors, which would then be taken as the basis for a resolution. Dr Rice’s initial reaction had been maybe, but she had wanted a deadline of 28 February. Mr Ricketts and Sir David thought that was too soon and would not allow sufficient time to rally middle-ground opinion. A 14 March deadline “should still fit with other time lines and demonstrate that we are listening to those who call for more time”.

481. Mr Ricketts conceded that the proposal was “not a brilliant strategy” but it “might be a way forward avoiding signals of weakness”.

482. Sir Jeremy Greenstock advised that more time would be needed and that the inspectors should be given the chance to deliver a judgement which would convince the Council.

483. Sir Jeremy Greenstock advised that the UK could table a resolution the following week.¹³¹ The existing version would “not get nine votes, but it will signal the beginning of the end game and Council minds will have to concentrate within a harder context”. In his view, the “Best area for plan B options” was “some kind of loaded ultimatum”.

484. Sir Jeremy’s view was that postponing the discussion to 14 March would not be sufficient to secure support: “If the judgement is left to Blix, e.g. to say whether or not Iraq has co-operated ‘immediately, actively and unconditionally’”, he “may not be capable of taking the heat or Council members may try to alter the terms in their favour”.

485. There would also be a problem with the US. Sir Jeremy reported that Ambassador Negroponte had told him that President Bush would not agree to anything which changed the terms of 1441 (especially OP2), or altered their current legal foundation for action, or ensnared the Council in endless argument about interpretation. The current US thinking was to table their draft mid-week and to set a date (probably the end of February) for a vote.

486. Sir Jeremy reported that he had told Ambassador Negroponte “in general terms” that more would be needed:

“Ideally, we should not move to the use of force without a find, a smoking gun. We should maximise the possibilities for that. We should expose the French reinforcement proposals as clearly inadequate for the disarmament of Iraq: indeed, no proposition other than war has yet been made which will realistically achieve that – something I said in terms to EU HOMS [Heads of Mission] meeting this morning.”

¹³¹ [Telegram 270 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 15 February 2003, ‘Personal Iraq Next Steps’.](#)

487. Sir Jeremy suggested that elements in the ultimatum should “either test the French idea to destruction ... or give the inspectors a real chance to deliver a judgement which will convince six more Council members”. Dr Blix could play a role: “There should be room to move him to a firmer approach which raises the chances of the inspectors achieving more.” Sir Jeremy reported that Dr Blix was interested in ideas for more vigorous inspections “though downbeat about the amount of time available from the US”.

488. Sir Jeremy concluded:

“If we and the US are true to our pronouncements of force as a last resort, bringing the Americans back to their mid-September approach as a last gasp before pressing the plunger at least has a certain logical force.”

489. Sir David Manning proposed a resolution setting a deadline of 14 March for Saddam Hussein to demonstrate that he was complying fully with resolution 1441, after which he would be in further material breach.

490. Sir David envisaged that military action would not begin until late March, giving 10 days for Arab leaders to persuade Saddam Hussein to depart.

491. The resolution should specify what compliance meant. That would set the bar at a level it would be difficult for Saddam Hussein to reach and prevent equivocation in the inspectors’ reports.

492. France would seek to block the resolution and to string out inspections indefinitely.

493. Sir David Manning advised Mr Blair on 16 February that Dr Blix’s careful “fence sitting” in his report to the Security Council had:

“... encouraged the wishful thinkers and procrastinators. For the moment, there is almost certainly a Security Council majority for letting the inspections run, not for moving to early military action.”¹³²

494. Sir David advised that it would be necessary “to go on making the argument that the issue is compliance. Our best bet may be to concede a little more time while issuing an ultimatum.”

495. Sir David set out a proposal along the lines suggested by Mr Ricketts to Mr Straw, including a second resolution “stipulating that unless Blix reports on 14 March that Saddam is in full, unqualified, unequivocal compliance with 1441, he will be in further material breach”. There would then be an immediate vote after Dr Blix reported.

¹³² [Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 16 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Way Forward’.](#)

496. Sir David suggested that, subject to advice from Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the UK might “spell out, either in the resolution or orally ... that full compliance includes:

- explaining satisfactorily what happened to all the BW and CW unaccounted for when UNSCOM were forced out of Iraq in 1998;
- full and unfettered access to, and co-operation from [...] who were allegedly involved in the destruction of Iraq’s chemical stocks;
- full and unfettered access to, and co-operation from, all scientists UNMOVIC wished to interview both inside and outside Iraq, as provided for in UNSCR 1441.”

497. Sir David added that those “conditions set the bar too high for compliance, yet are fundamental to it”. Dr Blix would “find it hard to pretend otherwise, whatever marginal improvements Saddam may go on making on process as opposed to substance”.

498. In tabling the resolution, the UK:

“... should emphasise that we are giving the French the extra time they want; and we are taking Blix at his word ... ‘inspections could still be short if immediate, active and unconditional co-operation ... were to be forthcoming’.”

499. Sir David identified a number of disadvantages:

- The Americans will dislike it. As usual they are in a hurry. But the military timetable can be adjusted if necessary. It would probably mean action in the last few days of March i.e. after a vote on the second resolution on 15 March and a further 10 days for the Arabs to press Saddam to leave.
- Blix will dislike having to make a categorical judgement ... We must draft the resolution so that he cannot equivocate and cannot honestly give a verdict of full compliance.
- The French ... will work to block it. Their game is to string things out indefinitely ...”

500. Sir David also identified the advantages:

- It gives us another month to find our secure nine votes. We can claim that we have been reasonable; four months on from 1441 no-one should seriously argue that it is impossible to tell if Saddam is complying. A deadline will also focus minds ...
- We have another four weeks in which the inspectors just might get lucky. A real find would have a major impact on Security Council opinion ...
- It will give Saddam four more weeks to make a mistake. He may do so, perhaps reacting badly if Blix announces later this week that the Iraqis must destroy their Al Samoud 2 missiles with their costly engines. If Saddam refuses to co-operate, it will be a glaring example of Iraqi non-compliance.”

501. Sir David concluded that it was “impossible to be certain” that the strategy would work, “but it gives us a chance. The odds are against a successful second resolution at the end of February ... an extra couple of weeks could make the difference.”

502. Sir David advised “saying nothing” until after the European Council, allowing France a little more time, then hitting them with the draft resolution “probably in mid-week”. Before that, Mr Blair would “need to do a heavy selling job” with President Bush.

503. Mr Blair agreed the proposals were worth exploring and asked for advice, particularly on the proposed “tests” for Iraq’s compliance.

504. Mr Blair agreed that the ideas in Sir David Manning’s advice of 16 February were worth exploring.¹³³ That is addressed later in this Section.

505. Mr Straw was told that President Bush believed Mr Blair would commit troops if the US took unilateral action.

506. Mr Straw discussed developments with Secretary Powell twice on 16 February.

507. In the first conversation at 1pm, Mr Straw set out his “emerging thinking”, including the suggestion that a meeting might be held on 14 March at which Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei would be asked to report if Iraq was “actively and fully co-operating, perhaps against a checklist”.¹³⁴ Mr Straw added that he thought that Dr Blix:

“... would try to avoid responsibility for this. But whilst a further material breach and what we did about it were matters for the Security Council, saying whether Iraq was or was not co-operating had initially to be a matter for the inspectors since the information ... was theirs. After all, it was Blix’s statement ... about further co-operation ... on process which had put us on the back foot.”

508. In a discussion about the content of any checklist, Mr Straw said that it was important it:

“... did not become a ‘tick in the box for compliance’, but rather good evidence of compliance and it had to be very comprehensive, so that if he [Saddam Hussein] did all these things he was complying in reality.”

509. Mr Straw and Secretary Powell agreed that if Saddam Hussein was faced with a choice, for example, of whether to destroy missile engines and the survival of his regime, he would choose the latter. Mr Straw added that:

“... since the objective of HMG’s policy was ... the disarmament of Iraq’s WMD if possible by peaceful means, clear and continuing evidence of Saddam’s compliance

¹³³ [Letter Manning to McDonald, 17 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Way Forward’.](#)

¹³⁴ [Letter Straw to Manning, 17 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Telephone Conversation with Colin Powell, 16 February’.](#)

on substance would be bound to negate the case for the UK's involvement in military action.”

510. Secretary Powell was reported to have responded that he understood that:

“... but he was not sure that was where President Bush was. He might still be inclined to ‘go it alone’ for the removal of Saddam and the President believed that the Prime Minister would commit British troops in any event.”

511. Mr Straw said that Mr Blair’s “personal loyalty to the President was never in doubt; but that alone would not answer the question whether there was adequate legal and political justification for UK military involvement”.

512. In response to Secretary Powell’s comment that he assumed the demonstration on 15 February made a second resolution “even more necessary”, Mr Straw replied:

“... yes. If there were nine votes or more in the Security Council for a second resolution, and this majority was subject to a veto by one only of the P5, I thought we could carry the day in the Commons and the country but there would have to be ... clear evidence of substantive non-compliance by Iraq of 1441. Without the latter, we could have no chance. Regime change per se had never been the objective of HMG’s strategy however desirable it was.”

513. Mr Straw added that:

“... even with a second resolution (or a majority and a veto but good case) the political and public order consequences of the early stages of military action on current plans would be hard to handle: without a very strong case, consistent with our clear, already stated objectives, they could become unmanageable. Unless we were very lucky, military action without an effective international consensus could severely damage US as well as UK interests.”

514. In a discussion of the timing for a second resolution, Mr Powell said he was still thinking about tabling a resolution that week but stating that a vote was not being asked for immediately. Mr Straw pointed out the disadvantages for the UK while Parliament was in recess, adding that tabling a resolution without any commitment for an early vote would be seen as a sign of weakness. It might also make it harder to secure the votes of the elected members of the Council. It might also be seen as ignoring the outcome of the inspectors’ reports on 28 February.

515. In their second conversation at 8.30pm, following a conversation between Dr Blix and Secretary Powell, Mr Straw and Secretary Powell considered a list of particular issues which could be used to judge compliance.¹³⁵ Those need not be specified in the resolution but could include:

- the destruction of the Al Samoud 2 missiles;
- a push on interviews;
- control of road traffic;
- control of the Syrian pipeline; and
- legitimisation of existing No-Fly Zones and their potential extension to cover all of Iraq.

516. The bar would need to be set high enough to ensure that there really was compliance. Dr Blix had suggested a deadline of 15 April, which Secretary Powell said “would be difficult for the US”, though it fitted with the deadline Mr Blair had “originally suggested”.

517. Secretary Powell also suggested that there would be a presentational problem for President Bush if Saddam complied, and that “He would be unhappy publicly, but almost certainly relieved in private.”

European Council, 17 February 2003

518. On behalf of the European Union, the Greek Presidency had delivered a demarche to Iraq on 4 February stating that it was “deeply concerned” about the crisis and that time was “running out”. It called on Iraq “fully, unconditionally and immediately” to comply with all resolutions and to co-operate pro-actively with the inspectors. If Iraq did not comply, it would “carry the responsibilities for all the consequences”.¹³⁶

519. Mr Blair wrote to Mr Simitis,¹³⁷ other EU Heads of State and Government, Mr Romano Prodi, the President of the European Commission, and Mr Javier Solana, the Secretary General of the Council of the European Union, on 12 February, welcoming the decision to call an extraordinary European Council on 17 February and proposing that the 10 new EU Accession Partners and three candidate countries should also be invited “given their interests”.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ [Letter Straw to Manning, 17 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Second Telephone Conversation with Colin Powell, 16 February’.](#)

¹³⁶ European Commission, ‘Demarche by the Presidency on behalf of the EU regarding Iraq (4 February 2003)’.

¹³⁷ Greece held the Presidency of the European Council at that time.

¹³⁸ [Letter Blair to Simitis, 12 February 2003, \[untitled\].](#)

520. Recognising that the debate would need to “take full account” of Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei’s reports to the Security Council on 27 January and 14 February, Mr Blair set out a number of elements that “might form the basis for our debate and the conclusions we draw”. Those included:

- Reaffirming the EU position agreed at the 27 January meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Committee (GAERC), “particularly the full implementation of UNSCR 1441 to achieve the objective of Iraqi disarmament of all its WMD. Iraq must comply fully, actively, immediately and unconditionally with its international obligations”.
- Clarity about the implications of resolution 1441. OP2 had given Iraq a final opportunity to comply: “But Saddam had not taken that opportunity. His false statements and omissions in the December declaration and failure to co-operate fully with the inspectors are a material breach of the resolution [OP4]”. So, as OP13 made “explicit”, Saddam faced “serious consequences”.
- Military action was a last resort, but the Council “must make it clear that no Member State rules it out if needed to uphold the authority of the Security Council. We should also be clear that in the absence of full and immediate co-operation, the UNSC should move quickly to a second resolution.”
- Maintaining and increasing the pressure on Saddam: “Time is now running very short. There is still a last opportunity for Saddam to co-operate unconditionally with the international community’s demands or to leave. But failing that, we should be clear Saddam faces immediate and serious consequences.”
- The EU should ensure it was ready to contribute to humanitarian and reconstruction issues.
- Addressing the regional implications of the crisis by “underlining ... the importance we attach to early progress towards a lasting settlement between Israelis and Palestinians on the basis of the Road Map”.

521. Mr Straw wrote to his Cabinet colleagues on 14 February, reiterating the point he had made in Cabinet on 6 February, about the importance of maintaining contacts with members of the Security Council in “the crucial period leading up to consideration of a new resolution on Iraq”.¹³⁹ The position of the 10 elected Members of the Security Council (the E10)¹⁴⁰ would be crucial.

522. Mr Blair discussed Iraq, including the different expectations of what would constitute a material breach and the time required to bring people together and avoid further polarisation, with Mr Annan on 16 February.¹⁴¹ Mr Blair said the time required was the time needed to “make a judgement on whether Iraq was co-operating”.

¹³⁹ Minute Straw to Prime Minister, 14 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Contacts with Members of the Security Council’.

¹⁴⁰ Angola, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, Germany, Guinea, Mexico, Pakistan, Spain and Syria.

¹⁴¹ Letter Rycroft to Owen, 16 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with UN Secretary General, 16 February’.

523. Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries that, at the No.10 morning meeting on 17 February, Mr Blair “was keen on a major upgrade of our communications and believed we could win the argument as set out at the weekend”.¹⁴²

524. An extraordinary meeting of the European Council to discuss Iraq on 17 February pledged “full support” to Security Council efforts and to work with partners, “especially the United States”, to disarm Iraq.

525. Mr Annan appealed for transatlantic unity and patient persuasive diplomacy behind closed doors. The UN would be seriously weakened if action was taken without its authority.

526. The discussion of Foreign Ministers addressed the objective of disarmament rather than regime change, the need for a second resolution whilst the inspections were continuing, the consequences of military action, and the role of the EU, its relationship with the US and its credibility.¹⁴³

527. Mr Straw said:

“... what was at stake was the future of multilateralism in a unipolar world. France emphasised the power of words but not the power of action. Europe was very multilateralist in decision-making but not so when it came to action. There were essentially three fundamental issues involved: Iraq remained a threat to international security; the only reason that inspections were taking place was because of military pressure on Saddam; and Iraq was not complying. The EU would not be having this discussion unless the US and the UK were willing to pay for this military build up and put their troops on the line. They could not stay there forever but that did not mean that events were being driven by a military timetable.”

528. Mr Annan’s address to the Council was reported as “uncompromising in putting the onus on Saddam to implement resolution 1441; and to implement it swiftly”.¹⁴⁴ If the Security Council managed the current crisis successfully, it would emerge with its authority enhanced. But if it failed, and action was taken without its authority, the UN would be seriously weakened. If Iraq were allowed to defy the Security Council because the international community failed to impose itself, the foundations of collective security would be gravely undermined. An effective international security system depended on the Council and on its determination to take action in even the most difficult cases.

529. Mr Annan had appealed for transatlantic unity and patient persuasive diplomacy behind closed doors to build a common front. The greater the degree of consensus

¹⁴² Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

¹⁴³ Telegram [un-numbered] UKREP Brussels to FCO London, 17 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Special European Council, 17 February: Foreign Ministers Discussion’.

¹⁴⁴ Telegram 178 UKREP Brussels to FCO London, 18 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Special European Council, 17 February: Discussion with UNSG Annan’.

in dealing with Iraq, the greater the chance of resolving other crises, particularly Israel/Palestine.

530. In the discussion over dinner, Mr Blair said there were three issues at stake:

- **The authority of the UN.** That was set out in resolution 1441 passed after twelve years of Iraqi prevarication. The UN had made clear this was a final opportunity requiring full compliance. In neither the December declaration nor Dr Blix's reports to the Security Council in January and February was there any sign of full compliance on substance. If there were 100 percent Iraqi compliance, the inspectors could take as long as they needed. But the inspectors were not supposed to be a detective agency. Co-operation was key. If we were not careful we would be back in the situation we were in in the nineties.
- **Iraq's WMD.** There was no intelligence agency of any member state which did not know Iraq possessed these weapons. It was true that conflict meant bloodshed. But it was not true that the absence of conflict meant the absence of bloodshed. Thousands of Iraqis were dying under Saddam Hussein. Four million were in exile. The rate of Iraqi infant mortality in areas outside Saddam's control was a quarter of that in areas under Baghdad's rule.
- **EU/US relations.** Iraq had to be resolved in a way which met the objective of maintaining EU/US relations. That did not mean the EU had to do things simply because the US wanted. The way Europe handled Iraq would have profound implications for generations to come. The key was to ensure resolution 1441 was implemented. "The UN had to be the way of dealing with this issue, not a way of avoiding it."¹⁴⁵

531. The Council statement agreed at the dinner left the decision on inspectors' time and resources to the UN Security Council and made it clear that immediate action was needed by Iraq.¹⁴⁶ It was seen by the media as more robust than expected.

532. The statement said that the European Council was "determined to deal effectively with the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction"; and that it was "committed to the United Nations remaining at the centre of the international order". The European Council recognised that "the primary responsibility for dealing with Iraqi disarmament lies with the Security Council"; and it pledged its "full support". It wanted to achieve disarmament peacefully, and that was what the people of Europe wanted: "War is not inevitable. Force should only be used as a last resort. It is for the Iraqi regime to end this crisis ..."

¹⁴⁵ Telegram 179 UKREP Brussels to FCO London, 18 February 2003, 'Iraq: Special European Council, 17 February: Dinner Discussion'.

¹⁴⁶ Council of the European Union, 21 February 2003, *Extraordinary European Council Brussels, 17 February 2003*.

533. The European Council reiterated its:

“... full support for the ... work of the UN inspectors. They must be given the time and resources that the UN Security Council believes they need. However, inspections cannot continue indefinitely in the absence of full Iraqi co-operation. This must include the provision of all the additional and specific information on the issues that have been raised in the inspector’s reports.

“Baghdad should have no illusions ... The Iraqi regime alone will be responsible for the consequences if it continues to flout the will of the international community and does not take this last chance.”

534. The European Council would “work with Arab countries and The League of Arab Nations ... to bring home to Saddam Hussein the extreme danger of miscalculation”. It also reiterated “its firm belief in the need to invigorate the peace process in the Middle East and to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict”.

535. The European Council concluded:

“The unity of the international community is vital in dealing with these problems. We are committed to working with all our partners, especially the United States, for the disarmament of Iraq, for peace and stability in the region and for a decent future for all its people.”

536. The UK had argued that the extraordinary meeting of the Council should have been extended to include Accession Partners and candidates to allow them to contribute fully to the debate.

537. After the Council, Mr Blair wrote to the Heads of State and Government of the Accession Partners and candidates setting out his impressions of the meeting. The letter concluded:

“... it is essential that we keep the focus on Iraq and its obligation to disarm. This is a defining moment for the multilateral system. It calls for unity and unwavering determination on the part of the international community and, in particular, for solidarity between Europe and the United States ...”¹⁴⁷

538. The Partners and candidates subsequently agreed a statement supporting the outcome of the Council.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Telegram 7 FCO London to Budapest, 18 February 2003, ‘Prime Minister’s Letter to Accession Partners and Candidates’.

¹⁴⁸ Telegram 181 UKREP Brussels to FCO London, 18 February 2003, ‘Special European Council: Accession Partners and Candidates’.

539. In his monthly press conference the following day, Mr Blair made an opening statement setting out the “basic case” for the international community’s response to Iraq.¹⁴⁹

540. The points made by Mr Blair included:

- Saddam Hussein was “a threat” whose actions over the last 12 years made him unique.
- The stance taken by the world against Saddam was “not just vital in its own right”, it was “a huge test of our seriousness in dealing with the twin threats of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism”.
- If the UN was “to keep credibility, it must act to implement its stated will”.
- It was “plain in our judgement that Saddam” continued to be “in breach”. No country at the European Council had disputed that his co-operation was “neither unconditional nor complete”.
- There was “no rush to war”. It was “over three months” since Saddam Hussein had been given a final opportunity to comply. But without a change of heart, the inspectors were “never going to be able to play detective to search out weapons hidden in a country” the size of Iraq.
- The basis for action was disarmament.
- The demonstrators on 15 February had “a rightful hatred of the consequences of war”, but they should “also listen to the voices of some of the four million Iraqi exiles”. The nature of the regime could not itself provide justification for war, it could “at least show why if we do have to take military action, we do so in the sure knowledge that we are removing one of the most barbarous and detestable regimes in modern political history”.
- People were against a war which they felt was “rushed or unnecessary” and wanted to know war was not inevitable. Saddam Hussein could avoid war if he co-operated fully and that was the “reasonable and easily delivered requirement” of the international community.

541. Asked if he reserved the right to go to war without a majority in the UN, Mr Blair stated that there were “certain situations in which you have simply got to say to people look this is what I believe and this is what I think is right”. He added that there were “certain issues, particularly where there are issues of life and death, where I think the job and duty of the Prime Minister is to say to people what you honestly think, and then they have got to make up their minds”.

542. Mr Blair subsequently stated that he did not believe that he would be in a position where there was no majority in the Security Council, and he did not want to indulge in speculation on that point.

¹⁴⁹ The National Archives, 19 February 2003, *PM press conference 18 February transcript*.

543. Asked about concerns that Washington was rushing unilaterally into action, Mr Blair responded that people who wanted “to pull Europe and America apart” were “playing the most dangerous game of international politics” he knew. That was “so dangerous for the security of the world”. The US had listened to its allies and agreed to go through the UN to give Saddam Hussein a final chance to disarm. But having done that, if Saddam did not disarm, Mr Blair asked, “what prospect is there of persuading America in the future to go down the multilateral route if having taken that route we then just shy away from the consequences”?

544. Asked why public opinion was moving against action, Mr Blair replied that in relation to Kosovo and Afghanistan, there had been “a very immediate casus belli”. It was “more difficult to persuade people of the link between a state like Iraq with chemical, or biological, or nuclear weapons and the link with international terrorism”. It was his job to try to “persuade people of that, and also to persuade people of the moral case for removing Saddam”.

545. Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries that “the plan was to consolidate” on the success at the European Council, and “restate the basic case and get going re Iraq exiles”. In his meeting of the Iraq communications group on 18 February there was:

“... a clear understanding that we were widening [the communications strategy] to take in the bigger dimension of the moral and humanitarian side, and we had to be clear about whether this was shifting to a regime change position. We had to be clear that it didn’t, that the basic rationale hadn’t changed, but equally we were entitled to make the case that the world would be better off without him [Saddam Hussein] in power.”¹⁵⁰

546. Mr Campbell also wrote:

“The US was still giving out the message that it was going to happen and the rest was just giving us cover, eg saying that a second resolution wasn’t absolutely necessary but they would try to get it. Maybe they were just getting irritated with us for having taken them down the UN route in the first place.”

UK proposals for a draft second resolution

547. On 17 February, Sir David Manning had sent his advice to Mr Blair, of 16 February, to Mr Straw’s Private Office and to Sir Michael Jay, FCO Permanent Under Secretary (PUS), Sir Jeremy Greenstock and Sir Richard Dearlove.¹⁵¹ He wrote that Mr Blair had asked if they “could look particularly at the tests” suggested for Iraqi compliance.

¹⁵⁰ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

¹⁵¹ [Letter Manning to McDonald, 17 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Way Forward’](#) attaching Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 16 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Way Forward’.

548. Sir David asked:

- Were these the “right” tests?
- Were there others that could added?
- “Should the tests be included explicitly in a second resolution, or should this take the form of a short text simply stating that Saddam Hussein is in breach of 1441, while the conditions he must meet by 14 March are set out in an accompanying statement?”

549. Sir David asked for advice that day, stating that his letter and accompanying minute should be held “very tightly”, handled “on a strictly need to know basis” and the addressees should “keep the papers off main files”.

550. Sir David Manning spoke to Dr Rice before the EU Council on 17 February.¹⁵²

551. In response to Dr Rice’s report that, in a conversation with Dr Blix over the weekend, Dr Blix had “felt bad that he had given the Iraqis too much in his ... presentation to the Security Council”, Sir David said that Dr Blix had “overdone the course correction, worried by the reaction to his earlier presentation on 27 January”.

552. Sir David told Dr Rice that Dr Blix “had hinted” to Mr Straw “that he might be in the market for an ultimatum” and they discussed his report which would summarise the outstanding disarmament questions. They also discussed whether the Security Council should instruct Dr Blix to destroy the Al Samoud missiles. Sir David commented that he “strongly favoured” that: “Saddam would hate having to do it and might be provoked into making a mistake.”

553. Sir David said the UK was thinking about the shape and timing of an ultimatum:

“We did not have nine votes in the Security Council at present, and were very unlikely to get there by 28 February ... we needed time to shift three or four abstentions ... If it became clear that we could win, we could hope the French would decide to abstain rather than veto. It was going to be a tough sell ... Once the ultimatum was down, and the deadline was clear, the dynamics would change ... We must take more time if we needed it.”

554. In the subsequent discussion about how to increase the number of votes in favour of a resolution and whether, if there was a majority, France would abstain rather than veto, Dr Rice said that would be a “tough fight” in the US Administration about more time. She thought 8 March, “exactly four months” after the adoption of resolution 1441, might be better than 14 March as the French wanted. Sir David commented that he “saw the attraction”, but: “We must take more time if we need it.”

¹⁵² Letter Manning to McDonald, 17 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

555. Sir David and Dr Rice discussed possible avenues to increase the diplomatic pressure on Saddam Hussein to leave. Dr Rice's view was that "there were still two possible outcomes to the crisis: Saddam could step down; or the Security Council would conclude that he was not complying with 1441 and that action must follow". They agreed it would be important to have a clear plan by the end of that week.

556. Sir David asked Sir Jeremy Greenstock to "sound out" Dr Blix about a possible visit to London "in the next few days" because Mr Blair "would like to see him, one on one, to discuss ideas about an ultimatum". He concluded that the evidence suggested Dr Rice's:

"... thinking on the way forward is similar to ours. We shall have to think hard about whether to press for 14 rather than 8 March as the date for a vote ... but at least Condi [Rice] has now moved away from 28 February. This is something the Prime Minister will want to discuss with Bush when they speak later this week."

557. Mr Blair spoke to Dr Blix on 20 February.

558. Separately, Mr Rycroft produced a list of possible elements for inclusion in an ultimatum, drawing on the provisions of resolution 1441:

- Full explanations of all the material unaccounted for in the last UNSCOM report, and answers to all of UNSCOM's questions.
- A full list of those involved in the destruction of old chemical weapons stocks, and full and unfettered access to them in interviews at the location of the inspectors' choice and without Iraqi government representatives.
- Similarly full co-operation over the interviews of any other witnesses called by the inspectors, inside or outside Iraq.
- Full co-operation over any exclusion zones declared by the inspectors.
- Full co-operation over the destruction of the Al Samoud rockets and all other material identified for destruction by the inspectors.¹⁵³

559. Sir Richard Dearlove counselled against specifying the points on which Saddam Hussein should comply; there was "ample evidence" that he was not, and had no intention of, complying. There was no guarantee that inspections would produce conclusive physical evidence.

560. Sir Richard Dearlove stated that, in his view, the best course would be to stick with a short text stating that Saddam Hussein was not complying with, and was therefore in breach of, resolution 1441, backed by the available evidence that that was the case.¹⁵⁴ Listing the points on which we wanted Saddam Hussein to comply would undermine the overarching argument of resolution 1441 that it was Saddam Hussein, not the international community, who must do the work of disarmament. The UK should avoid further moves which perpetuated an inversion of roles. Setting Saddam Hussein

¹⁵³ Minute Rycroft to Manning, 17 February 2003, 'Iraq: Specific Demands'.

¹⁵⁴ Letter Dearlove to Manning, 17 February 2003, 'Iraq: The Way Forward'.

an agenda would allow him to be seen to be making efforts to comply and therefore to be co-operating with the UN; and that it would be difficult to act on a deadline if Saddam Hussein was seen still to be co-operating.

561. Sir Richard also wrote that there was ample evidence, including from Dr Blix, that Iraq was not, and had no intention of, complying. Given the resources Saddam Hussein had available to thwart inspections, and the scale of the task of uncovering something “truly damning”, there was no guarantee that the inspections would produce conclusive physical evidence.

562. Sir Jeremy Greenstock advised that the US would have difficulty with any language which renegotiated resolution 1441 or changed the legal basis for the use of force; and that there were difficulties in identifying concrete tests which did not go beyond the resolution.

563. Sir Jeremy questioned whether the material was available to convince the majority of the Security Council that the end of the road had been reached.

564. Sir Jeremy Greenstock discussed the way ahead with Dr Blix and, separately, Ambassador Negroponte on 17 February, including informal ideas for an ultimatum.¹⁵⁵

565. Sir Jeremy told Dr Blix that the UK remained committed to disarmament by peaceful means and to a second resolution. But the UK “wanted to force the issue in the next four weeks”; and that there might be less time if the US “balked”.

566. Sir Jeremy reported that Dr Blix had “noted that it was amazing that, in all their inspections, UNMOVIC had found no WMD except the (empty) chemical warheads”. Dr Blix had also commented that nothing had been found in the sites suggested by the US: “If they had come close there would at least have been a denial of access.”

567. In response, the UK had “underlined the sophistication of the Iraqi deception regime – we were confident in our intelligence while some information, e.g. on BW production, was corroborated by a variety of sources”; and that “given the Iraq deception mechanism, the key thing was co-operation”.

568. Sir Jeremy also reported that Ambassador Negroponte “showed interest in an ultimatum process with concrete tests”, but he foresaw problems with Washington. The UK should not propose language which renegotiated 1441 or changed the legal basis for the use of force.

¹⁵⁵ [Telegram 271 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 18 February 2003, ‘Personal Iraq: Meetings with Blix and Negroponte’.](#)

569. Reflecting further discussions with the US Mission in New York on 17 February, Sir Jeremy subsequently reported that:

- It was proving difficult to define concrete disarmament tasks with the information available and which did not go further than the resolutions required.
- It would be better if the benchmarks came from Dr Blix. The “key” would be “that they forced either Iraq to reveal its lie or the Council to come to a conclusion that Iraq was failing to co-operate”.
- The US Mission still favoured a simple “serious consequences” resolution with a vote by a certain date (or abandon the exercise altogether) if Iraq had not radically changed its approach.¹⁵⁶

570. Sir Jeremy advised that he remained of the view that we should put forward a resolution sooner rather than later to move the debate on. That could include a list of benchmarks discussed with Dr Blix, but he could also see the attractions of tabling a resolution now which simply called for disarmament, leaving Dr Blix or the middle-ground members of the Council to seek to define concrete actions. That would tie the US into the process. Delay risked appearing to be on the back foot, “uncertainty about our/ the Council’s intentions, perhaps reducing the likelihood that Iraq will realise the game is up and surrender its WMD (or ditch Saddam)”.

571. The telegram also made clear that Sir Jeremy had commented to Ambassador Negroponte that “perhaps we just did not possess the material to convince others that we were right to claim it was the end of the road”.

572. The UK Mission in New York offered suggested elements for a resolution which reflected discussions with Dr Blix.

573. The UK Permanent Mission to the UN in New York provided a paper overnight on 17/18 February setting out possible elements for a new ultimatum strategy.¹⁵⁷ It pointed out that resolution 1441 had used words like “active” and “unconditional” without defining them, and referred to a “final opportunity” for “immediate” co-operation without specifying how long that should take.

574. Addressing whether co-operation had been immediate, the UK Mission stated:

- “On the whole there has been great promptness of response”, and co-operation on process had been “without delays or foot dragging”.
- Co-operation on substance could “hardly be said” to have been “active”, although “a few recent measures” could be, “provided their potential usefulness is borne out by real results”.

¹⁵⁶ Telegram 274 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 18 February 2003, ‘Personal Iraq: Discussion with Wolf’.

¹⁵⁷ Fax UKMIS New York [junior official] to Ricketts and Chaplin, 17 February 2003, attaching Paper [unattributed], ‘February resolution 2003’.

- Iraq had appointed two Commissions, one to look for any remaining proscribed items and one to look for any relevant documentation. A third Iraqi initiative had been the provision of a list of personnel who had taken part in the destruction of proscribed chemical items in 1991.
- The Iraqi papers presented at the meeting in Baghdad on 8 to 9 February were spontaneous and “focused on central issues, but without any new evidence”.
- Iraq claimed it was encouraging “persons to come for ‘private’ interviews In Baghdad”, but there was doubt that they “really feel they can talk freely”. Interviews outside Iraq were “certainly an option”, but raised “difficult issues”.

575. The UK Mission asked:

“If it seems clear that many governments feel that enough time has not yet been given for the option of disarmament through inspection, how much further time, would they ask for inspections ... before they give up on this option and how ‘active’ should Iraq be required to be?”

“It does not seem unreasonable to hold that **11 weeks of inspections**, which have barely come up to full strength, and which come after a period of eight years of inspections between 1991 and 1998 and four years of non-inspections between the end of 1998 and November 2002, **is a rather short** period to allow a final conclusion that the disarmament requirements cannot be fulfilled through this method. What is clear ... is that military and political pressure has been and remains indispensable to bring about compliance. A slackening of it would, in all likelihood, result in less co-operation.”

576. The UK Mission proposed that, in the circumstances, an **“explicit time line** within which satisfactory co-operation and the required resolution of unresolved disarmament issues (or ‘key remaining disarmament tasks’) would be demanded”, would “not seem unreasonable”. Addressing how long would be needed, it stated:

“Under resolution 1284 (1999) 120 days were thought to be a time frame within which ‘progress’ on key remaining disarmament tasks would be. It is evidently a question of **political judgement how much time should now be given under resolution 1441 (2002)**. However, a time frame should not be set without any regard to what may be achievable ...”

577. Addressing who would judge **“whether there has been co-operation and disarmament”**, the UK Mission stated:

“In the last resort the Security Council must provide the answer, but it seems likely that the Council would need to rely on a prior assessment by UNMOVIC and the IAEA.”

578. Both questions were “very broad” and judgements would be easier if there were “some particular actions” or “benchmarks” which could be identified as “indispensable

but not conclusive”. Similarly, the extent of disarmament “could perhaps be judged on the basis of progress noted on some key issues (as was specified in resolution 1284 (1999)) rather than the whole catalogue of issues”. Although some of the measures required might not be possible, because of lack of documents or witnesses, “it would probably be possible to see whether Iraq provided active, genuine co-operation to solve the issues rather than dragging its feet and be evasive”.

579. The UK Mission provided an illustrative text for a draft resolution, including a request that UMOVIC and the IAEA submit a list of unresolved disarmament issues and questions “by [1 March] ... indicating which, in their view are key points, and what ... Iraq should do to solve these issues and to answer these questions”. The draft left open the date by which UNMOVIC and the IAEA would be asked to submit a report with their judgement on whether the issues and questions had been resolved and Iraq had fulfilled its obligations.

Mr Blair’s conversation with President Bush, 19 February 2003

580. Mr Straw and Mr Blair discussed the way ahead before a telephone call with President Bush. As result, the FCO produced an illustrative list of benchmarks which Dr Blix could be encouraged to propose alongside a “simple draft resolution” declaring Saddam Hussein to be in breach of resolution 1441.

581. Sir David Manning told Dr Rice on 18 February that the European Council had “gone well” and that the “emphasis had been on the need for Saddam’s swift and full compliance” with resolution 1441: “Recourse to force, once other options were exhausted had been conceded albeit reluctantly in the usual quarters.”¹⁵⁸

582. Sir David and Dr Rice discussed the next steps, including the nature of a second resolution declaring simply that Saddam was in violation of resolution 1441; the possibility of a vote after Dr Blix’s next report to the Security Council and the advantages and risks of setting rigorous benchmarks requiring total compliance to judge Saddam’s performance.

583. Sir David told Dr Rice that Mr Blair’s preference was for a vote on 14 March. That:

“... had the advantage of playing to the date proposed by the French. But it also gave us a precious extra few days to secure nine votes. In the end this was what it was about. We had to fashion our ultimatum and choose our timing to give ourselves the very best chance of getting the necessary majority ... this was critically important for us politically.”

584. Mr Straw told Secretary Powell that the UK needed a second resolution, and that “everything now had to be subordinate to that”.¹⁵⁹ He suggested setting Iraq

¹⁵⁸ Letter Manning to McDonald, 18 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

¹⁵⁹ Letter McDonald to Manning, 18 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Conversation with Colin Powell, 18 February 2003’.

“benchmarks” for co-operation by “filleting” Dr Blix’s paper. If the benchmarks were set high and Saddam Hussein co-operated, the US and UK would have “won by a different route”. Although Secretary Powell had reservations about including benchmarks in a second resolution, they agreed that Sir Jeremy Greenstock and Ambassador Negroponte should discuss a list with Dr Blix.

585. In response to a request for advice in preparation for Mr Blair’s discussion with President Bush, Sir David Manning wrote that:

- Mr Blair should seek to secure President Bush’s agreement to delay a vote in the Security Council until 14/15 March to provide “a few, precious extra days ... [which] might make the difference to securing the critical nine votes”.
- The second resolution should be “very simple, declaring Saddam in violation/ breach of [resolution] 1441 – without specifying what happens or when”. That should be accompanied by tough tests “agreed with Blix if possible” which Saddam Hussein would have to pass “in full”. Sir David wrote that Saddam Hussein “almost certainly won’t comply. If he does, we’ve won anyway”; the tests should “stick to what is stipulated in resolution 1441 and to the general disarmament categories, otherwise Saddam will play games”; and that the UK would be looking for “yes/no answers” from Dr Blix.
- There would also be a much better chance of gaining support for the resolution if it was clear that the UN would have a “key role” after any military action and that a “massive humanitarian aid programme” would be instituted; and by publishing and implementing the Road Map on Israel/Palestine before any military action. Sir David advised that both points would be a “tough sell” with President Bush, but “both are very important in helping us to win the argument”.¹⁶⁰

586. Following a discussion between Mr Blair and Mr Straw, Mr Ricketts sent Sir David Manning an illustrative list of benchmarks, which Dr Blix could be encouraged “to propose alongside a simple draft resolution”.¹⁶¹ Mr Straw recommended allowing a few days before tabling the draft resolution early the following week.

587. Mr Ricketts wrote that Dr Blix had “spoken about selecting benchmarks from the list of unresolved disarmament issues which UNMOVIC has drawn up (the cluster document)”; and that it would “not be easy to circulate the cluster document before 1 March”.

588. Mr Ricketts suggested the UK could propose its own benchmarks as a way to get Dr Blix to focus quickly. The illustrative list covered biological weapons, chemical weapons, ballistic missiles, documentation and unrestricted interviews with key personnel.

¹⁶⁰ Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 18 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Points for Bush’.

¹⁶¹ [Letter Ricketts to Manning, 18 February 2003, ‘Iraq: The Way Forward in the Security Council’.](#)

589. In his memoir, Dr Blix recorded that he had finalised his ideas about how UNMOVIC's work on clusters might be used on 17 February, producing both a draft resolution and a background paper which he gave to Sir Jeremy Greenstock.¹⁶² Sir Jeremy gave the documents to the Americans.

590. Explaining his thinking that inspections offered Iraq "an opportunity that was not open endlessly" and that it was "for the Council – but not individual members of it – to consider and decide on the alternative to inspections", Dr Blix wrote that military pressure "was and remained indispensable to bringing about Iraqi compliance" but:

"... many delegations felt that not enough time had yet been given to inspections; eleven weeks was rather a short time to allow the final conclusion that disarmament could not be achieved through the inspection path and would have to be abandoned. It would not seem unreasonable ... to set 'an explicit time line' within which satisfactory co-operation and resolution of unresolved disarmament issues and key remaining disarmament tasks would be demanded. It was a political judgement ... to decide how much time would be given.

"It would be for the Security Council to judge – after a report by the inspectors – whether there had been adequate co-operation and resulting disarmament ...

"My draft requested that UNMOVIC/IAEA submit by 1 March a list of 'key points' ... along with indications of what Iraq should do to resolve them (the benchmarks). It further spelled out a number of demands for Iraqi actions ... It requested UNMOVIC/IAEA to report to the Council before a specific date ... whether Iraq had done what was asked of it. Lastly, it stipulated that if the Security Council were to conclude that Iraq had not fulfilled what was demanded and thus had 'not made use of the inspection process,' the inspections would be terminated and the Council would 'consider other measures to solve the disarmament issue'."

591. Sir Christopher Meyer advised that there was no agreed position within the US Administration about how to work on a second resolution and UK views were best registered directly with President Bush.

592. Sir Christopher Meyer advised that the US Administration was still debating the timing and contents of a second resolution and that there was no agreed interagency position on how best to work with Dr Blix on a second resolution.¹⁶³

593. There was concern about Dr Blix's reluctance to press Iraq on mobile biological weapons facilities, because the "knowledge" of those facilities came from intelligence, which "appeared to put the onus on the US/UK to prove these existed rather than on Iraq to reassure the Council that they did not"; and that he might have lost sight of the fact that Iraq's co-operation on process was not synonymous with disarmament.

¹⁶² Blix H. *The Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction: Disarming Iraq*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2005.

¹⁶³ Telegram 219 Washington to FCO London, 19 February 2003, 'Iraq: US Thinking, 19 February'.

594. The US Principals were minded to see benchmarks as a record of what Iraq had not done, rather than a headline list of what Saddam Hussein should do.

595. Sir Christopher also advised that the UK's views were "best registered directly by the Prime Minister" with President Bush.

596. Mr Blair sent President Bush a six-page Note on 19 February.

597. Mr Blair proposed focusing on the absence of full co-operation and a "simple" resolution stating that Iraq had failed to take the final opportunity, with a side statement defining tough tests of co-operation and a vote on 14 March to provide a deadline for action.

598. Mr Hoon was not consulted about the approach to be adopted.

599. Mr Blair sent President Bush a six-page Note on 19 February.¹⁶⁴

600. Mr Blair stated that it was "a defining moment in EU/US relations and in the future direction of Europe". He wrote that it was "apparent to me from the EU summit that France wants to make this a crucial test: is Europe America's partner or competitor? ... For the first time ... a strong bloc prepared to challenge France and Germany" was emerging.

601. Mr Blair wrote that "European public opinion seemed to favour France" and that was being used "to embarrass the pro-US case, to inhibit the pro-US leaders". Those leaders had been:

"... remarkably firm in the face of really difficult polls and demonstrations.

"But the issue will be this: is it the US that is forced to go it alone with the UK, or is it France that is left isolated with a choice as to whether to use its veto?

"That is in turn a function of where public opinion is outside ... the US."

602. Mr Blair added that was "far more nuanced than people think". In his view, public opinion outside the US was:

"... not against conflict in all circumstances. What they fear is that we are hell bent on war, come what may, that we don't really want the UN to succeed."

603. Mr Blair wrote that fear was "absurd":

"The issue of time for the inspections has become vicariously, the focus for this sentiment. At the heart of this is a confusion between active and passive co-operation. The duty on Saddam is to co-operate fully; ie actively to help the Inspectors. If he isn't he's in breach. But the France/Germany view – too much shared by others on the Security Council – is that the inspectors should have

¹⁶⁴ Letter Manning to Rice, 19 February 2003, 'Iraq' attaching Note [Blair to Bush], [undated], 'Note'.

the time they need to “sniff out” the weapons ... and all Saddam needs to do is to offer passive co-operation, ie the absence of obstruction. Obviously if this is right, they could be there for months or years.”

604. Mr Blair added:

“Our view, which is correct is that time is irrelevant unless he [Saddam] is co-operating fully and actively. If he isn’t, the time needed is just the time necessary to make a judgement as to his co-operation: is it full or not? And actually, no one ... is seriously suggesting Saddam is co-operating fully.”

605. Mr Blair wrote that Dr Blix “unfortunately” embodied that confusion. His report to the Security Council on 14 February “never suggested there was full co-operation; indeed the opposite”. But the tone “seemed to imply that because Saddam was co-operating more on process, that was an improvement despite the fact that there was no co-operation on substance”.

606. Mr Blair reported that recent conversations with Dr Blix showed that he was “aware of this problem, and is prepared to countenance a definitive judgement and was shocked at how negatively for the US/UK his report was spun”. Mr Blair added: “My faith in Blix is somewhat shaken. But he remains key.”

607. Mr Blair suggested:

“... the trick we need to take is this: we have to find a way of re-focusing the issue on the absence of full co-operation ... and do so in a way that pulls public opinion and the UNSC waverers back to us by showing that we have indeed made every effort to avoid war.”

608. Mr Blair proposed that the US and UK should:

- Put down a new resolution “soon, probably early next week”. That resolution would be “simple and clear and as easy to vote for as we can make it”.
- Put the resolution “to a vote on 14 March, the date France has suggested for a [Security Council] meeting of Foreign Ministers”. That would then become “the deadline for action”.
- “At the same time” the resolution was tabled, there would be a side statement defining the categories of full co-operation: “full disclosure of the 1998 leftovers; witnesses interviewed outside Iraq; destruction of the rocket motors etc”. That should be “sufficient if he did it, to amount to a complete and total capitulation by Saddam”. That was “the ultimatum”.

609. Mr Blair wrote that he would be speaking to Dr Blix the following day to try to “tie” him in “to accept this is indeed what must happen”.

610. Mr Blair continued that the UK and US should say that:

“... failure in any respect to meet this test, will amount to non-co-operation; that this is a final attempt by us to disarm Saddam peacefully; that by 14 March it will be 4 months since 1441, quite long enough to assess whether he is co-operating or not.

“We work like crazy next week to get the UNSC members to agree or at least not oppose this strategy; and then build the support to carry a majority for 14 March.”

611. Mr Blair recognised that there were both advantages and disadvantages in his proposed approach. The disadvantages were identified as:

- The risk that Saddam Hussein “might conceivably comply fully – but the chances of this, according to all the intelligence are minimal”. If he did comply, “it would still amount to a huge humiliation [to Saddam Hussein]”.
- Saddam Hussein might “seem” to comply but that was “a risk in any event and by defining non-compliance so clearly” the “chances of ambiguity” would be minimised.
- The start of military action might be delayed by a week: “But this is not long and the blunt truth is that by next Friday i.e. 28 February or even a week later ... the chances of securing nine votes are very slim. A week’s wait is worth a resolution; or at least a majority on the UNSC.”

612. Mr Blair saw the advantages as:

- putting the US and UK “back in the driving seat, with a clear deadline and ultimatum”;
- re-focusing the “debate where it should be” on Iraq’s duty “fully to co-operate”;
- giving the “doubters a reason to sign up”;
- helping “the Arab world come on board”;
- accepting the French date;
- allowing the US and UK to “show the world we are going to war, not because we want to, but because we have to”; and
- “Above all”:
 - show “the US reaching out”;
 - set “the UN a fundamental test”;
 - give the Europeans something to rally round; and
 - “When we do act, it will show we went the last mile for peace.”

613. Mr Blair told President Bush:

“A successful second resolution would be an enormous success for your diplomacy over the last few months.

“I have never come across an issue in which the dividing line between overwhelming support and overwhelming opposition is so slender.”

614. Mr Blair added that, in the UK, which was “reasonably typical of European opinion”, “large majorities” believed:

- Saddam Hussein was “a threat and needs disarming”;
- “without the threat of action, he wouldn’t disarm”; and
- “in military action if there is a new UN resolution or even without a resolution if we had a majority of the UNSC ... ie France would veto and we could still do it.”

615. Mr Blair wrote: “Around 80 percent” in the UK supported an ultimatum and acknowledged that inspections could only work if Saddam co-operated. Yet a majority opposed action at that time. The “only explanation” was that:

“... they needed to be persuaded that the US and UK would prefer peaceful disarmament if that were possible. Proving it isn’t possible is the huge benefit of the ultimatum route.”

616. Finally, Mr Blair offered “two further thoughts”:

- “Publishing the MEPP Road Map would have a massive impact in Europe and the Arab world.”
- There was a “need to start firming up the humanitarian work for the aftermath of the conflict ... and show how we will protect and improve the lives of Iraqi people.”

617. Mr Campbell wrote that the Note had set out the basic strategy: “that we put down a UNSCR, not to push to a vote, instead use it like an ultimatum, give him two weeks or so to take us to the French date of 14 March.”¹⁶⁵

618. In their discussion at lunchtime on 19 February, Mr Straw and Secretary Powell discussed the fact that Dr Blix was “not yet ready to say that Iraq was not co-operating on substance” and the difficulties of agreeing a list of tests with him that “set the bar satisfactorily high”.¹⁶⁶

619. Sir David Manning spoke to Dr Rice before the phone call between Mr Blair and President Bush on 19 February to explain the UK’s thinking. He reported that he had “emphasised yet again that ... It was critical to give ourselves enough time to secure nine votes.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

¹⁶⁶ Letter McDonald to Manning, 19 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Conversation with Colin Powell, 19 February’.

¹⁶⁷ Letter Manning to McDonald, 19 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

620. Sir David had also addressed in some detail the importance of a US commitment to the Road Map, for the MEPP.

621. Mr Straw spoke twice to Secretary Powell on the evening of 19 February.¹⁶⁸

622. Mr Straw continued to press for the draft resolution to be tabled after the weekend, not before, and for a vote to take place on 14 March. He and Secretary Powell also discussed the text of the resolution, benchmarks and a possible ultimatum to Saddam Hussein telling him to leave. Mr Straw commended Sir Jeremy Greenstock's language in the draft resolution, stating that the Council "decides the final opportunity has not been taken" and talking more about Saddam Hussein's obligation for "voluntary disarmament".

623. In the context of conversations with Palestinian and Israeli representatives, Mr Straw repeated the imperative for publication of the Road Map to secure Arab support for action on Iraq.

624. President Bush and Mr Blair agreed to introduce a draft resolution at the UN the following week but its terms were subject to further discussion.

625. Mr Blair telephoned President Bush later on 19 February.¹⁶⁹ They discussed the positions of France, Germany and Russia and key regional countries. Mr Blair said it was "a defining moment".

626. Mr Blair repeated the arguments that the resolution and ultimatum route would help to demonstrate that the US and UK did not want war but were prepared to use force if that was the only way to disarm Saddam Hussein. Addressing the question of whether disarmament should be defined for Dr Blix and if identifying tasks for Saddam Hussein would allow Saddam Hussein to do some and try to show he was co-operating, Mr Blair said that, when the resolution was tabled, "we should set out the issues that were part of full co-operation".

627. Mr Blair and President Bush agreed the resolution would be introduced at the UN the following week.

628. Mr Blair also set out the reasons for a vote around 14 March. It would be important for No.10 and the White House to remain in close contact on communications. Mr Blair said that the resolution and ultimatum route would "help us to demonstrate that we did not want war but were prepared to use force if that was the only way to disarm Saddam".

629. Finally, Mr Blair underlined the importance of progress on the MEPP to help transform opinion in Europe and the Arab world.

¹⁶⁸ Letter Straw to Manning, 20 February 2003, 'Iraq: Foreign Secretary's Conversation with Colin Powell, 19 February 2003'.

¹⁶⁹ Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 19 February 2003, 'Iraq and MEPP: Prime Minister's Telephone Conversation with Bush, 19 February'.

630. Mr Campbell wrote that Mr Blair told President Bush that we couldn't dispute public opinion was against us but he strongly felt that the French and Germans were in the right place for public opinion but in the wrong place for the world.¹⁷⁰

631. President Bush wrote in his memoir that, in his Note of 19 February, Mr Blair had "urged that we forge ahead" and that he had written: "The stakes are now much higher". Mr Blair had also written that it was "apparent" to him "from the EU Summit that France wants to make this a crucial test: Is Europe America's partner or competitor?", and that there was support for the US from a strong European coalition.¹⁷¹

JIC Assessment, 19 February 2003: 'Southern Iraq: What's in store?'

At the request of the Cabinet Office Overseas and Defence Secretariat, the JIC produced an Assessment on 19 February of the situation in southern Iraq and what might happen there before, during and after any coalition military action.¹⁷²

The Assessment and Mr Blair's request for further advice are addressed in Sections 6.2 and 6.5.

Security Council open debate, 18 and 19 February 2003

632. An open debate of the Security Council requested by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was held on 18 and 19 February.¹⁷³ The debate gave the Security Council the opportunity to hear the views of non-members.

633. Sixty UN Member States or Permanent Observers spoke in the debate, the overwhelming majority opposing the use of force. The members of the Security Council did not speak. Ms Louise Fréchette, UN Deputy Secretary-General, attended the debate, but did not speak.

634. Mr Dumisani Kumalo, South African Permanent Representative to the UN, speaking on behalf of the NAM, said that NAM members considered resolution 1441 to be "about ensuring that Iraq is peacefully disarmed". The Security Council was yet to "fully utilize the inspection mechanisms of resolution 1441".

635. Mr Aldouri stated that the United States had transformed a "technical and scientific issue" into a "political" one, and reaffirmed Iraq's commitment to "full and active co-operation with UNMOVIC and the IAEA".

¹⁷⁰ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

¹⁷¹ Bush GW. *Decision Points*. Virgin Books, 2010.

¹⁷² [JIC Assessment, 19 February 2003, 'Southern Iraq: What's in Store?'](#).

¹⁷³ UN Security Council, '4709th Meeting Tuesday 18 February 2003' (S/PV.4709); UN Security Council, '4709th Meeting Wednesday 19 February 2003' (S/PV.4709, Resumption 1).

636. Mr Paul Heinbecker, Canadian Permanent Representative to the UN, stated that, since the withdrawal of inspectors in 1998, there had been “no proof” that Iraq had rid itself of WMD. There were reasons to believe the opposite was the case. Recent Iraqi co-operation had only come in response to intense international pressure. More time for inspectors could be useful, but only if Iraq decided to co-operate “fully, actively and transparently, beginning now”.

637. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that the debate had been a “necessary exercise” which had been organised by Germany (as President of the Council).¹⁷⁴ “Almost all” Member States who had spoken “expressed a preference for a peaceful outcome, but almost all stressed the need for better Iraqi compliance”.

Deployment of South African scientists to Baghdad

When Mr Blair met Mr Thabo Mbeki, the South African President, at Chequers on 1 February, they had three hours of private talks.¹⁷⁵

On Iraq, the readout from the discussions was that Mr Blair had “debriefed” Mr Mbeki on his talks with Washington and set out the UK position “in normal terms”. Mr Mbeki told Mr Blair that Mr Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, “had asked South Africa to send a team to Iraq to advise on how disarmament should be done”. Mr Blair “commented that there was not much doubt about what Iraq should do”.

Mr Aziz Pahad, the South African Deputy Foreign Minister, told the British High Commission that, following his visit to Baghdad from 9 to 13 February, where he had had meetings with Saddam Hussein, Mr Tariq Aziz and others, South Africa would be sending a team of apartheid-era scientists to advise Iraq on disarmament.¹⁷⁶

Mr Pahad said that he had delivered the message that Iraq must comply fully with resolution 1441, and the time for compliance was running out. Subsequently he added that he had urged full rather than partial co-operation; this was “an all or nothing” decision.

Mr Pahad’s assessment was reported to be that:

- Iraqi attitudes were slowly shifting;
- the inspectors to whom he had spoken had noticed and reported this mood change;
- those in favour of co-operation might be “winning out”; and
- the resolution of the U2 over flights issue was “major progress”.

Mr Pahad said South Africa’s objective was to prevent war by ensuring the success of weapons inspections. A team of experts would be sent to Iraq “imminently”. They would not have direct contact with the UN inspectors, “but would be proactive in helping Iraq to co-operate and demonstrate this co-operation”.

¹⁷⁴ Telegram 280 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 20 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Security Council Open Debate, 18/19 February’.

¹⁷⁵ Letter Lloyd to Davies, 1 February 2003, ‘Prime Minister and President Mbeki at Chequers: 1 February 2003’.

¹⁷⁶ [Telegram 42 Pretoria Capetown to FCO London, 18 February 2003, ‘South Africa/Iraq: Pahad Returns from Baghdad’](#).

Mr Pahad added that the initiative gave Iraq “the possibility of a face-saving climb-down ... if Saddam seriously rushed to comply”.

The British High Commission commented that Mr Pahad was “cautiously optimistic that South Africa might be able to help resolve the current stand-off in Iraq”, but was “realistic about the obstacles” that remained.

Mr Blair’s conversation with Dr Blix, 20 February 2003

638. Sir Jeremy Greenstock told Dr Blix that the Security Council had to realise that if it was not willing to authorise force if Iraq did not disarm, the issue would be taken out of its hands.

639. Sir Jeremy Greenstock told Dr Blix on 19 February that the UK was likely to go for an approach “signalling the end game on Iraq”.¹⁷⁷ The UK “would say that the Council had to realise that this would be out of the hands of the UN unless it decided that Iraq had to start the process of real disarmament and was willing to authorise force if it did not”. The UK “still hoped to avert the use of force – but we had to be realistic”.

640. Sir Jeremy reported that Dr Blix was not averse to a deadline but 15 March was “not theoretically doable”. He concluded that the “Blix benchmark possibilities” had been “tested” and “set aside as too risky”.

641. Sir Jeremy also reported that Dr Blix had said he would issue a decision on missiles to Iraq within 24 hours; and that UNMOVIC had “just received an ‘amazingly’ detailed document on the persons involved in the destruction of biological weapons which could be significant”. The meeting of the College of Commissioners for UNMOVIC on 24 and 25 February would discuss the “clusters” document. Dr Blix expected it to be finalised by 3 March, but he did not intend to submit it to the Security Council; it “was an exercise to help UNMOVIC define the key remaining disarmament tasks due under 1284 – but would do so if asked”.

642. Sir Jeremy commented that the UK was “likely to say that, if Iraq did not rapidly demonstrate it was engaging in voluntary disarmament, this document was academic”.

643. Mr Blair told Dr Blix that he wanted to offer the US an alternative strategy which included a deadline and tests for compliance. He did not think Saddam would co-operate but he would try to get Dr Blix as much time as possible.

644. Dr Blix stated that full co-operation was a nebulous concept; and a deadline of 15 April would be too early.

645. Mr Blair telephoned Dr Blix on 20 February.¹⁷⁸ They spoke for 45 minutes.

¹⁷⁷ [Telegram 287 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 20 February 2003, ‘Iraq: 19 February’.](#)

¹⁷⁸ Letter Cannon to Owen, 20 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Blix’.

646. The record of the discussion stated that Mr Blair referred to US disappointment with Dr Blix's report of 14 February and that it was "now difficult to dissuade the Americans from going down the military route". Mr Blair told Dr Blix that he was concerned about the risk of the UN being marginalised and of a split in the international community; and that he wanted to offer the US "an alternative strategy".

647. Mr Blair outlined the need to devise an ultimatum including a deadline and imposing a duty on Saddam Hussein to co-operate actively; and that failure to do so would be a breach of resolution 1441. That would accompany a "simple" resolution that would be Saddam Hussein's "final final" warning. There were "some indications" that, with a second resolution, "the Arabs might be able to lever Saddam out of power". Mr Blair added that co-operation would need to be defined and Saddam Hussein would need to comply in full.

648. Dr Blix was attracted by timelines but commented that "full co-operation was a nebulous concept". Later he stated that demands for co-operation had to be related to what was "realistically do-able".

649. Dr Blix told Mr Blair that the UN should have a catalogue of the action required on disarmament by the end of the following week. He should be able to share the "clusters" of unanswered questions with the UNMOVIC College of Commissioners by 24 February. The intelligence he had received was "not all that compelling". While he still tended to think that Iraq was concealing some WMD, he needed evidence to put to the Security Council. He was receiving "a flow of half promises" on Iraqi co-operation and needed more time.

650. Mr Blair said that the Iraqis could have signalled a change of heart in the December declaration. The Americans did not think that Saddam Hussein was going to co-operate: "Nor did he. But we needed to keep the international community together."

651. Dr Blix suggested that "key disarmament tasks" could be selected from resolution 1284 as it would be easier to judge compliance on those. They discussed the difficulties with interviewing Iraqis, which Dr Blix said he would be working on the following week. It was important to keep the pressure on Iraq.

652. Dr Blix confirmed that he had suggested a deadline of 15 April to the US, which they thought was too late. He thought it was too early. The threat of war was making it difficult to recruit and retain inspectors.

653. Mr Blair told Dr Blix that he would pursue the ultimatum route and try to get Dr Blix as much time as possible.

654. Dr Blix commented that "perhaps there was not much WMD in Iraq after all". Mr Blair responded that "even German and French intelligence were sure that there was WMD in Iraq". Dr Blix said they seemed "unsure" about mobile BW production facilities:

“It would be paradoxical and absurd if 250,000 men were to invade Iraq and find very little.”

655. Mr Blair responded: “our intelligence was clear that Saddam had reconstituted his WMD programme”.

656. The record stated that Dr Blix had “concluded that he accepted the need for timelines and benchmarks”.

657. In his account of the conversation, Dr Blix wrote that he had said:

“Only at three sites to which we had gone on the basis of intelligence had there been any result at all.

“Personally I tended to think that Iraq still concealed weapons of mass destruction, but I needed evidence. Perhaps there were not many such weapons in Iraq after all.”¹⁷⁹

658. After the conversation between Mr Blair and Dr Blix, Sir David Manning told Dr Rice that while Dr Blix had understood the key point that Iraq was not co-operating fully with the UN, it was “equally clear that he was not ready to say so to the Security Council”.¹⁸⁰ The need was therefore to keep him focused on this question of co-operation and “persuade him that the logic of the situation was that we should now issue an ultimatum”. Dr Blix would need to decide whether “he was going to be a party to the pretence that Iraq was co-operating with the UN system when, in fact, Saddam’s defiance risked wrecking it”.

659. Sir David also recorded US/UK agreement to table a second resolution on 24 February and the UK’s preference for the “very light” resolution proposed by Sir Jeremy Greenstock. There would be a need to prepare the launch carefully with members of the E10 and potential allies in the Security Council.

660. Asked about his response to Dr Blix’s comment about the implications of invading Iraq and finding “very little”, Mr Blair told the Inquiry that he had told Dr Blix: “What you have to tell us is ... whether he is complying with the resolution. Is he giving immediate compliance and full compliance or not?” Dr Blix’s answer was: “No, but, you never know, it may be that, if we are given more time, he will.”¹⁸¹

661. Mr Blair added that the conversation had led to him working with Dr Blix “to try and get a fresh ... resolution. I kept working on that right up until the last moment.”

¹⁷⁹ Blix H. *The Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction: Disarming Iraq*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2005.

¹⁸⁰ Letter Manning to McDonald, 20 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

¹⁸¹ Public hearing, 29 January 2010, pages 112-113.

662. Sir Richard Dearlove's Private Secretary advised Sir David Manning on 20 February that the "chances of a successful inspection are increasingly slim".¹⁸² SIS had sent messages to its best placed sources "emphasising the utmost importance of a major find in the next two weeks, and asking them to do everything possible to try and identify where materials or papers being hidden". The chances of a potential defector were "not encouraging".

663. An internal FCO minute of the Iraq morning meeting on 20 February recorded that the UK was "now moving away from the idea of benchmarks from Dr Blix, given US concerns ... and the difficulty of coming up with anything specific enough".¹⁸³

664. The FCO instructions for Dr Bryan Wells, MOD Director Counter-Proliferation and Arms Control and UK representative on the UNMOVIC College of Commissioners, for the discussion of the "clusters document", stated that it was important that he did:

"... nothing which suggests the UK endorses the document, or even accepts the validity of proceeding with work against the SCR 1284 timetable in present circumstances. That is not to say that we regard ... 1284 as invalid. But it must now be viewed in the light of SCR 1441, which requires Iraq to co-operate 'immediately, unconditionally and actively' with the inspectors. We see no point in proceeding with work mandated by ... 1284 so long as such co-operation is lacking."¹⁸⁴

665. The FCO added: "We realise that this will not be an easy line to take. It may in the event be best simply to say that the paper appears irrelevant in present circumstances of Iraqi non-co-operation, and then decline to engage on the substance."

666. The FCO also wrote that it realised the position might "annoy" Dr Blix, and UKMIS New York was asked to forewarn him of the UK's likely approach, and to:

"... explain our concern that the ... document may be exploited by some countries as an excuse to postpone a further decision on the fundamental issue of Iraqi co-operation ... thereby undermining the pressure on Baghdad."

667. The letter showed that the initial view of officials had been that the document "could be played into the long grass" as "no more than an internal piece of UNMOVIC work-in-progress"; and that "As such there should be no question of it being presented to the Security Council." But there were suggestions that others might present it "as a set of benchmarks" which could be used to "focus the Council's attention on the middle distance – well past the mid-March date we and the US are looking at for a decision".

¹⁸² Letter PS/C to Manning, 20 February 2003, 'Iraq: UNMOVIC Inspections and Defectors'.

¹⁸³ Minute Tanfield to PS/PUS [FCO], 20 February 2003, 'Iraq Morning Meeting: Key Points'.

¹⁸⁴ [Letter Dowse to Wells, 20 February 2003, 'UNMOVIC Commissioners' Meeting: "Clusters Document"'](#).

Agreement on the text of a second resolution

668. Mr Straw and Secretary Powell reached agreement on the text of the draft resolution on 20 February.

669. Sir Jeremy Greenstock gave Ambassador Negroponte a revised “light draft resolution” on 19 February which:

- noted (draft preambular paragraph 5) that Iraq had “submitted a declaration ... containing false statements and omissions and has failed to comply with and co-operate fully in the implementation of that resolution [1441]”; and
- decided (draft OP1) that Iraq had “failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it in resolution 1441 (2002)”.¹⁸⁵

670. Sir Jeremy reported that he had told Ambassador Negroponte that the draft “was thin on anything with which Council members could argue and would be less frightening to the middle ground”. It did not refer to “serious consequences” and that “instead of relying on OP4 of 1441”, the draft resolution “relied on OP1 of 1441, re-establishing the material breach suspended in OP2”.¹⁸⁶

671. Sir Jeremy added that issuing the draft would signal the intent to move to a final debate, which they should seek to focus “not on individual elements of co-operation but on the failure by Iraq to voluntarily disarm” and being “thrown off course by individual benchmarks or judgement by Blix”. It should be accompanied by a “powerful statement about what 1441 had asked for” which had “been twisted into partial, procedural, and grudging co-operation from Iraq”; and that “substantive, active and voluntary co-operation was not happening”.

672. In response to a question from the US about whether the “central premise”, that the final opportunity was “now over”, would be disputed, Sir Jeremy said that: “was where we would have to define our terms carefully: voluntary disarmament was not happening.”

673. The US and UK agreed they should co-sponsor the resolution with Spain and that the UK would “lead in explaining it to the Council”.

674. Lord Goldsmith’s response to Sir Jeremy Greenstock’s rationale for the second resolution is addressed in Section 5.

675. Mr Straw had two conversations with Secretary Powell on 20 February. In the first, they discussed UK and US drafts for a second resolution. Mr Straw said that he had “no firm view about which one was best”.¹⁸⁷ Sir Jeremy Greenstock’s view was that the lighter the language the more likely the UK was to attract the support needed

¹⁸⁵ [Telegram 288 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 20 February 2003, ‘Iraq: 19 February: Draft Resolution’.](#)

¹⁸⁶ [Telegram 287 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 20 February 2003, ‘Iraq: 19 February’.](#)

¹⁸⁷ Letter McDonald to Manning, 20 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Colin Powell, 20 February’.

from “swing countries”. Mr Blair wanted a report to the Council on 7 March but there were indications that Dr Blix might want longer. If a majority in the Security Council supported more time, Mr Blair would be in “a very difficult position”. Mr Straw told Secretary Powell that an agreed strategy was needed, including tabling a side document with the resolution “containing our list of demands”.

676. Concluding the conversation, Mr Straw stated that if “extraordinarily Iraq complied, the UK could not go to war”. Secretary Powell was reported to have replied that “in the end, there was only one difference between us: President Bush had already made his decision”. If Mr Blair’s “efforts did not permit the UK to be there, Bush would still go alone”.

677. Following the first conversation with Secretary Powell, Mr Ricketts advised Mr Straw that the US draft would be “much more difficult for middle ground opinion” to accept.¹⁸⁸ Mr Ricketts wrote that it was the UK, not the Americans, which needed the resolution; and that the Greenstock text delivered what the UK needed and would be more difficult to oppose. It was “more compatible with building a case in the Security Council that the issue is a simple one of whether or not Iraq is in compliance”.

678. Mr Ricketts advised Mr Straw to go back to Secretary Powell to press the UK view.

679. Mr Ricketts suggested that the UK might also “move away from the concept of tabling lists of benchmarks”. He wrote that the work with the US delegation in New York had “shown up how difficult it is to isolate questions which are susceptible [to] yes/no answers in the time-frame we need”; and that there was a risk that it would “play into the hands of the ‘more time’ merchants”. Mr Ricketts suggested that it might be better to draw on the work that had been done to “set out in a co-ordinated way some illustrative tests such as the destruction of rocket motors or producing specified people for interview in acceptable conditions”.

680. Mr Ricketts concluded that would be “more compatible with the approach in the Jeremy Greenstock draft resolution of making our case on the basis of whether Iraq was in full co-operation or not”.

681. In his second conversation with Secretary Powell on 20 February, Mr Straw stated that the UK Government “was signed up to the Greenstock language. If countries voted for that ... they would ... be voting to let us go to war.”¹⁸⁹

682. In response to questioning from Secretary Powell about whether he was sure that was the right call, Mr Straw said that “we were sure that the Greenstock language would do the trick”.

¹⁸⁸ Minute Ricketts to Private Secretary, 20 February 2003, ‘Iraq: UN Tactics’.

¹⁸⁹ Letter McDonald to Manning, 20 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Colin Powell, 20 February’.

683. The British Embassy Washington reported overnight that, subject to a final word from President Bush, the US was prepared to “go with” the UK draft and was gearing up for a major lobbying exercise.¹⁹⁰

684. Mr Blair spoke to President Bush, Mr Berlusconi and Mr Aznar about tabling the resolution in a conference call on 22 February.¹⁹¹

685. In a conversation with Prime Minister Aznar, Mr Blair agreed that the resolution should be tabled late on Monday 24 February, after the meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the EU.¹⁹²

Presentation of the UK’s strategy

686. In response to the level of concern in the UK, Mr Blair asked for a communications strategy based on the theme of a “last push for peace”.

687. Mr Campbell wrote that, on the morning of 20 February, Mr Blair “was getting more and more worried about Iraq, and with good reason”. He had asked for a strategy on the theme of “the last push for peace”, with a strong media plan to underpin it. Mr Campbell had emphasised the need for a sense that “we were trying to avoid war, not rush towards it.”¹⁹³

688. Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Cardinal Cormac Murphy O’Connor, the Archbishop of Westminster, issued a joint statement on 20 February about “the crisis involving Iraq”.¹⁹⁴ Recognising the “huge burden of responsibility carried by those who must make the ultimate decision”, the statement said:

“The events of recent days show that doubts still persist about the moral legitimacy as well as the unpredictable humanitarian consequences of a war with Iraq.

“We recognise that the moral alternative to military action cannot be inaction ... It is vital therefore that all sides ... engage through the United Nations fully and urgently in a process, including continued weapons inspections, that could and should render the trauma and tragedy of war unnecessary.

“We strongly urge the Government of Iraq to demonstrate forthwith its unequivocal compliance with UN resolutions on weapons of mass destruction.

“... We must hope and pray ... an outcome that brings peace with justice to Iraq and the Middle East may yet be found.”

¹⁹⁰ Washington Telegram 222 to FCO London, 21 February 2003, ‘Iraq: US Thinking, 20 February’.

¹⁹¹ Letter Hallam to McDonald, 22 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with President Bush and Prime Ministers Aznar and Berlusconi’.

¹⁹² Letter Hallam to McDonald, 23 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Aznar’.

¹⁹³ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

¹⁹⁴ The Church of England News Release, 20 February 2003, *Joint statement from Archbishop and Cardinal*.

689. In a speech on reintegrating Iraq into the international community at Chatham House on 21 February, Mr Straw focused on the threat which Saddam Hussein posed to the people of Iraq and the moral case for action.¹⁹⁵

690. Mr Straw stated that there was international unity about the objective of disarming Saddam Hussein who posed “a unique threat to international peace and security”. But “with each passing year” of Iraq’s defiance, there had “been a growing awareness of the immense consequences of a failure to match our words with actions”, and:

“The stakes could not be higher. If the UN proves unable to act on the spirit and the letter of mandatory Chapter VII resolutions when faced with the most egregious non-compliance it risks joining its predecessor, the League of Nations, as a footnote in history.”

691. Mr Straw said that, without military pressure on Iraq, there would be “no co-operation; no inspections”. Mr Straw also stated that the threat of military action was “and always has been, about pressuring Saddam Hussein to comply with resolution 1441”.

692. In preparation for visits to key capitals to pursue support for the UK’s position, Mr Julian Miller, Chief of the Assessments Staff, informed Sir David Manning that a script was being prepared which would:

“... briefly summarise evidence and judgements on Saddam’s WMD, describe the effect of some of the agents; set out the Iraqi response to UNSCR 1441, including the flaws in the 7 December declaration; and cover what we know of concealment, intimidation of witnesses and other aspects of non-co-operation. It will also provide supporting material on Saddam’s regime and – briefly – on links with terrorism. We will update the pack as new material becomes available.”¹⁹⁶

693. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that, during a briefing for E10 representatives in New York on 21 February, he had made clear that the UK viewed war as a last resort, but the objective of disarming Iraq had to be achieved and the threat could not be allowed to continue for much longer. Verified disarmament had not happened; and no-one had explained how inspections could work without Iraq’s co-operation. The UK supported the UN as a relevant international body, and did not favour unilateral action. Sir Jeremy stated:

“We had to factor in the US determination to deal with Iraq ... [The UK was] prepared to work with the E10 members to achieve a unified Council keeping the pressure on Saddam and perhaps allowing him to crack.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ The National Archives, 21 February 2003, *Reintegrating Iraq into the International Community – A cause with ‘compelling moral force’*.

¹⁹⁶ Minute Miller to Manning, 21 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Briefing Foreign Government’.

¹⁹⁷ Telegram 294 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 21 February 2003, ‘Iraq: 21 February’.

694. The UK strategy was set out in a telegram from Mr Ricketts to diplomatic posts on the evening of 21 February.¹⁹⁸ The key points were:

“The present plan is to table a simple draft resolution in the Security Council, probably on 24 February. This would provide the ... legal authority for military action if necessary. We would make clear that it was part of a strategy to give Iraq another short period in which to demonstrate finally and fully whether it was co-operating in order to achieve voluntary disarmament of its WMD. We would ... not be seeking a vote ... for another two weeks or so, but were not prepared for the process to string out in the absence of a clear will by Iraq to comply with 1441.

“... we would expect several further rounds of discussion in the Security Council ... culminating in a report by the inspectors to a meeting on or around 7 March, probably attended by Foreign Ministers.”

695. Mr Ricketts advised that there would be an intensive lobbying campaign of the elected members of the Security Council with a “good deal of travel by Ministers”. The campaign would be co-ordinated with the US and Spain. The FCO would be setting up a system to “provide an up-date at least twice a week while the crisis remains at its present pitch”, and was producing a daily “core script” for media purposes.

696. In a letter to Mr Campbell about statements over the weekend of 22 and 23 February, Mr Straw advised against any reference to either an “ultimatum” or to “benchmarks”.¹⁹⁹ Mr Straw explained that the US was hostile to the use of the former term because “it would cut across a real ultimatum which President Bush had in mind to issue at about the time the resolution was voted – to Saddam to ‘get out of town’”.

697. On benchmarks, there was:

“... a trap here for us to avoid. If we are too specific about how we judge Saddam’s compliance, we set ourselves up as a target, both from Saddam but also from Blix. Saddam will know what he appears to have to do to get ticks in the right boxes. Judging from the Prime Minister’s conversation with Blix yesterday, I think Blix is also in the mood to say if he possibly can that Iraq has passed any benchmarks that we offer. Most of the members of the Security Council will look to Blix for their judgement.”

698. In his diaries, Mr Campbell wrote that, on 21 February, Mr Blair, who was on his way to Rome, had called him to say that “everything now had to be set in the context of pushing for peace, that we wanted to resolve it peacefully”. Mr Campbell had worked with the White House on a briefing note. Mr Blair and Mr Straw had been happy to include a reference to an ultimatum until Mr Straw spoke to Secretary Powell “who

¹⁹⁸ [Telegram 16 FCO London to UKREP Brussels, 21 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Next Steps at the UN’.](#)

¹⁹⁹ [Letter Straw to Campbell, 21 February 2003, ‘Choreography of Statements over the Weekend’.](#)

said the real ultimatum would be made just before action when we tell Saddam to get out of town”.²⁰⁰

699. In his press conference with Mr Berlusconi on 21 February, Mr Blair warned that military action on Iraq could not be avoided unless Saddam Hussein chose “the route of peaceful disarmament”.²⁰¹ Mr Blair emphasised that no one wanted war. That was why:

“... last summer, instead of starting a war, we went to the UN ...

“But there is a moral dimension to this question too. If we fail to disarm Saddam peacefully, then where does that leave the authority of the UN?

“And if we leave Saddam in charge of Iraq with his weapons of mass destruction, where does that leave the Iraqi people who are the principal victims of Saddam?”

700. Asked about the opposition to conflict expressed by church leaders, Mr Blair replied:

“I don’t pretend to have a monopoly of wisdom ... and I totally understand why people don’t want war ...

“That’s the very reason why we have given every single opportunity for this to be resolved peacefully. All I ask people to do is understand that however sincerely they hold their view, I hold my view sincerely too. And there is another side to this argument.

“I understand exactly why people feel so strongly, but in the end, I have got to make a decision and that’s the difference between leadership and commentary.

“I have got to make a decision. If we cannot disarm him peacefully, are we just going to ignore the issue and hope it will go away?”

701. Late that evening, there was a conference call, including Dr Rice, Mr Stephen Hadley (US Deputy National Security Advisor), Sir David Manning and Mr Powell as well as Mr Campbell.²⁰² The US was worried about the text, which included “a side statement directly challenging Saddam”. In his diaries, Mr Campbell wrote that Dr Rice:

“... feared that setting it out as a final chance – again – or a challenge to Saddam, suggested there was something here beyond 1441. She said 1441 was all that we needed. We tried to use the call to get over the need for a different sort of language on this, but they really didn’t get it.”

²⁰⁰ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

²⁰¹ *The Guardian*, 21 February 2003, *Blair: war difficult to avoid*.

²⁰² Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

702. Mr Campbell added that despite five phone calls including the conference call, the US and UK:

“... were not really in the same place. I could sense that Condi thought we were weakening. She really didn’t like the final, final opportunity line, couldn’t see it was simply a way of trying to show we preferred peace to war ...”

703. Mr Campbell told Dr Rice that she had to understand “we were hit hard here because people felt we were rushing to a timetable set by others”.

704. On 23 February, Mr Blair spoke to President Putin who was prepared to work on a second resolution which put tougher requirements on Saddam Hussein, but President Putin did not think it should provide an automatic start to hostilities.²⁰³

705. Mr Blair also spoke to Mr Vicente Fox, the Mexican President,²⁰⁴ and Mr Ricardo Lagos, the Chilean President.²⁰⁵

706. Mr Straw and Sir David Manning also made a number of telephone calls.

707. Mr Straw spoke to Mr de Villepin on 23 February about French concerns that pushing for a second resolution was premature and indicated that the US and the UK had no faith in the inspection process.²⁰⁶

708. On 24 February, Mr Campbell wrote that “Iraq was totally dominating” and he had suggested in Mr Blair’s morning meeting that “something concrete, like signs of Arab pressure, or a new diplomatic effort that meant something” was “needed to add some substance to the ‘last push for peace’, which at the moment just sounded vacuous”.²⁰⁷ Mr Blair “said the last push WAS the pressure being applied, or the pressure was the last push”, which Mr Campbell “still felt looked like we were trying to meet a US timetable, not genuinely trying to avoid war. But all the US politicians did was communicate an impatience to get to war.”

Response to the draft resolution of 24 February 2003

709. The UK, US and Spain tabled a draft resolution on 24 February stating simply that Iraq had failed to take the final opportunity offered by resolution 1441 and that the Security Council had decided to remain seized of the matter.

²⁰³ Letter Hallam to McDonald, 23 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Putin’.

²⁰⁴ Letter Hallam to McDonald, 23 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with President Fox of Mexico’.

²⁰⁵ Letter Hallam to McDonald, 23 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with President Lagos of Chile’.

²⁰⁶ Telegram 40 FCO London to Paris, 23 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Telephone Call with French Foreign Minister, 23 February’.

²⁰⁷ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

710. Sir Jeremy Greenstock stated that resolution 1441 required Iraq “visibly and unmistakably to divest itself of weapons of mass destruction immediately, unconditionally and actively”; that had not happened and the US and UK had concluded that Iraq had decided to defy the international community.

711. A meeting of the Security Council was held on 24 February at the request of the UK.²⁰⁸

712. A draft of a second resolution was tabled by the UK, US and Spain. The draft operative paragraphs stated simply that the Security Council:

- “Decides that Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it by resolution 1441”; and
- “Decides to remain seized of the matter.”²⁰⁹

713. Sir Jeremy Greenstock told the Security Council that:

“The co-sponsors are convinced that Iraq is not achieving, nor intending to achieve, the objective of SCR 1441 ... its unanimous message represented a powerful signal that the UN was in control. The Security Council was challenged by the US President to raise its game on its most difficult agenda item ... The resolution set out the most stringent terms ever decided upon by the United Nations for the process of disarmament. But there was also an olive branch ... Iraq was given every incentive to repair its documented non-compliance.

“Today, 15 weeks on ... we are no further advanced towards that objective of complete disarmament. Indeed, nor is Iraq taking adequate steps to correct its wider breaches of 687, including its support for terrorism. The terms of resolution 1441 are not being respected ...”²¹⁰

714. Sir Jeremy stated:

“What we all asked of Iraq was, first, a marked change from its denial and deception of 1991 to 2002, which had already placed it in material breach of relevant resolutions; and second, full compliance with and co-operation with the implementation of 1441. In other words, a decision by Iraq visibly and unmistakably to divest itself of weapons of mass destruction immediately, unconditionally and actively. That means bringing proscribed materials or programmes to the notice of inspectors and providing a full and credible account of Iraq’s WMD activity backed up by documentary evidence and testimony from personnel.

²⁰⁸ Telegram 301 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 25 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Tabling of US/UK/Spanish Draft Resolution: Draft Resolution’.

²⁰⁹ [Telegram 302 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 25 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Tabling of US/UK/Spanish Draft Resolution: Draft Resolution’.](#)

²¹⁰ [Telegram 303 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 25 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Tabling of US/UK/Spanish Draft Resolution: UK Statement’.](#)

“What 1441 was not was the establishment of a detective or a containment exercise ... The final opportunity afforded in SCR 1441 was not for the Council to slide back into process, but for Iraq to recognise a new determination in the Security Council to complete the business in a way which represented a complete change of attitude in Baghdad.

“That has not happened.”

715. Sir Jeremy said that the UK was “convinced” that Iraq had “decided to remain in defiance of the UN”. The reasons included:

- Iraq had “only agreed to inspections” after President Bush’s speech on 12 September 2002 “in a cynical attempt to scupper any new resolution strengthening them”.
- The Iraqi letter of 13 November 2002 was “full of tirades and complaints”, “grudgingly accepting that it would ‘deal with’ the resolution”. That was “way short of the wholehearted commitment to voluntary disarmament we had hoped for”.
- Iraq’s 12,000 page declaration was “indisputably inadequate”.
- Iraq had “done everything possible to prevent unrestricted interviews”.
- Iraq had “dragged its feet on as many other elements of procedural co-operation as possible. Instead of serious collaboration with the inspectors, Iraq has tried to make the process into a tightly monitored media circus ...”
- “Iraq’s co-operation on substance has been non-existent ... UNMOVIC have not been able to close a single outstanding issue ... And there are now even more unresolved questions ...”
- “This continues ... an all too familiar pattern of Iraq trying to get us to focus on small concessions of process, rather than on the big picture ... there is no semblance of whole-hearted co-operation ... nothing like a regime with nothing to hide ...”

716. Sir Jeremy concluded that the UK was seeking:

“... to keep the Council in control of the process and to build renewed Council consensus ... that Iraq has made the wrong choice: the choice not to take ... the final opportunity voluntarily to disarm ... We shall, in detailed discussions, set out further the argument that this choice has been made, that the choice is a defiance of 1441 and the available remedies are fast disappearing.”

717. The UK was “not asking for any instant judgements”: there was “time still ... for Iraq to make the right choice”. The UK would not “call for a vote ... until a proper debate has been held”. There was:

“... still an opportunity to avert conflict. But the Council’s judgement that Iraq has made the wrong choice should be clear and consensual. The last chance for peace

is that the Council should say this together and formally, confront Baghdad with the stark implications, and trust ... the response will be complete disarmament which we demanded ... in SCR 687 [1991] ...”

718. Mr Sergei Lavrov, Russian Permanent Representative to the UN, asked Sir Jeremy for the “additional facts justifying” his reference to Iraq’s support for terrorism. Sir Jeremy reported that Mr Lavrov also stated that the “allegations being levelled against Iraq” addressed the process of disarmament, not the substance.²¹¹

719. In subsequent remarks to the press, Sir Jeremy stated that resolution 1441 “had set out the terms. Iraq had failed to co-operate. The draft resolution was about taking the hard decisions that followed.”²¹²

720. Asked by the Inquiry why the UK had tabled that draft resolution when, unlike UNSCOM in December 1998, Dr Blix had stated he was getting co-operation on process, Mr Blair replied:

“Whether he thought the action was justified or not, his reports were clear that the compliance was not immediate and the co-operation unconditional. It plainly wasn’t.”²¹³

721. Mr Blair added that he did not believe that “if Dr Blix had another six months, it would have come out any differently”. Saddam Hussein “was definitely in material breach” of resolution 1441; Mr Blair “had to decide” whether his (Saddam Hussein’s) behaviour “really” indicated that he was “someone who had had a change of heart”.

722. Asked if there was a risk in tabling the resolution that it would appear that the UK was trying to curtail the process because of the demands of military planning, Mr Blair replied:

“It was more, actually ... the other way round ... what we were trying to do was to say: how do you resolve what, on any basis, is a somewhat indistinct picture being painted by Dr Blix ...

“... I think we [Mr Blair and Dr Blix] ... had a long conversation on the phone. I remember Jack Straw was very much involved in this. Jeremy Greenstock, I think, at the UN, was very much involved in this. We tried to construct these tests, and the most important one, to me, was this ability to get the scientists out of the country.”²¹⁴

²¹¹ Telegram 301 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 25 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Tabling of US/UK/Spanish Draft Resolution: Draft Resolution’.

²¹² Telegram 301 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 25 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Tabling of US/UK/Spanish Draft Resolution: Draft Resolution’.

²¹³ Public hearing, 29 June 2010, pages 113-114.

²¹⁴ Public hearing, 29 January 2010, page 116.

723. France, Germany and Russia responded by tabling a memorandum which proposed strengthening inspections and bringing forward the work programme specified in resolution 1284 and accelerating its timetable.

724. France, Germany and Russia responded to the draft resolution by tabling a memorandum, building on the earlier tripartite declaration of 10 February, stating that “full and effective disarmament” remained “the imperative objective of the international community”.²¹⁵ That “should be achieved peacefully through the inspection regime”. The “conditions for using force” had “not been fulfilled”. The memorandum stated that the Security Council “must step up its efforts to give a real chance to the peaceful settlement of the crisis”. A “combination of a clear programme of action, reinforced inspections, a clear timeline and the military build-up” provided “a realistic means to unite the Security Council and to exert maximum pressure on Iraq”.

725. Canada also circulated ideas for a process based on key tasks identified by UNMOVIC.

726. In a “non-paper” circulated on 24 February, Canada set out its ideas on establishing “a defined process for a specific period of time to address the Iraq situation”.²¹⁶

727. The document stated that the Security Council divisions on Iraq “could have serious long-term implications for the UN and for international peace and stability”; and that both sides of the division had a point:

- “• An open-ended inspection process would relieve the pressure on the Iraqis to disarm.
- A truncated process would leave doubt that war was a last resort.”

728. Canada suggested that the inspectors should bring forward their “clusters” document “early” on 28 February and provide the Council with a prioritised list of key substantive tasks for Iraq to accomplish. The inspectors would then provide four, weekly, reports on the substance with a final report on 28 March for discussion at a Ministerial-level meeting of the Security Council on 31 March.

729. If the 28 March report indicated that Iraq had not complied, “all necessary means could be used to force them to disarm”. If Iraq co-operated “an enhanced inspection, verification and monitoring system would be implemented”.

730. Mr Rycroft commented to Mr Blair on 26 February that the paper was “unhelpful”.

²¹⁵ UN Security Council, 24 February 2003, ‘Letter dated 24 February 2003 from the Permanent Representatives of France, Germany and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council’ (S/2003/214).

²¹⁶ [Letter Wright to Colleagues, 24 February 2003, \[untitled\], attaching ‘Non-paper: Ideas on Bridging the Divide’.](#)

731. The UK began an intense and determined effort to secure support for the draft resolution.

732. Between the discussion in the Security Council on 24 February and the reports to the Security Council from Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei on 7 March, the UK, US and Spain began an intense and determined effort to try to persuade the members of the Council, and other allies, to support the draft resolution.

733. The campaign included letters from Mr Blair, telephone calls, meetings and visits by Ministers and Sir David Manning, as well as discussions in New York and capitals and public statements in the US and UK.

734. Mr Straw and Secretary Powell discussed developments on 25 February and the “troublesome” implications of the request for more time. Mr Straw commented that “everyone was running for cover, finding any reason not to take action”. In the tea room of the House of Commons, he had “found much support for continued containment as the best way of avoiding unintended consequences”.²¹⁷

735. Iraq was reported to have “dominated” the discussion during a meeting and lunch between Mr Straw and Mr Fischer on 25 February.²¹⁸

736. The record stated that “there was no meeting of minds”. Mr Fischer had:

- made it clear that Germany could not vote for the UK/US/Spanish resolution, which in “German eyes would lead directly to war”;
- questioned why the inspections should stop now;
- suggested that destruction of Al Samoud 2 missiles would “prove resolution 1441 was working”, and that there were “other hopeful signs”;
- stated that the German/French/Russian joint memorandum set out the only process that would lead to peace; containment was working; and
- stated that “war would lead to serious repercussions; increased terrorism; insecurity in the Middle East”.

737. Mr Straw was reported to have argued that the problem with Saddam Hussein was that: “he had history of ‘stringing it out’. He only made concessions which represented the bare minimum, under the threat of force, and at the last minute.” The joint memorandum “made the error of putting the burden on the inspectors to find Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction”; and that it “would merely lead to loose containment not disarmament”. The burden should be on Saddam Hussein; he “could comply quickly” and, as Mr Blair had said, “if Saddam complied, then he could stay in power”. The joint

²¹⁷ Telegram 87 FCO London to Washington, 25 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Conversation with US Secretary of State, 25 February’.

²¹⁸ Telegram 33 FCO London to Berlin, 25 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Lunch with German Foreign Minister, 25 February’.

memorandum “simply created the message that Saddam wanted to hear; that the international community was divided”.

738. In a letter to Sir David Manning on 25 February, Mr Straw’s Private Office identified the core arguments for the UK to use in persuading other members of the Security Council to support the resolution as:

- There is an objective case against Iraq. We have given inspections 12 years already. SCR 1441 (2002) set clear benchmarks – immediate, unconditional and active co-operation. Iraqi co-operation has not been forthcoming.
- More time will make no difference. Inspections are not a detective agency. How many last chances can you have?
- The authority of the UN is at stake. Collective threats in a globalised world means taking on threats where they emerge ...
- It is in no-one’s interest to see the US go unilateral. We need to show the US that the UN can play a constructive role.”²¹⁹

739. Following their discussion of the next steps on 25 February, Sir David reported that Dr Rice thought there would be no vetoes of the resolution.²²⁰

740. President Chirac’s position was identified as important but Mr Blair decided to wait for “the right moment” to resume their dialogue.

741. Sir John Holmes wrote to Sir David Manning on 24 February offering advice on the way ahead.²²¹ He recommended that it remained important that Mr Blair continued to talk to President Chirac, “even if there is at present no chance of changing his mind”. There would be “the usual problems about who picks up the phone first” but it would be “much easier to attempt any final persuasion if we have kept up a dialogue”.

742. Recognising that it was “outside my province, and very much for” Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Sir John also wrote:

“... the assumption here is that the French will not have to veto if we cannot assemble nine positive votes ... But have we thought about going ahead with a vote even if we know we cannot get nine positive votes? Might there not be value in a vote with six or seven positive votes and everyone else abstaining – it would be a diplomatic failure in one sense, but if no-one had voted against, perhaps more of a political mandate than otherwise? There might of course still be the risk of a French vote against, but would they really want to do it in these circumstances? It is obviously too soon to know how all this will play out in the end, but it might be worth keeping the thought in mind.”

²¹⁹ Minute Owen to Manning, 25 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Second Resolution: Positions of E10’.

²²⁰ Letter Manning to McDonald, 25 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

²²¹ [Letter Holmes to Manning, 24 February 2003, ‘Iraq: France’](#).

743. Sir David Manning commented that he was not sure Mr Blair would have much enthusiasm for Sir John’s first recommendation, but it was worth “bearing the argument in mind”.²²² Sir David agreed with Sir John’s second point.

744. Mr Blair replied: “We sh[oul]d wait ‘til the right moment.”²²³

745. Sir Jeremy Greenstock remained concerned about the lack of support in the Security Council and the implications, including the legal implications, of putting the resolution to a vote and failing to get it adopted.

746. Sir Jeremy Greenstock advised that in the circumstances Sir John Holmes had identified (fewer than nine positive votes but everyone else abstaining), the resolution would not be adopted and it would have no legal effect.²²⁴ He found it:

“... hard to see how we could draw much legal comfort from such an outcome; but an authoritative determination would be a matter for the Law Officers. (Kosovo was different: in that case a Russian draft condemning the NATO action as illegal was heavily defeated, leaving open the claim that the action was lawful ... (or at least was so regarded by the majority of the Council).)

“Furthermore, in the current climate ... the political mandate to be drawn from a draft which failed to achieve nine positive votes seems to me likely to be (at best) weak ... The stark reality would remain that the US and UK had tried and failed to persuade the Council to endorse the use of force against Iraq. And the French (and the Russians and Chinese) would no doubt be sitting comfortably among the abstainers ...

“My feeling ... is that our interests are better served by not putting a draft to a vote unless we were sure that it had sufficient votes to be adopted ... But we should revisit this issue later – a lot still had still to be played out in the Council.”

747. Following discussions with the US and Spanish Missions in New York on 25 February, Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that the “key arguments” in relation to Canadian and other benchmarking proposals were:

- “• it was impossible accurately to define key remaining disarmament tasks, or other benchmarks, in the absence of Iraqi co-operation ...
- the Council had to accept there would never be total clarity ...
- 1441 set the benchmarks for Iraqi co-operation, benchmarks it had manifestly failed; and
- the big picture was that we were being taken for a ride ...”²²⁵

²²² Manuscript comment Manning to Prime Minister, 25 February 2003, on [Letter Holmes to Manning, 24 February 2003, ‘Iraq: France’](#).

²²³ Manuscript comment Blair on [Letter Holmes to Manning, 24 February 2003, ‘Iraq: France’](#).

²²⁴ [Letter Greenstock to Manning, 25 February 2003, \[untitled\]](#).

²²⁵ Telegram 309 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 26 February 2003, ‘Iraq: 25 February’.

748. Mexico had raised questions about the legal effect of the UK draft and whether it signalled that peaceful means had been exhausted and whether a third Council decision would be needed for the use of force.

749. Sir Jeremy suggested that “consistent with being legally accurate”, the “most persuasive answers” might be along the lines that:

- “• the resolution itself asked the Council to conclude that Iraq had failed to take its final opportunity to comply. This was something on which, given Iraq’s pattern of non co-operation, the Council should be able to unite;
- the consequence of that judgement, deriving from 1441 and previous resolutions, was that force would be authorised;
- this did not mean that the resolution would lead to the use of force or that peaceful means were exhausted. Rather, with a clear Council decision ... there was still a chance of last minute radical moves by the Iraqis. We recognised that the probability of Iraq taking that chance ... was low, but it was perhaps the only route by which we could secure disarmament and a peaceful outcome.”

750. Sir Jeremy also reported that Mr Lavrov had suggested the inspectors had said that there were no false statements and Iraq’s submission of 30 documents might have rectified the omissions in the declaration.

751. Sir Jeremy emphasised the importance of the Council meeting on 27 February and asked for “additional detailed punchy arguments” he could deploy.

752. Reporting discussions in New York on 26 February, Sir Jeremy Greenstock wrote:

- There remained “a general antipathy to having now to take decisions on this issue, and a wariness about what our underlying motives are behind the resolution”.
- The German position was that the process of inspections had not been exhausted; the work programme and key tasks envisaged in resolution 1284, which had not been revoked, had not begun; it had good reason to suspect that that Iraq had WMD, but there was no proof and it could turn out that Saddam Hussein was telling the truth.
- The US position was that resolution 1441 had found Iraq in material breach and partial compliance would not do. Continued inspections was, in effect, an argument for containment; and “Business as usual” would not produce the radical Iraqi transformation needed. The US was willing to ensure disarmament by itself if necessary and the Council had to factor that into its decisions.²²⁶

753. Sir Jeremy reported that he had argued that the UK had not given up on a peaceful outcome. The second resolution would maximise pressure on Saddam Hussein and

²²⁶ Telegram 314 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 27 February 2003, ‘Iraq: 26 February’.

there was still a chance for him to make a last minute decision to leave or genuinely yield all his WMD. The UK:

“... wanted a further Council decision because we wanted it to stay in control of this issue. Saddam’s assertion that he had no WMD made benchmarks a pipe-dream – how could we benchmark something the Iraqis said did not exist? Having unanimously adopted 1441, we could not go back to extended inspections under 1284 ... The fact ... that Iraq was not fully co-operating – was the point. If colleagues believed that Iraq was co-operating fully, then it was justified to vote against the text or amend it. If they voted against the text for any other reason, they were denying what was unanimously agreed in resolution 1441.”

754. Sir Jeremy concluded that the US was focused on preserving its room for manoeuvre while he was “concentrating on trying to win votes”. It was the “middle ground” that mattered. They “resent[ed] being forced to choose” between the P5 and wanted “to come to an objective judgement”. Mexico and Chile were the “pivotal sceptics”; and “effective arguments (and intelligence evidence) to show that Iraq’s zero is a huge lie are going to be more productive ... in bringing them over”.

755. Sir Jeremy also reported that an UNMOVIC contact regarded letters received from the Iraqis in the last few days, which included names of people involved in the destruction of VX, as showing that the Iraqis were trying to be active.

756. The UK considered that the Franco/German/Russian proposals were “misconceived”.

757. The UK viewed the Franco/German/Russian approach as “misconceived”. A telegram to posts setting out the UK position on 26 February:

- Questioned the assertion that there was no evidence that Iraq still possessed WMD. That was a “Fundamental misunderstanding of the inspections process”, which had “to date left very large questions unanswered – particularly about Iraqi chemical and biological programmes”. It was “not for others to prove that Iraq has got WMD, but for Iraq to prove that it has not, through full, immediate and active co-operation with the inspectors as required by resolution 1441”. It was “an extraordinary statement”. “Substantial evidence”, including the September dossier, had been presented “of continuing Iraqi programmes and capabilities”.
- Described Secretary Powell’s presentation to the Security Council on 5 February as having “offered extensive evidence of Iraqi activities to hinder inspections”. In addition, in relation to specific provisions in resolution 1441, “no interviews have taken place with individuals ... under the conditions requested”; the Iraqis had complied with the requirement to provide names of personnel “partially, belatedly, and under pressure”; and the inspectors had faced “obstruction and delay in attempting to search sites”. For example, on 16 January they were obstructed by Iraqi officials when they attempted to enter a scientist’s

private home. After insisting on their rights, the inspectors discovered a cache of documents on nuclear enrichment.

- Asserted that the proposals put the onus on the Security Council, not “where it should be – on Iraq”.
- Asked how offering more time would increase the pressure on Iraq.
- Questioned how identifying key tasks would oblige Iraq to co-operate as “even when requirements are stated very clearly”, as in resolution 1441, Iraq complied “belatedly, grudgingly, partially or not at all”.
- Stated that none of the proposals for strengthening inspections could be implemented quickly.
- Questioned the need to allow 120 days for a report on progress in completing key tasks: “we already have ample evidence to the contrary”.
- Stated that it was: “Disingenuous to express support (indeed encouragement) for the military build-up while at the same time making proposals which would require forces to be held at a high state of readiness for a wholly unrealistic period.”²²⁷

Parliament, 25 and 26 February 2003

758. Mr Straw published key documents on Iraq on 25 February.

759. Mr Straw stated that Iraq continued to pose the clearest possible threat to international peace and security. He still hoped that Iraq would comply, but if it did not, he hoped the international community would recognise its responsibilities.

760. During Oral Questions to the Foreign Secretary on 25 February, Mr Straw announced the publication of a Command Paper on Iraq.²²⁸

761. The Command Paper was “intended to bring together in an easily accessible form some of the key international documents relevant to the Iraq crisis”. It comprised:

- key Security Council resolutions;
- the report of the Amorim Panel in 1999;
- the briefings to the Security Council by Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei on 27 January and 14 February 2003;
- statements by the European Union on 13 December 2002 and 27 January and 17 February 2003;
- the NATO Summit statement of 21 November 2002; and

²²⁷ Telegram 103 FCO London to UKMIS New York, 26 February 2003, ‘Iraq: French/Russian/German proposals’.

²²⁸ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 25 February 2003, column 109.

- Mr Straw's statements to the Security Council of 20 January, 5 February and 14 February 2003.²²⁹

762. Mr Straw told Ms Annabelle Ewing (Scottish National Party):

"... Iraq has been, and remains in material breach of a string of very clear obligations that have been imposed on it. It has had a final opportunity to deal with those violations ... but continues to pose the clearest possible threat to international peace and security through its possession of weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles, and its defiance of international law. I hope that the whole of the international community will recognise the responsibilities borne by it and by individual members of the Security Council to ensure that international law means what it says. I still hope that we can gain enforcement by peaceful means but, if we cannot, the serious consequences ... we spelled out in ... resolution 1441 will have to follow through."²³⁰

763. Subsequently, in response to Ms Joan Ruddock (Labour), Mr Straw stated:

"I continue to hope that a vote [on the draft resolution] can be avoided because the purpose of the resolution is to serve very clear notice on Saddam ... that the final opportunity has nearly passed."²³¹

764. In a statement on 25 February, Mr Blair rehearsed the Government's strategy.

765. On 25 February, Mr Blair made a statement in the House of Commons on Iraq.²³²

766. Mr Blair provided a brief history of the crisis in which he emphasised Saddam Hussein's concealment of his biological and nuclear weapons programmes from the inspectors and his continued deception.

767. Mr Blair stated that the intelligence was "clear" that Saddam Hussein continued "to believe that his weapons of mass destruction programme is essential both for internal repression and for external aggression". It was also "essential to his regional power". "Prior to the inspectors coming back in", Saddam Hussein "was engaged in a systematic exercise in concealment of those weapons". The inspectors had reported some co-operation on process, but had "denied progress on substance".

768. Mr Blair said that the UK, US and Spain had introduced a resolution deciding that Iraq had "failed to take the final opportunity", but would "not put the resolution to a vote immediately" to "give Saddam one further final chance to disarm voluntarily". The UN inspectors would have a further report to make in March but the time had come for Saddam Hussein to decide. Peaceful disarmament required active co-operation.

²²⁹ FCO, *Iraq*, 25 February 2003, Cm 5769.

²³⁰ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 25 February 2003, column 110.

²³¹ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 25 February 2003, column 113.

²³² House of Commons, *Official Report*, 25 February 2003, columns 123-139.

769. Mr Blair said that the memorandum put forward by France, Germany and Russia called “for more time – up to the end of July at least”. But the issue was not time but will. The risk was that Saddam Hussein wanted to drag the process out until the attention of the international community waned.

770. Mr Blair emphasised that the objective was disarmament but “the nature of Saddam’s regime was relevant”, first because “weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a regime of this brutality” were “especially dangerous, in particular because Saddam has chosen his willingness to use them”. Secondly, the innocent were dying in Iraq every day.

771. Mr Blair concluded that the authority of the United Nations and the international community was at stake. If that was not upheld, the consequences would “stretch far beyond Iraq”.

772. In response to questions about the threat posed by Iraq, Mr Blair stated that that the “whole basis of resolution 1441” was that Saddam Hussein constituted a threat, adding:

“Moreover, there is a whole set of related dangers to do with unstable states developing or proliferating such material and with potential links to terrorism. That is why, in the end, the world has to take a very strong view of the matter and deal with it.”

773. Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries that Mr Blair had called him later and said:

“... it was going to be really tough from now on in. The truth was we may well have to go without a second UNSCR, or even without a majority on the UNSC. The Bush poodle problem would get bigger ... but he was adamant it was the right thing to do, and worth the political consequences.”²³³

774. Mr Campbell added that “an awful lot” of Labour MPs were “committed to rebellion” and were asking if Iraq was a threat “to us, and now”? Mr Blair was “dismissive” of Dr Blix; he had “said his job was to set out the facts, but he now saw his mission as to stop war”.

775. In his memoir, Mr Cook wrote that Mr Blair had been:

“... at his most effective. He was convincing and passionate about his own belief in the correctness of his course of action ...

“However, no amount of skilled presentation could conceal the immense confusion that we are in over the role of the UN. Tony knows that he desperately needs the blessing of the UN if he is to have any chance of carrying domestic opinion with him,

²³³ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

but since he knows that Bush will go to war whatever the UN says, Tony's attempt to wrap himself in the UN flag is fatally hobbled by his inability to say that the UN will have the last word."²³⁴

776. Mr Cook added that Mr Blair's exchanges with backbenchers had "clearly laid out the nexus of issues which have brought him to his present conviction". That was that "proliferation, plus unstable states plus terrorism adds up to a new and serious threat". That was:

"... a way of linking action against Saddam to the response to 9/11, and avoids the irritating evidence that Saddam has no link whatsoever to 9/11 and has no link with Al Qaida. But it does still leave unanswered why Iraq is the focus of so much effort. Whatever else we may say about the Iraqi regime, it is not unstable ..."

777. Asked by Mr Duncan Smith during PMQs on 26 February whether he would support action in the absence of a majority in the Security Council, Mr Blair responded that he believed that there would be support for a second resolution.²³⁵

778. Mr Blair subsequently stated that he was "working flat out" to achieve a second resolution, and that the best way to do that was "to hold firm to the terms of resolution 1441". That required "full, unconditional and immediate compliance" from Iraq, and was intended "genuinely to be the final opportunity" for Saddam Hussein.²³⁶

779. The House of Commons was asked on 26 February to reaffirm its endorsement of resolution 1441, to support the Government's continuing efforts to disarm Iraq, and to call upon Iraq to recognise that this was its final opportunity to comply with its obligations.

780. The Government motion was approved by 434 votes to 124; 199 MPs voted for an amendment which invited the House to "find the case for military action against Iraq as yet unproven".

781. The Government motion tabled for debate on 26 February invited the House of Commons to:

"Take note of Command Paper Cm 5769 on Iraq; reaffirm its endorsement of United Nations Security Council resolution 1441, as expressed in its resolution of 25 November 2002; support the Government's continuing efforts in the United Nations to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction; and call upon Iraq to recognise this is its final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations."²³⁷

²³⁴ Cook R. *The Point of Departure*. Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2003.

²³⁵ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 25 February 2003, column 251.

²³⁶ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 25 February 2003, column 258.

²³⁷ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 26 February 2003, column 265.

782. In his statement opening the debate, Mr Straw said that the motion meant what it said. It was “not an endorsement of military action” and no decision “to deploy British forces in action” had “yet been taken”.²³⁸ Any decision on military action would be put to the House and “subject only to the usual caveat about the safety of our forces”. It was “as much in the Government’s interest as it is in the paramount interest of the House, that we should do so before the start of hostilities”. The House would be kept informed on the business of the Security Council and have “a full opportunity to debate and vote on the outcome of proceedings on any second resolution”.

783. Stating that he intended to answer the “central and continuing question in people’s minds”, Mr Straw said that the 13 Security Council resolutions in the Command Paper provided the best answer to the question “Why Iraq?” They showed “paragraph by paragraph, the exceptional danger posed by Iraq, and its continued defiance of the United Nations”. Iraq had “flatly and completely” refused to comply with resolution 1284 (1999). Resolution 1441 gave Iraq its “final opportunity”. Iraq was the “only country in such serious and multiple breach of mandatory UN obligations”.

784. In response to the question “Why now?”, Mr Straw stated that Saddam Hussein’s aim was that “now” should never arrive. His tactics were to “prevaricate in the hope that by exploiting people’s natural anxieties” he could “string out the process forever and keep his arsenal”. Since the inspectors’ return to Iraq, Saddam Hussein had not provided new evidence and there were concerted Iraqi efforts to prevent unrestricted interviews with scientists. The inspectors had not been able to close a single outstanding issue.

785. In response to calls for “more time and more inspections”, Mr Straw said that in the absence of active and immediate Iraqi co-operation, more time would not achieve anything of substance. The disarmament of South Africa had taken nine inspectors and three years. The “grudging concessions on process” from Saddam Hussein had been “secured only because of the military build up”. Saddam Hussein “must either embark immediately on voluntary and full disarmament or the Security Council must face up to its responsibility to see that he is disarmed by force”.

786. Iraq had made “a string of cynically timed concessions” that were “calculated to divide and delay”. A second resolution was needed to “bring this game to a halt”. If the words “final opportunity” in resolution 1441 were to have any meaning, it was that Saddam Hussein should not be allowed to “lure the international community into endless indecision”. Saddam Hussein:

“... would use a further 120 days to bring the authority of the United Nations lower week by week, to tie the weapons inspectors in knots, and create further divisions within the international community.”

²³⁸ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 26 February 2003, columns 265-276.

787. Mr Straw added:

“Worse, this delay would send Saddam the clearest possible signal that his strategy is succeeding. It would tell him that the international community lacked the will to disarm him, and it would tell all those who threaten our security that Saddam Hussein has broken the United Nations as an instrument for defending peace through the force of international law.”

788. Mr Straw argued against persisting with a policy of containment. That was “not the policy of disarmament as set out in resolution 1441 or any of the preceding resolutions”. There could be “no stable, steady state for Iraq unless it is properly disarmed”. Nor could there be stability for the region and the international community: “What may appear to be containment to others is rearmament for Saddam.” “Far from keeping a lid on Saddam’s ambitions”, the policy of containment between 1998 and 2002 had “allowed him to rebuild his horrific arsenal, his chemical and biological weapons, and the means of delivering them”. Mr Straw cited Iraq’s refurbishment of prohibited equipment and the building of a missile test stand as proof of that activity. Containment required “a degree of trust in Saddam that we cannot risk and which runs contrary to all the evidence”.

789. In relation to questions about double standards, especially in relation to Israel and Palestine, Mr Straw said that he and Mr Blair accepted that there had been a “considerable amount to that charge” but the way to deal with that was “not by ignoring outstanding UN obligations, but by working even harder to see all of them implemented”. The UK was “working actively to implement” UN policy on Israel/Palestine “including the early publication of the Road Map”.

790. Mr Straw stated:

“International terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are the crucial strategic questions of our time. Our answer to the threats will determine the stability of the world for decades to come. This is an awesome responsibility. It calls for courageous leadership and it requires a vision and foresight to act decisively and, if necessary, with military force.”

791. Mr Straw concluded that a “moment of choice” had been reached for Saddam Hussein and for the Iraqi regime, and for the United Nations. The:

“... issue of what we do about tyrannical states with poison gases, nerve agents, viruses and nuclear ambitions, and which defy international law and the principles of the UN, will not go away. We have to face the issue. We have to give Saddam Hussein a categorical choice, and after 12 long years he has to give us his answer now.”

Points made during the debate

The debate that followed Mr Straw's statement returned repeatedly to the question of whether the inspectors should be given more time, and whether the case had yet been made that military action was necessary.²³⁹ A number of MPs referred to the need for an authorising UN resolution if action was to go ahead, and for plans for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Iraq.

Mr Chris Smith (Labour) told the House that there must be "the clearest possible reasons" for going to war and risking thousands of lives, and added "I do not believe those reasons are there".

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Conservative) said: "I cannot rid myself of doubts that the course to war upon which we are now embarked was decided on many months ago, primarily in Washington, and there has been a fairly remorseless unfolding of events since that time."

That point was echoed by Mr John Gummer (Conservative), who said: "There is no Member of Parliament who does not know that this war is war by timetable, and the timetable was laid before the United States had any intention of going to the United Nations."

792. After the debate, 199 MPs voted for an amendment to the Government motion which invited the House to "find the case for military action against Iraq as yet unproven".

793. The Government motion was approved by 434 votes to 124.

794. Sir David Manning spoke to Dr Rice on 27 February to explain the political difficulties in the UK:

"Yesterday's outcome [in the House of Commons] emphasised in stark terms that a second resolution was absolutely vital ..."²⁴⁰

795. Mr Cook wrote that it was the largest rebellion against the Government in his 30 years in Parliament, and that the newspapers the following morning had described it as the "biggest government rebellion since Gladstone introduced the Home Rule Bill".²⁴¹

President Bush's speech, 26 February 2003

796. In a speech on 26 February intended to make the case for action against Iraq, President Bush stated that the safety of the American people depended on ending the direct and growing threat from Iraq.

797. President Bush also set out his hopes for the future of Iraq.

²³⁹ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 26 February 2003, columns 265-371.

²⁴⁰ Letter Manning to McDonald, 27 February 2003, 'Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice'.

²⁴¹ Cook R. *The Point of Departure*. Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2003.

798. In a speech at the American Enterprise Institute on 26 February, President Bush stated that Saddam Hussein was “building and hiding weapons that could enable him to dominate the Middle East and intimidate the civilized world”; and that the US would “not allow it”.²⁴² In addition, Saddam Hussein had “close ties to terrorist organizations, and could supply them with terrible means to strike” the US. The danger that posed “could not be ignored or wished away” and “must be confronted”. The US hoped:

“... that the Iraqi regime will meet the demands of the United Nations and disarm, fully and peacefully. If it does not, we are prepared to disarm Iraq by force. Either way, this danger will be removed.

“The safety of the American people depends on ending this direct and growing threat. Acting ... will also contribute greatly to the long-term safety and stability of our world ... A liberated Iraq can show the power of freedom to transform this vital region, by bringing hope and progress into the lives of millions.”

799. If it “must use force”, the United States and “our coalition” stood ready to: “help the citizens of a liberated Iraq”; “lead in carrying out the urgent and dangerous work of destroying chemical and biological weapons”; “provide security against those who try to spread chaos, or settle scores, or threaten the territorial integrity of Iraq”; and “protect Iraq’s natural resources from sabotage ... and ensure those resources are used for the benefit of the owners – the Iraqi people”.

800. The US had “no intention of determining the precise form of Iraq’s new government”; that choice belonged to the Iraqi people. But the US would “ensure that one brutal dictator is not replaced by another”:

“All Iraqis must have a voice in the new government and all citizens must have their rights protected.

“Rebuilding Iraq will require a sustained commitment from many nations ... we will remain in Iraq as long as necessary, and not a day more ... in the peace that followed a world war ... we did not leave behind occupying armies, we left constitutions and parliaments. We established an atmosphere of safety, in which responsible, reform-minded local leaders could build lasting institutions of freedom ...

“... The nation of Iraq – with its proud heritage, abundant resources and skilled and educated people – is fully capable of moving towards democracy and living in freedom.”

801. A new regime in Iraq would:

“... serve as dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region ...

²⁴² The White House, 26 February 2003, *President discusses the future of Iraq*.

“Success in Iraq could also begin a new stage for Middle Eastern peace and set in motion progress towards a truly democratic Palestinian state. The passing of Saddam Hussein’s regime will deprive terrorist networks ... of a wealthy patron ... And other regimes will be given a clear warning that support for terror would not be tolerated.”

802. President Bush also stated that a future Palestinian state must abandon for ever the use of terror and that, as the threat of terror receded, Israel must support efforts to create a viable state. He reiterated his personal commitment to implement the Road Map, but without setting a timetable.

803. President Bush said that confronting Iraq showed the US “commitment to effective international institutions”; and that he wanted the words of the Security Council to have meaning. The world needed:

“... international bodies with the authority and will to stop the spread of terror and chemical and biological weapons ... High-minded pronouncements against proliferation mean little unless the strongest nations are willing to stand behind them – and use force if necessary ... the United Nations was created, as Winston Churchill said, ‘to make sure that the force of right will, in the ultimate issue, be protected by the right of force’.”

804. In her memoir, Dr Rice wrote that the speech was made after she and Mr Hadley had “realized belatedly” in late February “that the President had not made the broader arguments” for action in Iraq. She also commented: “But the die had been cast. This was a war that had been justified by an intelligence judgement, not a strategic one.”²⁴³

805. Following the speech, Mr Straw asked for further work on the draft vision for the Iraqi people, which had first been produced in 2001, on the grounds that a “public commitment on the lines of the draft could have a powerful impact in Iraq and the region as well as on the British domestic debate”.²⁴⁴ It would not be launched or trailed until after the UN had voted on the second resolution because of the risk that it would be presented as “discounting the role” of the Security Council. Care would also be needed to avoid confusing the message that the justification for military action rested firmly on disarmament of WMD.

806. Mr Straw thought it essential that the UK, US and “other coalition members” were speaking to a common script. That underlined the importance of making progress with the US on post-conflict planning; and although there was nothing in the UK draft that “could not be squared with US policy” as set out in President Bush’s speech, “elements ... go further than the US has so far done in public or, on some issues including UN involvement, in private”.

²⁴³ Rice C. *No Higher Honour: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.

²⁴⁴ [Letter Owen to Rycroft, 28 February 2003, ‘A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People’](#).

807. A ‘Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People’ was eventually agreed, and issued at the Azores Summit on 16 March 2003 (see Section 3.8).

JIC Assessment, 26 February 2003: ‘Iraq: Prospects in the North’

At the request off the FCO the JIC produced an Assessment on 26 February of how the Iraqi regime would respond in northern Iraq to a Coalition attack; the likely attitudes and actions of Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds; and the prospects for northern Iraq post-Saddam Hussein.²⁴⁵ The Assessment highlighted the short and longer-term risks of action in northern Iraq.

The JIC specifically asked Mr John Scarlett, the Chairman, to draw the Assessment to the attention of Mr Blair, Mr Straw and Mr Hoon.²⁴⁶ He wrote that it noted:

- “The continued presence of significant military forces in the North and the possibility that they were equipped with WMD.”
- “The potential for fighting between Turkish and Kurdish forces.”
- “The potential for Iranian involvement”.

Mr Blair commented: “I need to talk on this.”²⁴⁷

Cabinet, 27 February 2003

808. Mr Blair told Cabinet on 27 February that:

- **he would continue to push for a further Security Council resolution;**
- **humanitarian and reconstruction planning needed to take “centre stage”, and he would pursue that with President Bush in the coming days;**
- **decisions had to be made; and**
- **failure to achieve a second resolution would reinforce the unilateralists in the US Administration.**

809. Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries that Mr Blair had held a meeting with Mr John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Mr Straw, “at which we went over the distinct possibility of no second resolution because the majority was not there for it”.²⁴⁸ Mr Blair “knew that meant real problems, but he remained determined on this, and convinced it was the right course”.

810. Mr Straw told Cabinet that the draft resolution could be put to the vote in the week after the 7 March discussion of Dr Blix’s and Dr ElBaradei’s reports in the Security

²⁴⁵ [JIC Assessment, 26 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prospects in the North’](#).

²⁴⁶ [Minute Scarlett to Rycroft, 27 February 2003, ‘JIC Assessment: Iraq: Prospects in the North’](#).

²⁴⁷ Manuscript comment Blair to Rycroft on [Minute Scarlett to Rycroft, 27 February 2003, ‘JIC Assessment: Iraq: Prospects in the North’](#).

²⁴⁸ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

Council, which was likely to be at Foreign Minister level.²⁴⁹ There had been considerable diplomatic activity to win the votes of the 10 non-permanent members of the Council. He thought that Spain and Bulgaria would support; and Syria and Germany would vote against or abstain. Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea, Mexico and Pakistan were being encouraged to vote for the resolution. France and Russia would need to “think through their responsibilities”.

811. Reporting on his visit to Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar, Mr Hoon said that they were supportive of “our approach”. The Royal Navy Task Force and about half the total British military commitment of 45,000 service men and women was in the region. He was “confident that the troops and their equipment would arrive in place as planned”.

812. Mr Hoon had “one particular concern” which he had discussed with General Tommy Franks, Commander in Chief US Central Command (CENTCOM), that:

“Not enough planning had been done on the post-conflict phase of operations, including humanitarian relief. British forces could find themselves in charge of a portion of Iraq quite quickly if resistance to Coalition military action collapsed. It would be helpful if experts from the Department for International Development could work with military planners in the region and consider pre-positioning humanitarian supplies so that there was no hiatus in the event that military action took place.”

813. Ms Short said that experts had been involved in talks in the Pentagon. Preparations were “just beginning and needed to be expedited”. A UN legal mandate was “essential” for the humanitarian and reconstruction tasks that lay ahead. Without that, “proper preparation was impossible”. That matter “needed to become a priority for the Coalition”. It would be “difficult” to accommodate action in Iraq within her department’s contingency reserve: “Greater resources were likely to be needed.”

814. The points made in discussion included:

- The MEPP needed to be revived quickly. That was the focus of much Arab frustration.
- Unity inside Europe needed to be restored “as soon as possible after any military action”.
- Keeping to the UN route and winning support for a new Security Council resolution would garner support in the UK.
- In the event of a veto, gaining a preponderance of votes for a new resolution could still be important.
- Insufficient credit had been given to the value of the No-Fly Zones and the difference between life in northern Iraq, which was beyond Saddam Hussein’s direct control, and that elsewhere in Iraq.

²⁴⁹ Cabinet Conclusions, 27 February 2003.

- There had been “sharp differences of view” in the debate in Parliament on 26 February, the tone was not “unpleasant, but the issues were difficult, and views could still be swayed”. The commitment to a further debate had been “wise”.

815. Mr Blair said that he would continue to push for a further Security Council resolution. President Bush’s commitments the previous day in respect of the MEPP were “helpful”. Looking beyond the current divisions in the international community it would be “important to seek unity of purpose through the humanitarian and reconstruction work which would follow any military action”. Planning in this field “needed to take centre stage”. He would pursue that with President Bush “in the coming days”. The “transitional civil administration in Iraq should have a United Nations mandate, although the scale of United Nations involvement should balance the administrative effectiveness with the necessity for proper authority”.

816. Mr Blair described the debate in the UK and Parliament as “open”:

“Feelings were running high and the concerns expressed were genuine. But decisions had to be made. The central arguments remained the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Iraq; the brutal nature of the Iraqi regime; and the importance of maintaining the authority of the UN in the international order. Failure to achieve a further Security Council resolution would reinforce the hand of the unilateralists in the American Administration.”

817. Mr Campbell wrote:

“At Cabinet, things were pretty much rock solid ... I could sense a few of them only fully realising ... the enormity of the decisions, the enormity of the responsibility involved. Robin [Cook] was the trickiest ... Clare [Short] was doing her usual ... and for her was relatively onside. She wanted to do a big number on aftermath preparations but TB was there ahead of her. He was very calm, matter of fact, just went through where we were on all the main aspects of this. Margaret Beckett [Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs] ... made a very strong intervention. She was a really useful barometer and she was very supportive. Nobody was really looking to make TB’s position more difficult ... with the possible exception of Robin.”²⁵⁰

818. Mr Campbell added that Mr Blair had:

“... said later that he felt only now was [President] Bush really aware of the full extent of the stakes here. This had the potential to transform for good America’s relations with Europe and the rest of the world, and in a worst-case scenario was a disaster

²⁵⁰ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

for everyone. He wanted to get the thing done quickly, but he also wanted them to understand better the broader agenda. He felt Bush had moved a good deal on that but was less convinced it permeated through the rest of the Administration.”

LORD GOLDSMITH'S MEETING WITH NO.10 OFFICIALS, 27 FEBRUARY 2003

819. When Lord Goldsmith met No.10 officials on 27 February he advised that the safest legal course would be to secure a further Security Council resolution.

820. Lord Goldsmith told them, however, that he had reached the view that a “reasonable case” could be made that resolution 1441 was capable of reviving the authorisation to use force in resolution 678 (1990) without a further resolution, if there were strong factual grounds for concluding that Iraq had failed to take the final opportunity offered by resolution 1441.

821. Lord Goldsmith advised that, to avoid undermining the case for reliance on resolution 1441, it would be important to avoid giving any impression that the UK believed a second resolution was legally required.

822. At the request of No.10, Lord Goldsmith met Mr Powell, Baroness Morgan (Mr Blair’s Director of Political and Government Relations) and Sir David Manning on 27 February.²⁵¹ The discussion, and Mr Powell’s request that Lord Goldsmith’s advice should not “become public”, are addressed in Section 5.

Discussions at the UN, 27 and 28 February 2003

823. Informal consultations in the Security Council on 27 February showed there was little support for the UK/US/Spanish draft resolution.

824. The Security Council held “informal consultations” on the UK/US/Spanish proposal on 27 February.²⁵²

825. Mr Miller provided a brief for Sir Jeremy Greenstock to use in the Council discussion, setting out the UK assessment of Iraq’s WMD and its response to resolution 1441.²⁵³ That is addressed in Section 4.3.

826. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported:

- Ambassador Negroponte had said he “hoped for a decision on the resolution in the not too distant future”; and that it “asked only if Iraq had complied with its final opportunity”. “The Council should judge the facts on the basis of what had happened over the last 108 days.” He would be “concerned” about the

²⁵¹ [Minute Adams to Attorney General, 26 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Meeting at No.10, 27 February’.](#)

²⁵² [Telegram 318 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 28 February 2003, ‘Iraq: 27 February Consultations and Missiles’.](#)

²⁵³ [Letter Miller to Greenstock, 26 February 2003, ‘Iraq: WMD Brief’.](#)

message to Iraq “if the Council were not able to pass this straightforward justified resolution”.

- Mr Lavrov had said implementation of 1441 and 1284 should continue “until the inspectors encountered impediments and obstacles”. Iraq was “not blocking the work of [the] inspectors and was more and more actively co-operating on substance”. That was “the result” of “continuing pressure” from a “unified” Council “and the strong inspection mandate which could, if necessary, be made more effective”. Facts were needed “to close this issue”. He suggested distribution of UNMOVIC’s “clusters” document to provide the basis for discussion.
- Mr Aguilar Zinser, Mexican Permanent representative to the UN, said Mexico “still wanted: disarmament; a peaceful solution; inspections ... and multilateral consideration of this issue” and, unusually, asked the UK, US and Spain a series of questions about the proposal.
- Mr Juan Gabriel Valdés, Chilean Permanent Representative to the UN “urged the P5 to find a solution”. He “did not reject the use of force but it must only be once all peaceful means had been exhausted”. He “wanted the continuation of inspections for some time before a definitive report”.
- Mr Inocencio Arias, Spanish Permanent Representative to the UN, had said the draft was “one more step in imposing serious diplomatic pressure”. Saddam Hussein co-operated only under pressure. The more time was given, “the less pressure he would face”.²⁵⁴

827. Sir Jeremy reported that the points he had made included:

- We were not getting Iraqi co-operation because “the ‘zero’ Iraq had declared was a lie”.
- Iraq was “trickling out concessions to divide the Council, buy time and avert military action while continuing concealment”.
- It was “very probable that Iraq would decide to destroy the Al Samoud missiles. In addition they might also start trickling out what they claimed to be newly discovered documents and announce ‘private’ interviews which would in reality still be monitored and taped.”
- He “recognised” that he was “saying things that could not be confirmed by the inspectors”, but the UK had “invested in facilities not available to other member states or the inspectors because our national interest was at stake and the UN was being defied. We were providing detailed intelligence to the inspectors”.
- It was “our word against Saddam’s – but Council members had to choose whom they believed”.

²⁵⁴ [Telegram 318 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 28 February 2003, ‘Iraq: 27 February Consultations and Missiles’.](#)

828. Sir Jeremy reported that he had used “the points provided by the Assessments Staff”, including Iraq’s:

“... capacity to produce chemical and biological weapons; its delivery mechanisms; the efforts the regime had taken to conceal WMD; the fact that the regime had considered whether to declare some weapons but concluded it was too risky; plans to obstruct ... [the inspectors] if they got too close; and the intimidation to prevent private interviews which Iraq saw as the weak link that could expose their WMD”.

829. In addition, he stated that “UNMOVIC had been tagging proscribed equipment that had been repaired by the Iraqis”.

830. Directly challenging the French/German/Russian proposal, Sir Jeremy reported that he had said it “wrongly claimed inspections were not being hindered” and “wrongly suggested” a number of other proposals to strengthen inspections and allow more time. It “did not add up to a solution delivering disarmament, but at best temporary containment while Iraq continued to exploit major holes in sanctions to develop WMD”.

831. Addressing the legal arguments “using the lines agreed with London”, Sir Jeremy said that the “new draft, if adopted, would confirm the authorisation of the use of force inherent in resolutions 678, 687 and 1441”. It would increase the pressure on Iraq; but it:

“... did not necessarily mean that its adoption would in practice lead to immediate use of force. There was still a chance that at the last minute Iraq would take radical action to disarm. The UK hoped that would be the result. This was the only remaining route to secure disarmament and a peaceful outcome.”

832. Sir Jeremy stated that he “recognised that [resolution] 1441 set an awkwardly high standard. But we had adopted it and at no point had inspectors reported the immediate, active and unconditional co-operation demanded”. He “accepted delay was more comfortable and that there were downsides to the action ... proposed”. But colleagues should read the relevant provisions of resolution 687 (1991). Iraq “continued to cheat the UN”.

833. Mr Jean-Marc de La Sablière, French Permanent Representative to the UN, had responded that Sir Jeremy’s statement showed that the resolution “was not about increased pressure but about force”. He questioned whether the Council “would be strengthened by supporting a war against which so many objected”. He set out the French/German/Russian proposal “in standard terms”. There was “no reason to resort to force in the current circumstances nor to discuss a resolution to legitimise it”.

834. Mr Wang Yingfan, Chinese Permanent Representative to the UN, said that “the road of peaceful inspections had not run its course”.

835. Dr Gunter Pleuger, German Permanent Representative to the UN, said “the resolution was about war”. The goal was “peaceful disarmament – if we went to war we would have failed”.

836. Sir Jeremy commented that: “Positions remain generally unchanged” but the co-sponsors had produced a “more effective line of argument than the opposition”.

837. Following the meeting, details emerged of a letter from Iraq to Dr Blix confirming “agreement ‘in principle’ to the destruction of Al Samoud 2 missiles”. Sir Jeremy reported that he had “tried to discount it in advance with the Council”. If Iraq’s “acceptance ‘in principle’” did not turn into concrete destruction before 1 March, which Sir Jeremy thought “unlikely”, that would be “a bonus”.

838. Dr Blix told the UK Mission that he could and would make the “clusters” document available for the Council meeting on 7 March. But preparation of the work programme and key remaining tasks would not be ready by then.

839. Dr Blix lunched with EU Heads of Mission in New York on 28 February.²⁵⁵

840. The UK Mission reported that Dr Blix had made a number of points including:

- Iraq “had not actively co-operated until recently”. It was now producing documents, a list of participants in destruction activities in 1991, and digging up R-400 bombs. But Iraq had not started to disarm, the picture on interviews was “disappointing”, and the flow of documents was “limited”.
- He shared the US view that it “was for Iraq to declare its WMD holdings and show how it was disarming”. UNMOVIC was not a detective agency. There was plenty Iraq could do to address allegations which were well known to Baghdad, such as checkpoints for trucks and an inventory of underground facilities.
- Iraq could have acted earlier. Iraq was not co-operating fully and actively. Full co-operation should not take a long time. If UNMOVIC secured full co-operation, “verification would take neither years nor weeks but months”.
- There had been no change of heart, just more activity. Iraq had attempted to conceal things.
- The debate was “somewhat over-focused on the outstanding questions identified by UNSCOM”. It was not possible to prove a negative (Iraq’s claim that it had not resumed any WMD programmes): “But Iraq could certainly make the negative plausible (e.g. producing documents; opening underground facilities).” It could “certainly do more on interviews”.
- He thought there was increasing acceptance in the Council that he should circulate UNMOVIC’s clusters of unresolved questions. But UNMOVIC should not “grade” Iraq’s co-operation; that was “the responsibility of the Council”. But producing the document would facilitate Iraq’s task.
- He did not think he was bound to deliver the work programme required by resolution 1284 “only on 27 March”. It would be “fairly short”, but the Commissioners had still to take a view.

²⁵⁵ [Email Thomson to Greenstock, 1 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Blix’.](#)

- It would “make sense for UNMOVIC to identify some priorities” within the clusters. He suggested VX, anthrax and SCUD missiles.
- “... just three months of inspections was ‘not fully satisfactory’ as a decent amount of time to give the inspections effort. But that was a Council decision.”
- If the Council voted for war, there would be a long term monitoring requirement. It would be for the Council to decide whether UNMOVIC should go back and on what terms.

841. Dr Blix subsequently told the UK Mission that he could and would make the clusters document available for the Security Council meeting on 7 March. But preparation of the work programme and key remaining tasks would not be ready by then.

842. The UK Mission also reported that Ambassador James Cunningham, US Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, had:

- said he was “not opposed to surfacing the clusters document ... provided it was not accompanied by the list of key remaining tasks”; and
- agreed that, “after any conflict, US forces should certainly be accompanied by UNMOVIC inspectors to witness the uncovering of WMD and missiles. But there was Pentagon resistance ... and, if the resolution failed to pass, giving UNMOVIC a role could be a difficult argument.”

843. The UK continued to provide information to UNMOVIC on potential targets for inspection but, by late February, it was “less confident about these than some of the previous targets”.²⁵⁶

UNMOVIC report, 28 February 2003

UNMOVIC issued its quarterly report to the Security Council on 28 February.²⁵⁷

The UK Permanent Mission to the UN in New York reported that UNMOVIC had concluded that Iraq had been helpful on process but there was no explicit conclusion on substance.²⁵⁸

Other points included:

- The “clusters” document could serve as an important source for the selection of key remaining tasks.
- Verified disarmament would be “problematic” without co-operation and even with co-operation it would take some time.
- Results in terms of disarmament had been very limited so far.

²⁵⁶ Minute DI ACR [junior official] to DDI CPSG et al, 25 February 2003, ‘Proposed Targets for UNMOVIC Briefing – 26/27 February 2003’.

²⁵⁷ UN Security Council, 28 February 2003, ‘Note by the Secretary General’ (S/2003/232).

²⁵⁸ Telegram 323 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 28 February 2003, ‘Iraq: UNMOVIC Quarterly Report’.

- Iraq could have made a greater effort in the period and it was hard to understand why some measures which might achieve results had not been taken earlier.
- It was only after mid-January that Iraq took a number of steps that had the potential to result in the presentation of either proscribed items or of relevant evidence.

The report was discussed in the Security Council on 7 March.

UK attempts to secure support for the draft resolution

844. In meetings in Madrid on 27 and 28 February, Mr Blair and Mr Aznar discussed the need for a second resolution and the positions of other members of the Security Council, including:

- Mr Aznar's concerns following his meeting with President Bush that the US might be over-confident.
- Doubt that France would actually veto a resolution although it was attempting to prevent nine positive votes.
- The need for the US to "win" the Mexican vote given its "history of non-intervention ... strong anti-US nationalism, and [President] Fox's lack of a majority in Congress".
- President Lagos' understanding "that military action would go ahead", his view that "it would be better for it to do so in the UN context", his wish not to have the "decisive vote", and the need "to find something to help Mexico and Chile".
- Pressure from, for example, Brazil for a common Mexican/Chilean position.
- The outcome of the visit to Africa by Baroness Amos, FCO Parliamentary Under Secretary of State.
- Hopes that Pakistan could be persuaded to vote in favour of the resolution.
- Uncertainty about President Putin's position.
- That it was "unlikely that the Arab idea of exile for Saddam would work, but it was worth a try".²⁵⁹

845. Mr Blair focused on:

- the importance of keeping close to Dr Blix, who "must not be taken in by the likely Iraqi destruction of the Al Samoud missiles";
- the UK's assessment of Iraq's concealment of its WMD;
- the need to focus on the "1999 left-overs" and interviews;

²⁵⁹ Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 28 February 2003, 'UK/Spanish Summit, Madrid, 27-28 February: Iraq'.

- the need to show “as quickly as possible that military action had brought the Iraqi people a humanitarian benefit”; and
- the need to press the US that the UN “had to be centrally involved, legitimising the international presence”.

846. To address the difficulties created by “the impression that the US was determined to go to war come what may”, Mr Blair and Mr Aznar agreed the need to pursue a communications strategy showing that they “were doing everything possible to avoid war”. Mr Blair would also seek more public support from Denmark and the Netherlands.

847. Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries:

“Blix was now causing us significant problems. He was talking now about Saddam’s line on [potential decommissioning of] Al Samoud missiles being a significant piece of disarmament. TB was raging again, said the man was supposed to be a civil servant, but had decided to behave like a politician. He is just desperate not to be seen as the person who allowed a war to start, but his job is to present the facts. He felt Blix was being bullied successfully by the French who, he was now convinced, wanted as their main foreign policy objective to build Europe as a power rival to the US, and determined to shaft TB ...”

“He was also worried that Kofi [Annan] ... was getting closer to the Franco-German position ...”²⁶⁰

848. At the end of February, a senior official in the US Administration sought the UK’s views on whether the resolution should be put to a vote or withdrawn if it was judged that there was insufficient support for its adoption.

849. No.10 took the view that it would want a vote.

850. Following his farewell calls in Washington, Sir Christopher Meyer reported that Mr Richard Haass, the Director of Policy Planning in the State Department, had produced a memorandum which challenged the conventional wisdom by suggesting that the second resolution should be withdrawn if it was likely that it would not be adopted; and that Secretary Powell would be interested in Mr Straw’s views.²⁶¹

851. Sir Christopher’s letter was also copied to Sir David Manning, Sir Michael Jay, and Sir Jeremy Greenstock.

852. Mr Powell sought Mr Blair’s views, commenting that he had told Mr Haass on 28 February that the UK “would prefer to put the resolution to a vote and that, “having thought about it”, that was “even more strongly” his view: “Refusing to put this to the vote and claiming we had nine votes would hole us below the waterline.” In addition,

²⁶⁰ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

²⁶¹ Letter Meyer to McDonald, 28 February 2002 [sic], ‘Iraq: Confronting a French Veto’.

Mr Powell commented, “how do we know if the French will veto if we don’t put it to the test”.²⁶²

853. Mr Powell also recorded that Mr Blair was very opposed to the idea.

854. Sir David Manning commented “Me too”.²⁶³

855. In his memoir, *War of Necessity War of Choice*, Mr Haass described a “mini-debate” within the US Administration:

“... about whether to press for a second resolution despite its poor prospects. Some ... favored doing so as a means of pressurising others to stand up and declare themselves against going to war, even if it did not appear that we had the votes to win. I never understood this logic and thought this approach misguided, and instead argued that the worst of all outcomes would be to lose a vote and then go to war. This would be widely viewed as ... arrogant ... and raise even more fundamental questions concerning the legitimacy and legality of what the US was contemplating. I also thought it would do real and lasting damage to the United Nations. Far better to explore getting a second resolution and then pull back if consultations demonstrated that it was likely that we could not prevail ... I argued all this out in a memorandum that Powell distributed to the [NSC] Principals. Fortunately, this position carried the day, and the Administration decided to pull back if and when it became obvious that no international consensus favoring war would emerge.”²⁶⁴

856. An Arab League Summit on 1 March concluded that the crisis in Iraq must be resolved by peaceful means and in the framework of international legitimacy.

Arab League Summit, 1 March 2003

An Arab League Summit meeting, held in Sharm al-Sheikh on 1 March, discussed the “serious developments in the crisis over Iraq”. The communiqué recorded that the Summit had resolved:

- “To reaffirm its absolute rejection of a strike on Iraq ... The Iraqi crisis must be resolved by peaceful means and in the framework of international legitimacy.”
- “To demand that the inspection teams should be given enough time to complete their mission ... and to call upon them to continue to observe objectivity ...”
- “To emphasise the UNSC’s responsibility to ensure that Iraq and its people are not harmed, and to protect Iraq’s independence and the integrity and unity of its territories ...”

²⁶² Manuscript comment Powell on Letter Meyer to McDonald, 28 February 2002 [sic], ‘Iraq: Confronting a French Veto’.

²⁶³ Manuscript comment Manning on Letter Meyer to McDonald, 28 February 2002 [sic], ‘Iraq: Confronting a French Veto’.

²⁶⁴ Haass RN. *War of Necessity War of Choice: A Memoir of two Iraqi War*. Simon & Schuster, 2009.

- “To re-affirm that their countries should refrain from taking part in any military action targeting the security, territorial integrity and unity of Iraq or any other Arab country.”
- “To emphasise solidarity with the Iraqi people ... and to stress that it is time to lift the sanctions imposed ...”
- “The Kingdom of Bahrain to form a Presidential Committee ...”
- “The affairs of the Arab world and development of its regimes are a thing decided by the peoples in the region in [a] way that suits their national interests, not by foreign interference. In this context the leaders denounce reported attempts to impose changes on the region, interfere in its internal affairs or ignore its interests and just causes.”
- “To consider the disarmament of WMDs in Iraq an inseparable part of the WMD disarmament of the region, including Israel ...”²⁶⁵

Mr John Sawers, British Ambassador to Egypt, reported that the proceedings had been broadcast live on Egyptian television and that the statements by Arab leaders had “displayed a more balanced approach than was evident from the communiqué”.²⁶⁶ Mr Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian President, had said that the best way to solve the crisis would be for Iraq to comply with international law represented by the UN; and to co-operate fully with the inspectors. Mr Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian President, had said that war was inevitable and the region should focus on the aftermath of war. Sheikh Zayed, the Emir of Qatar, had tabled a written suggestion that Saddam Hussein should be given an amnesty and step down.

857. Sir David Manning and Mr Scarlett visited Mexico and Chile on 1 and 2 March to explain the UK’s position to Presidents Fox and Lagos and to seek their support.

858. On 27 February, Mr Gregory Faulkner, British Ambassador to Chile, reported Chilean concerns that the Permanent Members of the Security Council were not seeking to resolve their differences on Iraq.²⁶⁷ The Chileans thought that passed the buck for decision-taking to the non-permanent members, which was unfair. Chile wanted an amendment to the draft resolution asking the inspectors to produce a conclusive report within a specific deadline of a week to 10 days. This would also help Mexico.

859. Sir David Manning was reported to have told President Fox on 1 March that Mr Blair believed that matters had come to a head, UN credibility was eroding and containment was not sustainable.²⁶⁸ Iraq must come clean now or face the consequences. Mr Blair was convinced that Iraq’s WMD had to be dealt with now or we would face a worse situation later. The Iraqi declaration of 7 December 2002 had been a disappointment which did not address vital issues such as the whereabouts of anthrax

²⁶⁵ Telegram 68 Cairo to FCO London, 2 March 2003, ‘Arab League Summit: Final Communique’.

²⁶⁶ Telegram 67 Cairo to FCO London, 2 March 2003, ‘Arab League Summit’.

²⁶⁷ Telegram 31 Santiago to FCO London, 27 February 2003, ‘Chile/Iraq’.

²⁶⁸ [Telegram 1 Mexico City to Cabinet Office, 1 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Mexico’.](#)

and VX. Since then, the inspectors had been prevented from doing their job properly. War must be a last resort but the international community could not allow Saddam Hussein to play games and spin things out. Proper access to scientists was one key to progress.

860. Mr Scarlett was reported to have told President Fox that the UK had developed:

“... a range of sources, some inside Iraq, that had proven reliability. We had built up a consistent picture in which we had confidence. Our allies, including Europeans, had no serious differences of substance with us ...

“While we believed that UNSCOM had been able to disarticulate Iraq’s nuclear programme it had not been able to account for a wide range of chemical and biological materials – we were particularly worried about VX and anthrax. Even conservative estimates of material Iraq still held indicated the capacity to assemble thousands of WMD artillery shells. Since 1998 Iraq had continued to produce new agents, develop its missile capability and, with less success, reconstitute its nuclear programme.

“In 2002 a conscious decision was taken to deny possession of WMD to frustrate a renewed and strengthened inspection programme. We had watched a policy of concealment and intimidation develop. Evidence had been dispersed, factories cleaned up and scientists cowed.

“... Some UNMOVIC successes in January resulted in further efforts to hide evidence and deceive inspectors. Continued small successes forced Iraq to move to a policy of slow, small concessions to give the impression of movement (eg on missiles). For the UK, the litmus test would be interviews with scientists. Iraq realised their knowledge was their Achilles heel, hence the intimidation.”

861. President Fox was reported to have listened carefully and with an open mind. Mexico wanted to continue to seek consensus. It did not like talk of action “with or without the UN”; overriding international institutions had grave internal consequences for countries nurturing fragile newly created institutions. He was attracted to the Canadian idea of benchmarking Iraqi co-operation.

862. Sir David Manning had concluded that Mexican support for a second resolution was “not impossible, but would not be easy and would almost certainly require some movement”.

863. In a telephone conversation with Mr Blair on 2 March, before his meeting with Sir David Manning and Mr Scarlett, President Lagos wondered if there was room for clarification of what the Security Council was trying to achieve.²⁶⁹ He was worried that talk of regime change was overshadowing the issue of disarmament in the media.

²⁶⁹ [Letter Cannon to Owen, 3 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with President of Chile, 2 March’.](#)

He wondered if the Council could set benchmarks and mentioned interviews with scientists. He understood UNMOVIC had interviewed only seven scientists. “Setting benchmarks ... looked better than going to war over a few missiles.”

864. President Lagos said that he was calling on other P5 states to assume responsibility for what was going on. It was not acceptable for them to say: “We’ll abstain, it’s not our war”. He had told President Chirac that was not good enough; if he did not agree with the resolution, he should veto rather than shift the responsibility on to others. President Chirac had sent an emissary to try to win him [Lagos] over, but he thought it would be possible to work out a compromise in the Security Council “during the week” and he wanted to talk through the benchmarks idea with Sir David Manning.

865. Mr Blair recommended that Chile should look again at the 1999 UNSCOM report which made clear the scale of outstanding material and the extent of Iraqi deceit. The issues were the “unaccounted for WMD and the need for real co-operation”. The missiles were “a side issue”. Saddam Hussein “had admitted their existence thinking they were not in breach of sanctions”, and he “had had little choice but to destroy them when UNMOVIC decided that they were”.

866. Mr Blair stated that he:

“... took [President] Lagos’ point about the need to be precise and specific about what the Security Council wanted. Otherwise people interpreted the destruction of the missiles as real progress and said that we should leave the inspectors in longer.”

867. President Lagos agreed. The real issue was CBW not missiles, and that should be put to the international community. Mr Blair was right that Saddam Hussein was only co-operating because of the pressure on him, but he wanted the P5 to “participate and assume their responsibilities”.

868. President Lagos added that the French political system seemed to be divided on a veto: “There was an internal discourse ... But the French were not producing alternative ideas, they were just playing for time.” President Chirac had told him that he was against any deadline at all, not just that suggested by Canada.

869. Mr Blair stated that he was “in no doubt that Saddam had CBW and was concealing it”, but he “accepted the need to think about how to present the case”.

870. In his subsequent meeting with President Lagos, Sir David Manning was reported to have set out the need to act on Iraq to prevent other potential proliferators; the importance of the UN delivering after President Bush had been persuaded to go down the UN route; and Saddam Hussein’s failure to take his opportunity and the continued pattern of obstruction.²⁷⁰ Sir David “regretted” the split in the Security Council; without it, Saddam Hussein might have cracked. The UK saw war as a last resort and “needed a

²⁷⁰ Telegram 34 from Santiago to FCO London, 2 March 2003, ‘Chile/Iraq: Visit by Manning and Scarlett’.

second resolution because of public pressures”; it liked the Canadian idea of a deadline. Resolution 1441 already contained benchmarks, but they might have to be presented in a different way. Sir David had also said that, if it came to war, it would have to be “through the UN and with the UN heavily involved in the aftermath”.

871. Mr Scarlett was reported to have described the intelligence assessment and, in response to a specific question, informed President Lagos that “although there were some differences of detail e.g. over the degree to which Saddam could weaponise, the French assessment was similar” to the UK’s.

872. President Lagos repeated his concerns, including the difficulty of securing nine votes or winning the presentational battle without further clarification of Iraq’s non-compliance, and his suggestions to identify benchmarks with a short deadline. Sir David Manning agreed to report the conversation to Mr Blair.

873. Mr Blair wrote in his memoir that, during February, “despite his best endeavours”, divisions in the Security Council had grown not reduced; and that the “dynamics of disagreement” was producing new alliances. France, Germany and Russia were moving to create an alternative pole of power and influence.

874. Mr Blair thought that was “highly damaging” but “inevitable”: “They felt as strongly as I did; and they weren’t prepared to indulge the US, as they saw it.”

875. Mr Blair concluded that for moral and strategic reasons the UK should be with the US.

876. Mr Campbell wrote that Mr Blair had called him on 1 March “for a chat re Blix”: “A combination of Blix and the recent moves by the Iraqis had got us on the back foot again.” Mr Blair:

“... felt it was all now about the politics of the UNSC, and would come down to a hard-headed argument for votes. It was all going to ebb and flow but we just had to keep going. He was clear that the consequences of not being with the US now were incalculable.

“I said I felt there had been various points where we could have done something different vis-a-vis the US. He said no, the only way to have had influence with them was to be clear from the start that we would be with them when things got really tough. He was clear that our interests were aligned.”²⁷¹

877. In his memoir, Mr Blair wrote that, “politically, as well as to put the issue beyond any legal claim to the contrary, a second resolution was certainly desirable”.²⁷² During

²⁷¹ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

²⁷² Blair T. *A Journey*. Hutchinson, 2010.

February 2003, “despite his best endeavours”, divisions in the international community had grown not reduced:

“The ten new accession countries [in the EU] came out strongly for the US position ... Spain and Italy both supported action. Allies of the US outside Europe such as Japan and South Korea also rallied. So did many of the applicant countries for NATO. Australia gave unstinting and determined support.

“But public opinion in many traditionally supportive countries, like Turkey was strongly anti. Canada decided they couldn’t support without a new resolution, as did Mexico ...

“Basically, there were nations for whom the American alliance was a fundamental part of their foreign policy. They tended to back the US. Then there were those for whom the alliance was important, but not fundamental. They backed off ... the dynamics of disagreement then started to fashion new alliances, with France, Germany and Russia, in particular, moving to create an alternative pole of power and influence.”

878. Mr Blair added:

“I thought this was highly damaging; but I also understood it was inevitable. They felt as strongly as I did; and they weren’t prepared to indulge the US, as they saw it. They thought conflict would harm relations between the West and Islam, and of course the more they said this, the more they rather played into that analysis and strengthened it.

“... I agreed with the basic US analysis of Saddam as a threat; I thought he was a monster; and to break the US partnership in such circumstances, when America’s key allies were all rallying round, would in my view, then (and now) have done major long-term damage to that relationship.

“I had one last throw of the dice. The problem which sensible opinion had with it all was the feeling that it was a rush to war ... the US position was that this was all very well but ... they couldn’t simply wait until a diplomatic dance, which they had fair evidence for thinking would be interminable, was played out. Their position was: resolution 1441 was a final chance; if he didn’t take it; if we give him time, we just allow him to mess us around as he has before; he won’t reform; we’re kidding ourselves if we think he will; so let’s go and get the job done.

“The inspectors’ reports were at best inconclusive, but they certainly weren’t evidence of ‘immediate, unconditional and active compliance’. The US was champing at the bit. President Bush was actually losing support by waiting. The international community was split. The party was split. I was between numerous rocks and hard places.

“The strain on everyone around me was almost unbearable ...

“Gradually I did deal with it. I sat and reasoned it all through. I knew in the final analysis I would be with the US, because it was right morally and strategically. But we should make a last ditch attempt for a peaceful solution. First to make the moral case for removing Saddam ... Second, to try one more time to reunite the international community behind a clear base for action in the event of a continuing breach.”

879. Mr Campbell wrote that Mr Blair had telephoned him at 7:45am on 3 March and was:

“... even more worried than he had been on Friday. He felt things were just not where they needed to be. David M[anning] and John Scarlett came back from their weekend trip ... both countries were very firmly on the fence and could see no reason to come off it. TB said it was still possible we could get a majority on the UNSC but if it was in circumstances where people felt we bullied and arm-twisted, the French would be less worried about putting down a veto. The Americans were frankly alienating people by their tactics. David M said the message these smaller countries got was the basic assumption from the Americans that they would come over in the end.

“I said ... that our problem on the communications front was largely caused by US friendly fire ... They looked the whole time like they were desperate for war. We at least didn’t look like we were desperate for war, but we did look like we were desperate to be with them ... TB said he would have to tell Bush that it was not possible to get the votes at the moment. It was totally what they didn’t want to hear but they had to hear it from someone. He was very down on the Americans ... I sensed they were becoming irritated with us ...”²⁷³

880. Mr Campbell added that the destruction of missiles had “tipped the balance” of public opinion “towards giving the inspectors more time”. Mr Blair was “moving to the Canadian position of a bit more time to get the questions finally answered”.

881. Mr Straw proposed an offer of safety and immunity if Saddam Hussein would go into exile and returned to the earlier idea of setting out publicly some key benchmarks against which Iraq’s “full and active” compliance could be judged.

882. Mr Straw spoke twice to Secretary Powell on 2 March to discuss progress in securing support for the UK/US/Spanish draft resolution and possible ideas for addressing the concerns that had been raised by other members of the Security Council.²⁷⁴

²⁷³ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

²⁷⁴ Letter Straw to Manning, 3 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversations with Colin Powell, 2 March’.

883. In a discussion on the position of Russia, Secretary Powell said that Mr Ivanov had stated that there was nothing in it for Russia to vote for the second resolution. It meant an end to inspections and Iraq's neighbours were not threatened by Saddam Hussein.

884. In the context of remarks reported to have been made during a visit to China, Secretary Powell had asked Mr Ivanov if Russia would veto the second resolution. Mr Ivanov had responded, "You know me better than that"; he had simply been explaining that, under the UN Charter, Russia had the right of veto but he had avoided getting drawn into whether it would be used. Secretary Powell would be urging President Bush to speak to President Putin.

885. Mr Straw reported that he had told Secretary Powell that the level of support in the UK for military action without a second resolution was palpably "very low". In that circumstance, even if a majority in the Security Council had voted for the resolution with only France exercising its veto, he was "increasingly pessimistic about whether we could carry the Party" to support military action.

886. Mr Straw added that the debate in the UK was:

"... significantly defined by the tone of the debate in Washington and particularly remarks made by the President and others to the right of him, which suggested that the US would go to war whatever and was not bothered about a second resolution one way or another."

887. Mr Straw had proposed consideration of additional language in the second resolution "pledging immunity to Saddam and entourage if he were to leave Iraq by a specific date". Secretary Powell had declined, commenting that he did not think Saddam Hussein would agree.

888. Mr Straw sought Mr Blair's agreement to adding an ultimatum to the draft resolution.²⁷⁵

889. Mr Straw wrote: "Things may be moving towards a majority but I will not believe it until it happens", There were concerns that the draft resolution looked like a "fait accompli" and a "blank cheque for war". Key potential allies "needed a better reason" for supporting the resolution.

890. Mr Straw's view was that the language in the resolution on performance targets and deadlines would not be acceptable "to either US or UK for obvious reasons", but he had "two thoughts":

- an offer, subject to legal advice, of safety and immunity if Saddam Hussein would go into exile; and
- returning to the earlier idea of setting out publicly some key benchmarks against which Iraq's "full and active" compliance could be judged.

²⁷⁵ Minute Straw to Prime Minister, 3 March 2003, 'Iraq: Second Resolution'.

891. Mr Straw thought that an ultimatum had “significant” advantages: “It would indicate that we still wanted a peaceful outcome to the crisis; help get the moderate Arabs on board; help our friends on the Security Council; and put France especially on the spot.” It might make France “think twice about a veto”; “they knew as well as we did that he [Saddam Hussein] was only likely to take it [the final opportunity offered in resolution 1441] when he knew for certain there was no other way out”.

892. Mr Straw suggested that the “clusters” document could be turned to the UK’s advantage by “setting out a few carefully selected tests” and pointing to the document for further amplification. There was a risk that Saddam Hussein might produce “thousands of pages of commentary” and the UK would need to keep the emphasis on the need for “compelling evidence that he was now committed to full and active compliance”.

893. Mr Straw advised that, to “be credible with the middle ground”, his proposals would need “another week or two” to “convince some of the crucial swing voters”. In his view, that might “be possible without disrupting the military plan”.

894. On 3 March, Mr Blair proposed an approach focused on setting a deadline of 17 March for Iraq to disclose evidence relating to the destruction of prohibited items and interviews; and an amnesty if Saddam Hussein left by 21 March.

895. In a conversation with Mr Jan Peter Balkenende, the Dutch Prime Minister, Mr Blair commented that “Saddam was still playing around”; and that he was “struck by the parallels with 1997-98”.²⁷⁶ The “situation would be clearer by the middle of the week”; the UK was “working flat out to get the votes in the Security Council”. Mr Blair stated that “a majority in the Security Council with a French veto would be almost as good as a SCR”. He hoped the French were carefully considering the implications of a veto. “Unless Saddam co-operated in full, the inspectors would never find all the WMD: the history of UNSCOM showed a pattern of Iraqi concealment and deceit.”

896. In a conversation with Mr Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the Danish Prime Minister, Mr Blair stated that “the ‘middle group’ in the Security Council was moving in the right direction. We needed to focus on the facts that Saddam had still not accounted for the WMD identified by UNSCOM up to 1998 and no real interviews of scientists had taken place.”²⁷⁷

897. Mr Blair also told Mr Rasmussen that he thought the timing “would move pretty quickly – days rather than weeks” after Dr Blix’s report on 7 March; and that the Americans would take action if there was no further resolution.

898. Mr Rycroft sought Mr Blair’s agreement to a strategy to secure the Chilean vote, adding that if that was obtained, “we will probably also get the Mexicans”. President

²⁷⁶ Letter Cannon to Owen, 3 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Dutch Prime Minister, 2 March’.

²⁷⁷ Letter Cannon to Owen, 3 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Danish Prime Minister, 2 March’.

Lagos was “In particular ... looking for a little more time and a report from Blix judging Saddam’s compliance against specific benchmarks”.

899. Mr Rycroft suggested that the three main elements of a strategy could be:

- **“A slight change to the draft resolution.”** We could add in explicit references to the reports from Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei, concluding that they confirmed either that Saddam Hussein had “failed to comply with, and co-operate fully in the implementation” of resolution 1441, or that Iraq had “failed to take the final opportunity” afforded by the resolution.
- **“Benchmarks.”** Making public “in the next day or so what is required of Saddam in one or more key areas”. The benchmarks would not be set out in the resolution but the date of the vote would provide a deadline for compliance. That would allow Chile to say that “as there is not full compliance”, it would vote for the resolution.
- **“Offer of exile/amnesty to Saddam.”** Making “clear publicly again that we are not intent on war come what may, and that we are determined to explore every last avenue for peace. This includes making clear that we support Arab attempts to get Saddam to leave Iraq and go into exile in exchange for an amnesty.”²⁷⁸

900. Mr Blair produced a handwritten note on 3 March setting out a list of potential actions, including;

- Setting Saddam Hussein a deadline of 17 March for disclosure of documentation and proof of destruction.
- Presenting the “20 best” scientists for interview outside Iraq, with their families identified and their safety guaranteed.
- If Saddam Hussein failed, giving him until 21 March to leave Iraq with an agreed amnesty.
- A declaration “by the nine/ten [non-permanent members of the Security Council]” endorsed by Canada.
- A “launch” following Dr Blix’s report to the Security Council on 7 March in Chile or Mexico.
- “... trying to persuade Russia”.
- Agreeing a:
 - UN role in post-conflict Iraq;
 - broad-based government; and
 - humanitarian effort.
- Making “a last plea to France not to veto but to help”.
- Publishing an “analysis of Saddam’s deception alongside the ... declaration”.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ [Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 3 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Securing the Chilean Vote’.](#)

²⁷⁹ [Note \(handwritten\) \[Blair\], 3 March 2003, \[untitled\].](#)

901. A typed version of Mr Blair’s note, with Mr Rycroft’s comments, is published with this report.²⁸⁰

902. A separate minute from Mr Rycroft, stating “You asked for a plan we could work up with the Mexicans and Chileans, as a way of bringing them to vote for the second resolution”, elaborated on the suggestion of identifying benchmarks to define “full co-operation”, making clear that judgements were for the Security Council; and that Dr Blix’s reports “would form an important basis for the facts underpinning the judgements”.²⁸¹

903. Mr Rycroft added that that differed from previous work on benchmarks because it was “us” not Dr Blix “putting forward the benchmarks and answering the questions on Iraqi compliance”.

904. The minute set out the key demands in resolution 1441 and a note listing benchmarks on biological weapons, chemical weapons, missiles, documentation and personnel. On tactics and timing, Mr Rycroft advised Mr Blair:

- “we face an uphill struggle securing US agreement to any further time”.
- The judgements on Iraqi performance “must not” be tied to Dr Blix’s report to the Security Council on 7 March, and the UK should not “seek or encourage a further Blix report after 7 March”.
- The UK “must avoid at all costs a further Council decision after our second resolution”.
- The UK “could be vague publicly about when we would judge Iraqi behaviour”.
- The UK “would have to make clear privately to the US that we were talking about making those judgements at some point next week or at the latest early in the week of 17 March”.

905. Mr Rycroft also wrote:

- Sir David Manning had not seen the proposals.
- Mr Straw wanted to talk to Mr Blair “as soon as possible”.
- The FCO opposed benchmarks on the grounds that Saddam Hussein would fulfil a few of them.
- The UK needed to make clear that “full, positive answers to all of the questions” would be needed to demonstrate full co-operation – “destruction of a handful of Al Samouds is a small part of the picture”.
- Sir Jeremy Greenstock should advise on the tactics: “His advice so far is that we should not respond to the Chilean concerns until after 7 March, because it may be unnecessary if by then the Chileans intend to vote for our resolution and because it would cause a split with the US ...”

²⁸⁰ [Note, \[undated\], ‘Iraq: PM’s note of 3 March, with MR comments in italics’.](#)

²⁸¹ [Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 3 March 2003, ‘Iraq, Blix, Benchmarks and More Time?’](#)

906. Following a discussion with Mr Blair, Mr Straw told Secretary Powell that Mr Blair:

“... was concerned that, having shifted world (and British) public opinion over the months, it had now been seriously set back in recent days. We were not in the right position. The Prime Minister was considering a number of ideas which he might well put to the President.”²⁸²

907. Mr Straw recorded that Secretary Powell had advised that if Mr Blair wanted to make proposals, he should do so quickly.

908. Mr Straw also recorded that the US was not enthusiastic about the inclusion of an immunity clause for Saddam Hussein in the resolution. He had told Secretary Powell that Mr Blair had thought that “might be seen as premature”; and that “if necessary” it might be done “at the appropriate time in a separate resolution”.

909. Mr Straw reported that he and Secretary Powell had discussed the problems in the UK. Secretary Powell had told President Bush that he judged a vetoed resolution would no longer be possible for the UK. Mr Straw said that he had been told that, without a second resolution, only 100 Conservative MPs would vote with the Government. In those circumstances, approval for military action would be “beyond reach”.

910. In the context of a discussion about the lack of real serious US planning for post-conflict, the number of troops that might be required to secure the ground behind the US advance to Baghdad, and the role envisaged for the UN, Mr Straw recorded that he had told Secretary Powell that, “whilst the US Administration had to be the best judge of its long term interests”, he “thought that it would reap a whirlwind if it failed to secure legitimacy for what it was doing in respect of Iraq. We were not there yet.”

911. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that Dr Blix continued to see attractions in the Canadian proposal but was talking about a deadline of 1 May or 1 June.

912. Sir Jeremy Greenstock’s report of discussions in New York on 3 March, included:

- Discussion with the US delegation about:
 - US thinking that a French veto would not severely undercut the legitimacy of military action and Ambassador Negroponte’s “guess” that France was “talking up the veto to deter us from putting the resolution to a vote”.
 - Setting Iraq a deadline for Iraq to be “unconditionally disarmed” by 17 or 21 March with the UK suggesting a variant setting a deadline by which Iraq would have “failed to take its final opportunity”.
- In response to a suggestion from Sir Jeremy Greenstock that it might make more sense for UNMOVIC temporarily to withdraw before any vote on a resolution, Dr Blix said he would discuss that with Mr Annan, but “he would not want to be accused of playing to a minority in the Council”.

²⁸² Letter Straw to Manning, 4 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Colin Powell, 3 March’.

- Dr Blix would circulate the “clusters” document to the Security Council on 7 March, but the work programme would not be ready.
- Dr Blix was concerned that while it was possible to establish material balances up to 1998, it was less clear how Iraq’s flat denial of any activity since then should be treated.
- Iraq was being “hyper-active”; there has been some private interviews over the previous weekend, one of which – on UAVs – had been “informative”. In response to UK questions reflecting concerns that interviews would still be monitored, Dr Blix said that interviewees had not been searched and “there could of course be bugs in the room”.
- Dr Blix saw attractions in the Canadian proposal, which would help to unite the Council around key tests, which were becoming evident from the “clusters” document, and a deadline; and had mentioned possible deadlines of 1 May or 1 June.
- The UK had argued that the risk was that “we would simply end up back at square one a couple of months hence”.
- In a separate E10 discussion of the Canadian proposal, Germany had declared it could not countenance an ultimatum and others “had not seemed particularly interested, perhaps as it brought the Council back to the same place in the end”.
- The majority of the E10 were more concerned about US statements the previous weekend that the aim of US action was regime change.²⁸³

913. In separate advice “on the end game options”, Sir Jeremy Greenstock stated that there was little chance of bridging the gap with the French – “senior politicians were dug in too deep”; and that a French veto appeared “more of a danger than failure to get nine votes”.²⁸⁴

914. Sir Jeremy had told Mr Annan that “the UK would not give up on finding a non-war route if we possibly could”; and that “the French/German/Russian proposal ... merely diminished the pressure on Saddam”.

915. Sir Jeremy identified the options as:

- “... stay firm ... and go with the US military campaign in the second half of March with the best arguments we can muster ... if a second resolution ... is unobtainable, we fall back on 1441 and regret that the UN was not up to it ...”;
- “... make some small concessions that might just be enough to get, e.g. Chile and Mexico on board”. The “most obvious step” might be “ultimatum language” making military action the default if the Council did not agree that Iraq had come into compliance with resolution 1441;

²⁸³ Telegram 338 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 4 March 2003, ‘Iraq: 3 March’.

²⁸⁴ Telegram 339 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 4 March 2003, ‘Personal Iraq: End Game Options’.

- “... try something on benchmarks, probably building on Blix’s cluster document”. That “would be better done outside the draft resolution” to “avoid diluting 1441 (and avoid placing too much weight on Blix’s shoulders)”;
- “... putting forward a second resolution not authorising force”, although it was clear that Sir Jeremy envisaged there would be an “eventual use of force”;
- “... a peaceful introduction of forces into Iraq for the purposes of complete disarmament”. That would be a “genuine last resort”, which would “cut across the short-term timetable of the Americans and could only be feasible if there was a genuine wish to avoid an international bust-up.” As Saddam Hussein would be unlikely to co-operate, it would be a longer route to military action.

916. Commenting that the talk of vetoes “may be as much to scare us off as an indication of genuine voting intentions”, Sir Jeremy concluded:

“We will need to:

- remain robust that disarmament must be achieved, that there is very little time left, and that we are willing to contemplate military action without a further resolution if necessary;
- keep up the lobbying with key swing voters, but also with Russia (... even if the noises right now are negative), so that France increasingly faces the prospect of an isolated veto;
- work on a sample ultimatum that could be proposed by Chile or Mexico ...;
- continue to reflect internally on whether we would rather:
 - force a vote ...;
 - not force a vote ...”

917. Sir Jeremy concluded: “So long as we have enough swing votes, the simplest route may just be to force our (slightly amended) resolution to a vote, and test the French to veto or not.”

918. Mr Ricketts told Mr Straw that he and Sir David Manning had discussed Sir Jeremy’s telegrams and believed that the “best package” might comprise:

- Adding a deadline to the draft resolution requiring “a bit more time”. A US suggestion “that Iraq should have ‘unconditionally disarmed’ in ten days” would be “seen as unreasonable”.
- A small number of carefully chosen benchmarks “set out separately from the resolution, ideally by the Chileans and Mexicans ... We could then use the clusters document to illustrate how little compliance there had been across the board.”
- The US to make clear that it “accepted a significant UN role in post-conflict Iraq”.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ Minute Ricketts to Private Secretary [FCO], 4 March 2003, ‘Iraq: UN Tactics’.

919. On 4 March, Sir David Manning and Dr Rice discussed progress in securing support for the resolution, including the desire of some members of the Security Council for clear evidence of Saddam's failure to comply to justify a vote for a second resolution and possible amendments.²⁸⁶ Sir David said that "interviews were a litmus test of Saddam's intentions"; UNMOVIC "would be having no difficulties ... if Saddam had nothing to hide". He also suggested pre-empting the argument that Dr Blix's "clusters" document might provide the benchmark needed for full Iraqi disarmament: "Instead we should emphasise that Blix was producing a list ... of all the disarmament tasks that Saddam had failed to undertake ..."

920. Sir David told Dr Rice that the vote on the resolution should not take place until "we knew we could get nine votes".

921. Mr Straw told the Foreign Affairs Committee on 4 March that it was "a matter of fact" that Iraq had been in material breach "for some weeks" and resolution 1441 provided sufficient legal authority to justify military action against Iraq if it was "in further material breach". He emphasised Iraq's attempts to conceal its capabilities and deceive the inspectors.

922. Mr Straw also stated that a majority of members of the Security Council had been opposed to the suggestion that resolution 1441 should state explicitly that military action could be taken only if there were a second resolution.

923. Mr Straw gave evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 4 March.²⁸⁷

924. In an opening statement setting out the UK Government's position on Iraq's failure to comply with resolution 1441, Mr Straw said that Saddam Hussein's tactics had been:

"... to deny the existence of weapons of mass destruction and, if caught out, to offer the smallest concession possible in order to work for delay ... We can expect more concessions right up to the point at which Saddam Hussein concludes that the international community has, once again, been lured into doing exactly what he wants. Then the concessions will stop, and Saddam Hussein will be left in possession of an arsenal of deadly weapons."

925. Mr Straw stated that it was assessed that Iraq had the capability to produce a range of chemical and biological agents and:

"The Iraqi regime has put up an elaborate screen of concealment based on intimidation and deception to cover this capability ... [W]e know that sensitive materials and documents have been hidden in the homes of employees and hidden too in hospitals, farms and other sites. Intelligence also suggests that WMD-related items may have been buried and others were being kept on the move every 12 hours using trucks and trains. Throughout the period of inspection

²⁸⁶ Letter Manning to McDonald, 4 March 2003, 'Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice'.

²⁸⁷ Minutes, Foreign Affairs Committee (House of Commons), 4 March 2003, [Evidence Session].

Iraq's security and intelligence agencies have been monitoring UNMOVIC and the IAEA and plans are available to obstruct them if they come close to WMD itself ... Iraq is particularly concerned about ... interviews of scientists and others because if they were carried out as mandated by [resolution] 1441 they would unquestionably expose the regime's deception and its stockpile of weapons ... In early December we know that Saddam Hussein issued instructions that scientists were to be threatened with serious consequences for themselves and their families if they revealed any sensitive information to UNMOVIC. They were ordered not to agree to any interviews taking place outside Iraq ... The potential witnesses have been coached in the answers they have to give. Some of them have been removed from their homes and places of work and detained to prevent them from being interviewed."

926. Mr Straw added:

"... we can expect Iraq will continue trickling out so-called concessions, one at a time, at the last minute to split the Security Council and buy more time while continuing an active policy of concealment; to start trickling out 'newly discovered' documents as part of a co-ordinated plan to tie down UNMOVIC on what the regime considers to be expendable parts of its WMD programme. We can also expect Iraq soon to announce that interviews may take place unaccompanied ..."

927. Mr Straw concluded that it was clear that:

"... Saddam Hussein believes he can once again divide and outwit the international community through a pretence of co-operation. We cannot afford to send him ... any signal, that he is close to success ... He is also hoping that he final opportunity, which was originally afforded to him 12 years ago and then repeated by 1441, was not final at all ..."

928. Mr Straw was asked a series of questions by Mr Donald Anderson, the Chairman of the Committee, about the legality of military action without a second resolution.

929. Asked about Mr Blair's "escape clause" and whether the Government "would not feel bound to await" a second resolution "or to abide by it if it were to be vetoed unreasonably", Mr Straw replied:

"The reason why we have drawn a parallel with Kosovo is ... it was not possible to get a direct Security Council resolution and instead the Government and those that participated in the action had to fall back on previous ... resolutions and general international law ... to justify the action that was taken ... We are satisfied that we have sufficient legal authority in 1441 back to the originating resolution 660 [1990] ... to justify military action against Iraq if they are in further material breach."

930. Mr Straw added that was "clearly laid down and it was anticipated when we put 1441 together". The Government would "much prefer" military action, if that proved

necessary, “to be backed by a second resolution”, but it had had to reserve its options if such a second resolution did not prove possible. That was what Mr Blair had “spelt out”.

931. Asked if the Government should proceed without the express authority of the UN, Mr Straw replied:

“We believe there is express authority ... There was a ... a very intensive debate – about whether ... 1441 should say explicitly ... that military action to enforce this resolution could only be taken if there were a second resolution. That ... was not acceptable to a majority of members of the Security Council, it was never put before the ... Council. Instead ... what the Council has to do ... is to consider the situation ...”

932. Mr Straw told Sir Patrick Cormack (Conservative) that Iraq had “been in material breach as a matter of fact for some weeks now because they were told they had to co-operate immediately, unconditionally and actively”. He added:

“... we are anxious to gain a political consensus, if that can be achieved ... which recognises the state of Iraq’s flagrant violation of its obligations. As far as ... the British Government is concerned, that is a matter of fact; the facts speak for themselves.”

933. Mr Straw also stated:

“What we also believe, because we want this crisis resolved peacefully, is that the only way you are going to get this active, immediate and full co-operation by Saddam Hussein, even at this late stage, is if he realises fully what the alternative is ... [F]or all the suggestions that it is diplomacy that has brought about what co-operation there has been ... it has come about ... above all, by the fact that there are now a large number of US and UK troops stationed on Saddam’s doorstep concentrating his mind.”

934. Asked by Mr Andrew MacKinlay (Labour) how there was going to be “proper conscious decision-making” about whether Iraq was complying, Mr Straw replied:

“... we make our judgement on the basis of the best evidence. I have to say it was on the basis of the best evidence that the international community made its judgement on 8 November. They had hundreds of pages of reports ...”

935. Mr Straw also told Mr Mackinley that:

- “by simply passing ... 1441” Saddam Hussein “readmitted the inspectors having said he would not”.
- “I have seen nothing at all which says we have to take action immediately because of military planning necessities. The point we are making ... is that the reason we want immediate compliance is because that is what the

Security Council said ... 110 days ... is stretching the meaning of the word 'immediate' to breaking point."

- France took "the view that it was possible by continuous diplomacy to secure Saddam Hussein's compliance. We take a different view. I think the facts and history are with us."

IAEA position on Iraq's nuclear programme

The FCO advised No.10 on 4 March that the UK Mission in Vienna had confirmed that the IAEA was on the verge of closing the file on nuclear issues in Iraq, despite information from the UK that had "still not been followed up".²⁸⁸ The IAEA had apparently concluded that:

- There was "no significant evidence that Iraq had attempted to procure uranium from Niger". The documents the IAEA had seen "that formed the basis of such an allegation appeared to be forgeries".
- Aluminium tubes, "although imported illegally", were "not connected with a gas centrifuge programme". The Iraqis had "satisfactorily explained the use of the tubes, and the reasons for their various fine tolerances". The Iraqis "were no longer (if ever) in a position to manufacture a gas centrifuge, especially without foreign assistance".
- There was "no evidence to link the magnets with a covert nuclear programme"; the IAEA had found the part in the guidance system of a missile.
- The IAEA had evidence that a significant amount of the missing 32 tonnes of HMX (a high explosive used to help trigger nuclear fission), had been used for commercial purposes, as the Iraqis had claimed".

The positions of other members of the Security Council

936. Sir John Holmes advised on 4 March that France was intent on preventing the US and UK mustering the nine positive votes required for a majority in the Security Council.

937. Sir John Holmes confirmed on 4 March that France's main aim was to "avoid being put on the spot" by influencing the undecided, preventing the US and UK mustering nine votes, and keeping alongside the Russians and Chinese; and that there was "nothing that we can now do to dissuade them from this course".²⁸⁹ He advised that "nothing the French say at this stage, even privately, should be taken at face value".

938. If the French strategy failed, Sir John advised that "a lone French veto remains hard to imagine but is by no means out of the question".

²⁸⁸ Letter Owen to Rycroft, 4 March 2003, 'Iraq Weapons Inspections: IAEA Line on 7 March'.

²⁸⁹ [Telegram 110 Paris to FCO London, 4 March 2003, 'Iraq: Avoiding a French Veto'](#).

939. Sir John repeated his advice of 24 February that Mr Blair (and President Bush) should, “if and when it becomes clear that we have the votes, and that the Russians and Chinese will not veto”, attempt to dissuade President Chirac.

940. A subsequent telegram set out the key elements of the French position and the suggestions for arguments the UK might use.²⁹⁰ They included:

- France had repeatedly said that war was the worst of all possible solutions, but “war had been made more likely by Saddam’s ability to exploit differences in the international community”. The chances of Saddam Hussein taking the opportunity to avoid war looked “slim”. A veto would not help and “the only conceivable way of achieving a peaceful solution now is to increase the pressure on Saddam by re-establishing the maximum degree of consensus in the UN”.
- France had argued that war was a disproportionate response to the threat posed by Saddam Hussein’s WMD, but the point had been reached where failure to act firmly caused “disproportionate damage to the credibility of the will of the international community and to wider efforts to limit the proliferation of WMD”.
- If war became inevitable, it would be easier to “limit the destabilising effect elsewhere in the region, about which France has rightly been concerned, if military intervention is seen to be taken with the authority of the international community”.
- Weakening UN credibility would make it more difficult “to re-establish the clear and authoritative UN-backed administration and the rapid transition to a civil regime in Iraq ... and more difficult for Europe to play the role the region and the world will need at that point”.

941. Separately, Dr Michael Williams, Mr Straw’s Special Adviser, sent Mr Straw an analysis of the use of the veto by France.²⁹¹ He did not think France would veto on its own; but if it believed Moscow would veto, the second resolution would be lost. It was “perhaps most likely, if the yes votes creep up to nine and beyond”, that France would “back down and say it accepts a majority verdict”. But the UK could not rely on that. Dr Williams advised that a strategy was needed which reminded France “of the dangers and consequences of its present course of action”; and that would need Mr Blair’s engagement.

942. The analysis was sent to Sir David Manning and was seen by Mr Blair.

943. Sir Roderic Lyne, British Ambassador to Russia, had reported on 27 February that Russia’s position was hardening and it largely agreed with President Chirac. President Putin would find it hard to vote in favour of military action without a “smoking gun” or near-consensus in the Security Council.

²⁹⁰ [Telegram 111 Paris to FCO London, 4 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Avoiding a French Veto – Arguments to Use with the French’.](#)

²⁹¹ [Minute Williams to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 4 March 2003, ‘France and the Security Council’.](#)

944. Sir Roderic had reported on 27 February that: “Influenced by Paris and Berlin”, Russia’s position was hardening and it “largely agreed with” President Chirac. The policy was “to stay with (and behind) the French and Germans while trying not to antagonise the Americans”. Russia recognised that US action was “not far off”: “Their preferred option is to prevent nine positive votes and thus avoid an awkward choice on the veto.” Russia was “unlikely to be the first to break ranks”, and it seemed “far-fetched” to conceive of Russia “helping the UK to get the swing votes [in the Security Council]”.²⁹²

945. Sir Roderic wrote:

“In the political class, almost everyone would vote for endless containment rather than conflict. US arguments for bringing this to a head are not accepted. There is nervousness about the wider consequences. US policy is seen as potentially dangerous, and part of a right wing ‘axis-of-evil’ agenda ... no-one to the right of the Communists is arguing that Russia should obstruct the Americans. The prevailing mood is that Russia should not endorse the war, but should stand to one side ...”

946. President Putin “would find it very hard to justify internally a vote in favour of war, absent a smoking gun or a Security Council near-consensus”. The Russians did “worry about the UN’s authority”; but they did not “buy our argument that this obliges them to support the US regardless”. They would “prefer it if we were forced not to put our resolution to the vote”.

947. Sir Roderic concluded:

“The best, and probably the only, chance of getting the Russians onside without a smoking gun would be for [President] Bush to spell out personally to [President] Putin that support for the resolution will determine the future of the US/Russian relationship.”

948. Mr Ivanov told Mr Straw on 4 March that Russia had failed in an attempt to persuade Saddam Hussein to leave and it would veto a resolution based on the draft circulated on 24 February. President Bush had already decided to go to war.

949. Mr Straw reported that he had told Mr Ivanov that the international community had no choice but to pay attention to President Bush’s priorities.

950. During his visit to London on 4 and 5 March, Mr Ivanov informed Mr Straw that Mr Yevgeny Primakov, the former Russian Prime Minister, had just visited Baghdad in a failed attempt to persuade Saddam Hussein to leave.²⁹³ Russia, and others, would veto the resolution tabled on 24 February. Mr Ivanov also expressed doubts about claims that military action in Iraq would be quick.

²⁹² [Telegram 68 Moscow to FCO London, 27 February 2003, ‘Ivanov’s Visit to London: Iraq’.](#)

²⁹³ Telegram 37 FCO London to Moscow, 3 [sic] March 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Meetings with Russian Foreign Minister, 4 March’.

951. In response to a comment from Mr Ivanov that President Bush had already decided to go to war, Mr Straw responded that President Bush “would go to war unless – and the unless had to be big and happen quickly”.

952. In a discussion on the draft resolution, Mr Straw stated that the UK had never taken the position that draft text was “take it or leave it”. He had no problem in principle with tough benchmarks and a very tight timeline; but if an initial 120 days was followed by another 120 days, “momentum would dribble away. Saddam Hussein only responded because of military pressure and that could not be sustained for ever.

953. Mr Straw proposed additional language for the draft resolution setting a deadline for a Security Council decision on whether Iraq had “clearly begun the process of full active disarmament as provided by [resolutions 1441 and 687]”, together with a “private understanding about the targets Iraq had to reach”. Mr Straw was reported to have said that he was “very allergic to timelines and public benchmarks” which “could lead to a tick in the box mentality by Saddam and good opportunities for further game playing”.

954. In his subsequent discussion with Secretary Powell, Mr Straw said that he had told Mr Ivanov that he thought war could be avoided if Saddam went into exile and there was real evidence that Iraq was co-operating in its own disarmament.²⁹⁴

955. Later in the conversation, in response to a question about why Iraq was being targeted, Mr Straw had replied that “Iraq was President Bush’s No.1 priority; the international community had no choice but to pay attention to Bush’s priorities”.

956. Mr Ivanov told Mr Blair that Russia was looking for concrete demands and a decision on how much time was needed to resolve the issues.

957. In his meeting with Mr Ivanov on 5 March, Mr Blair explained that the threat from terrorist groups and unstable states meant that Iraq must be dealt with firmly.²⁹⁵ The issue was whether Iraq was co-operating to the extent required by resolution 1441. If the UN route did not work on this occasion, the US would not use it for a very long time. If Saddam Hussein made a genuine change, the inspectors could have as much time as they liked.

958. Mr Ivanov had made it clear that Russia was looking for concrete demands and a decision on how much time was needed to resolve all the issues; and that Russia would not be able to support any decision that ran counter to its principles.

959. The record described the meeting as “constructive”, but that “everything that Ivanov said was consistent with his public threat of the use of a Russian veto of our current draft”.

²⁹⁴ Letter McDonald to Manning, 4 March 2003, ‘Foreign Secretary’s Conversation with Colin Powell, 4 March’.

²⁹⁵ Letter Rycroft to Sinclair, 5 March 2003, ‘Iraq/Russia’.

960. Mr Straw agreed after the meeting with Mr Blair that Mr Ivanov could share Mr Straw's proposals with Mr de Villepin and Mr Fischer.²⁹⁶

961. France, Germany and Russia stated on 5 March that they would not let a resolution pass that authorised the use of force.

962. Mr de Villepin, Mr Ivanov and Mr Fischer met in Paris on 5 March.

963. In a press conference after the meeting the Foreign Ministers declared that they would "not allow a resolution to pass that authorises resorting to force".²⁹⁷ Russia and France, "as Permanent Members of the Security Council, will assume all their responsibilities on this point".

964. Sir Christopher Hum, British Ambassador to China, advised on 4 March that if the resolution was put to a vote that day, China would abstain.

965. Mr William Ehrman, FCO Director General Defence and Intelligence and Mr Straw's Special Envoy, met the Chinese Vice Foreign Minister, Mr Wang Guangya, and a senior official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), on 4 March.²⁹⁸

966. The report of the meeting with Mr Wang records that, following a briefing on the UK's assessment of Iraq's non-co-operation and the need for a second resolution, China's view was that Iraq must bear the major responsibility for failing to co-operate fully, but believed inspections should be given more time. Although it might take longer to resolve the issue by peaceful means, the time taken would be worth it. There was a common desire amongst the international community to avoid war. Unanimity was important for upholding the authority of the UN. China was still studying the draft resolution. Pressing for a vote now would split the Council and harm its authority.

967. Mr Ehrman had referred to the points emphasised by Mr Blair in his speech to Parliament on 25 February. He told Mr Wang that Saddam Hussein's behaviour since the middle of 2002, when he had directed the implementation of a concealment policy, had been "instructive"; and Saddam's aim was to buy time. Mr Ehrman described key elements of the concealment policy and stated that much of the evidence in the UK's September 2002 dossier "had been supported or confirmed subsequently by UNMOVIC (for example the range of the Al Samoud 2 rockets)". Despite Iraq's efforts, the UN inspectors had found a number of undeclared items and "Iraq itself had 'found' four empty chemical warheads and one aerial bomb containing biological agent". Iraq was particularly concerned about interviews with scientists because "if carried out as mandated they would expose Iraq's WMD programme" and had obstructed the process. The UK "judged it unlikely that Saddam would leave" and "faced with military defeat,

²⁹⁶ Telegram 37 FCO London to Moscow, 5 March 2003, 'Iraq: Foreign Secretary's Meetings with Russian Foreign Minister, 4 March'.

²⁹⁷ *The Guardian*, 5 March 2003, *UN war doubters unite against resolution*. *The Guardian*, 6 March 2003, *Full text of Joint declaration*.

²⁹⁸ [Telegram 89 Beijing to FCO London, 4 March 2003, 'Iraq: Lobbying the Chinese'](#).

Saddam would be prepared to use CBW". Saddam "had not taken the final opportunity afforded to him by ... 1441".

968. Mr Ehrman set out the UK difficulties with the tripartite French/German/Russian proposal and stated that the UK/US/Spanish resolution "would increase pressure on Iraq". There was still a chance for Iraq to take radical action to disarm and the resolution "was the only remaining route to peaceful disarmament".

969. In the separate meeting with a senior MFA official, Mr Ehrman had repeated the briefing and emphasised the importance of preserving international order and international law. The UK had made great efforts in persuading the US that it should use the UN route; that "should not now be lost".²⁹⁹

970. Mr Hum advised that China had "appreciated" the UK's willingness to share its assessments; but that "if a vote occurred today, I have little doubt they would abstain".

971. Baroness Amos advised on 4 March that Angola, Cameroon and Guinea were not yet ready to commit to a "yes vote" and had emphasised the need for P5 unity.

972. Following a visit for discussions with the Presidents of Angola, Cameroon and Guinea, Baroness Amos reported to Mr Straw that:

"... our approach to the visits was right with a focus on our strong relationship with Africa ... our desire to work with each of the countries in partnership and to share intelligence information available to us about the situation in Iraq ...

"All three listened carefully to our arguments, in particular the need to keep the UN in control of events, to keep the US engaged in multilateral fora and that the harassment and intimidation faced by the weapons inspectors made a nonsense of a longer inspection regime."³⁰⁰

973. Baroness Amos wrote: "I think we won the argument"; and that:

"... it might be possible to secure the votes. But – as expected – none of the three were prepared to commit themselves explicitly to a yes vote ... They would all much prefer to abstain than have to choose between us and the US on the one hand and France and Africa on the other. I was struck by the same argument from all three, the importance of unity amongst the P5 ... and the need for a majority in the Security Council ..."

974. Baroness Amos cautioned that the UK and US would need to stay in close touch to ensure that lobbying was complementary and to avoid being perceived to be harassing the African members of the Security Council. In addition, "some of what is

²⁹⁹ [Telegram 90 Beijing to FCO London, 4 March 2003, 'Iraq: Lobbying the Chinese'](#).

³⁰⁰ Minute Amos to Foreign Secretary, 4 March 2003, [untitled].

appearing in the press about ‘inducements’ to secure votes only makes it harder for the Africans to come on board”.

975. The report was sent to Sir Michael Jay, Sir Jeremy Greenstock and Sir Richard Dearlove. It was also widely circulated within No.10.

976. Mr Rycroft commented to Mr Blair: “An effective visit, but the three votes are not yet in the bag.”

The UK position, 5 and 6 March 2003

977. Mr Blair was informed on the evening of 4 March that US military planners were looking at 12 March as the possible start date for the military campaign; and that Mr Hoon was concerned about the “apparent disconnect” with activity in the UN.

978. Mr Hoon’s Private Secretary informed Sir David Manning on the evening of 4 March that Adm Boyce had reported indications of growing pressure from US military commanders, for force posture and other reasons, to take early military action: and that 12 March had emerged as a possible start date for the military campaign.³⁰¹

979. Mr Hoon was “concerned by the apparent disconnect between US military planning and continuing diplomatic activity in the UN” and thought that Sir David “might wish to ensure that Condi Rice is alive to the continuing need to keep the diplomatic and military tracks aligned”.

980. Sir Kevin Tebbit, the MOD Permanent Under Secretary, wrote to Sir Andrew Turnbull, the Cabinet Secretary, on 5 March about the need for an agreed legal basis for military action.³⁰² That is addressed in Section 5.

981. In Prime Minister’s Questions on 5 March, Mr Blair expressed confidence in the prospects for securing a second resolution.

982. In response to a question from Ms Lynne Jones (Labour) asking whether nine affirmative votes would provide “clear” legal authority “for war”, Mr Blair responded that the Government would “always act in accordance with international law” and that “we are confident of securing the votes for that resolution and we will carry on working for that end”. He added:

“... I know that we both agree the authority of the UN is important. If that authority is to be upheld, it is important that what we said last November is implemented. If it is not, the effect on the UN ... would be disastrous.”³⁰³

³⁰¹ Letter Watkins to Manning, 4 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Timing of Military Action’.

³⁰² [Letter Tebbit to Turnbull, 5 March 2003, \[untitled\]](#).

³⁰³ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 5 March 2003, column 817.

983. Asked by Mr Andrew Selous (Conservative) about the direct threat and risks to the UK, Mr Blair replied:

“... I think that the threat of leaving Saddam Hussein armed with weapons of mass destruction is two fold. First, it is that he begins another conflict in his region, into which Britain ... would inevitably be sucked ... Alternatively – and I think this is a powerful and developing threat that the world must face – the risk is that states such as Iraq, which are proliferating these chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, will combine in a way that is devastating for the world with terrorists who are desperate to get their hands on those weapons to wreak maximum destruction.

“... If we do not stand firm over Iraq now, we will never be able to deal with the next threat that encompasses us.”³⁰⁴

984. In the entry in his diary for 5 March, Mr Cook wrote that PMQs “was notable for the confidence” Mr Blair had “expressed about getting a second resolution”.³⁰⁵ He added:

“I don’t know whether this is calculated bravado to keep Saddam wary, or whether he is in a state of denial about the mounting evidence that they can’t get a second resolution on the present terms.”

985. Mr Cook told Mr Blair that he would be unable to carry public opinion if he sidelined the inspectors; if Dr Blix needed months, he should be given until the autumn.

986. In a meeting in the House of Commons shortly after PMQs, Mr Cook told Mr Blair that he had “gone out on a limb” and he should “stop climbing further”.³⁰⁶ The UK had “to be seen on the side” of Dr Blix. Mr Blair would “never carry British opinion” if the UK was “seen to be sidelining the work of the inspectors”.

987. Mr Cook also wrote that when Mr Blair had told him that Britain might propose a new deadline on 7 March, he had said it had to be “seen logically to arise from what Blix said. If he needed months, we should be prepared to give him until the autumn.” Mr Blair had replied that he could not deliver that, adding:

“Left to himself, Bush would have gone to war in January. No, not January, September.”

988. Mr Cook subsequently wrote that the conversation “was an honest exchange between two colleagues who were both open about the gulf widening between them”: and that Mr Blair had “always [been] candid about his intention to be with Bush when the war began”. Mr Cook had been “deeply troubled” by “two distinct elements” of that conversation. First, that “the timetable for war was plainly not driven by the progress

³⁰⁴ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 5 March 2003, column 818.

³⁰⁵ Cook R. *The Point of Departure*. Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2003.

³⁰⁶ Cook R. *The Point of Departure*. Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2003.

of the UN weapons inspections”. Mr Blair had “made no attempt to pretend” that what Dr Blix might report “would make any difference to the countdown to invasion”. In his speech in Glasgow on 15 February, Mr Blair had said that he wanted to “solve the issue” through the UN: “Today he was telling me that the solution was not going to be disarmament through the UN, but regime change through war.”

989. Secondly, Mr Blair “did not try to argue” Mr Cook out of the view that “Saddam did not have any real weapons of mass destruction that were designed for strategic use against city populations and capable of being delivered with reliability over long distances”.

990. Mr Straw told Mr Blair that the Labour Party would not support action beginning the following week.

991. Mr Blair wrote in his memoir that Mr Straw had:

“... come over after PMQs. He was genuinely alarmed and worried about the political fallout. ‘If you go next Wednesday with Bush and without a second resolution, the only regime change that will be happening is in this room.’ He said it as a friend and colleague, and he meant it.”³⁰⁷

992. In his memoir, Mr Straw gave a similar account of that discussion, explaining that his warning “was not about what I would do. I’d support him. But I felt ... we would not muster the numbers when it came to the vote in the Commons.”³⁰⁸

993. Mr Blair and President Bush discussed developments on 5 March.

994. Mr Blair proposed amending the draft resolution by adding a deadline for a decision by the Security Council.

995. On 5 March, Sir David Manning agreed with Dr Rice that Mr Blair and President Bush should speak later that day to discuss possible amendments to the resolution, including the question of a deadline, and to review the lobbying campaign.³⁰⁹ Sir David told Dr Rice that Chile and Mexico would need “something on timing, and meeting their need for some sort of benchmarking”. His preference was to focus on the issue of interviews. Sir David suggested welcoming Dr Blix’s “clusters” document on 7 March as “graphic proof” of Saddam Hussein’s failure to disarm over the last 12 years.

996. Sir David also said that the UK was looking at ways of trying to discount Dr ElBaradei’s decision to close the nuclear file by asking detailed questions.

³⁰⁷ Blair T. *A Journey*. Hutchinson, 2010.

³⁰⁸ Straw J. *Last Man Standing: Memoirs of a Political Survivor*. Macmillan, 2012.

³⁰⁹ Letter Manning to McDonald, 5 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversation with Condi Rice’.

997. Sir David advised Mr Blair that he should suggest a “package deal” to President Bush.³¹⁰ That should include a deadline in an amended resolution, which would “probably have to give us an extra week to ten days”, and an “accompanying declaration (either written or oral)” to meet the Chilean and Mexican need for benchmarks and calling on Saddam Hussein to go into exile if he were unwilling to co-operate with the UN.

998. Sir David said he had told Dr Rice that Mr Blair might travel to Chile and Mexico to show we were taking account of their concerns. That might be followed by a “carefully orchestrated” meeting with President Bush to demonstrate his (President Bush’s) willingness to listen to partners and allies and that he was still, “even at the eleventh hour”, hoping that Saddam Hussein would disarm. Mr Blair and President Bush might then consult President Putin. Even if that did not persuade President Putin to support the resolution, it might ensure a Russian abstention rather than a veto, leaving President Chirac isolated.

999. Sir David said he had made it very clear to Dr Rice that the proposals were his idea and that they had not yet been agreed by Mr Blair.

1000. Mr Rycroft advised Mr Blair that the key points he should make to President Bush were:

- The second resolution was “absolutely vital”.
- The UK needed “at least nine positive votes and no Russian veto”.
- “If the French veto alone, it would be just about manageable.”
- The UK thought Russia intended to veto, but “would be moved” by President Bush.
- Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea, Mexico and Pakistan were “moving in the right direction”; but they were “not in the bag yet”. Mexico and Chile were “interested in more time, a deadline, and benchmarks”.
- Adding an ultimatum into the resolution the UK which identified a “set date (e.g. 17 or 21 March)” for Iraqi compliance.
- It was: “Important that it would take a positive decision by the Security Council to decide that Iraq had taken the required step – so we have the initiative and lock on the process.”
- The need to “define some benchmarks to show what we mean by full co-operation”.
- The “clusters” document provided “ample evidence on non-co-operation” and “must” be used to extract benchmarks on BW, CW and missiles.

³¹⁰ Minute Manning to Prime Minister, 5 March 2003, ‘Iraq Strategy: Conversation with Condi Rice: 5 March’.

- We should “add our own benchmark on interviews ... immediate access to a large number of key people”. That was “where Saddam is really vulnerable” and “could change overnight”.
- A “little more time” would be required and there could be a need for further meetings and discussions.
- It was: “Crucial to have [a] UN role post-conflict.”
- The importance of progress on MEPP.³¹¹

1001. Mr Blair spoke to President Bush proposing a further amendment to the draft resolution.³¹²

1002. Mr Blair said that an ultimatum should include a deadline of 10 days from the date of the resolution for the Security Council to decide that “Unless ... Iraq is complying by [³¹³], then Iraq is in material breach”.

1003. Mr Blair stated that if there were nine votes but a French veto, he thought that “politically and legally” UK participation in military action would be acceptable. “But if we did not get nine votes, such participation might be legal”, but he would face major obstacles. It would be “touch and go”.

1004. Mr Blair and President Bush also briefly discussed the military plan.

1005. Mr Campbell wrote that he had only heard Mr Blair’s side of the call “saying we had a real problem with world opinion, that these countries need a reason to come round, that he wanted to go to Chile and set out the outlines of an amended resolution with a deadline”.³¹⁴ Mr Blair had also told President Bush that he “needed to work more on Putin”.

1006. The record of the discussion broadly confirms Mr Campbell’s account.³¹⁵

1007. Mr Campbell also wrote that Dr Blix “was out again today, as much commentator as civil servant”.³¹⁶ Mr Blair “felt the UNSC had to take control of this now, not Blix”. Mr Powell had reported that the US and UK “seemed far apart” but Mr Blair “said it was not as bad as that” he had told President Bush “we would be with them come what may” but it was “other countries” who “needed help to come over”. The US had “claimed they had already slowed down as a result of TB, that Bush had wanted to go as early as yesterday but TB made sure they didn’t. It was a pretty grim scene, and no matter, how grim, TB was still saying constantly that it was the right thing to do.”

³¹¹ Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 5 March 2003, ‘Bush Call’.

³¹² Letter Rycroft to McDonald, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Bush, 5 March’.

³¹³ No date specified.

³¹⁴ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

³¹⁵ Letter Rycroft to McDonald, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Bush, 5 March’.

³¹⁶ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

1008. In their subsequent discussion, President Lagos agreed to consider Mr Blair's proposals and to discuss them with President Fox.

1009. Mr Blair spoke to President Lagos on 5 March about rallying international support and making public opinion understand why he thought Saddam Hussein was not co-operating.³¹⁷

1010. Mr Blair wanted President Lagos' view on:

“... setting a deadline for full co-operation, and saying that if the Iraqis did not co-operate ... they would be in breach. In parallel, we would set out our criteria for co-operation. This would face Saddam with the decision: co-operate, leave the scene or face the use of force. It would make clear that force was our last resort.”

1011. President Lagos agreed to consider the proposal and Mr Blair's suggestion of a meeting in Chile, to discuss it with President Fox and others, and to respond the following day.

1012. Mr Campbell wrote that Mr Blair wanted to go to Moscow and the US as well as Chile: “We are in this and nobody must think we would ever wobble.”³¹⁸ Mr Campbell's view was that the idea of a visit to Chile “was clearly not on as things stood” and Mr Blair would need a purpose for a meeting with President Bush.

1013. Mr Campbell added that Mr Blair described the purpose of a visit to the US as “to get them to do the right thing”. Mr Campbell had responded that the US was “already very clear about their purpose, which was to go for it”. He had also asked Mr Blair “Are you not sure that your frustration at the way others are dealing with it is just producing a kind of wanderlust?” Mr Blair had replied that there was no substitute for face-to-face meetings. Asked if he was sure the issue was really worth “sacrificing everything”, Mr Blair had replied that it was:

“... always worth doing what you think is the right thing ... Iraq is a real problem, Saddam is a real problem, for us as much as anyone, and it's been ignored too long.”

1014. The British Embassy Washington reported overnight on 5/6 March that the US was now “firmly on track for military action” and would deal firmly with any efforts in the UN to slow down the timetable.

1015. The only event which might significantly affect their timetable would be problems for the UK and the US was therefore pulling out all the stops at the UN.

³¹⁷ Letter Cannon to Owen, 5 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister's Conversation with President of Chile, 5 March’.

³¹⁸ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

1016. Mr Tony Brenton, Chargé d’Affaires at the British Embassy Washington, reported overnight on 5/6 March that “barring a highly improbable volte face by Saddam”, the US was “now firmly on track for military action – with or without a second ... resolution”; and that the “only event which might significantly affect their timetable would be problems for the UK”.³¹⁹ That had been described as “huge – like trying to play football without the quarterback”. The US was “therefore pulling out all the stops at the UN”.

1017. Mr Brenton reported that the US fully understood the importance of the second resolution for the UK and he had explained the Parliamentary arithmetic. He also reported that the US had “gained the impression that we need the resolution for legal reasons” and that he had “explained the real situation”.

1018. Mr Brenton advised that the US was “reasonably hopeful of getting the nine votes (although a little disturbed that the Mexicans have not yet come back to them on our suggested amendment)”. The US was “sanguine” about Russia, and thought China would not veto “unless, at least, the French and Russians do”. The US could not “call” France.

1019. The US would discuss tactics with Mr Straw in New York. The US intention remained “to go for a vote next week, perhaps with ... a very short ultimatum tagged on”. He had told one of his contacts that “it was not helpful for the US to refer to the possibility of not going for a vote”.

1020. Mr Brenton concluded:

“... the military clock is now audibly ticking and only a major shock to our (ie UK) plans is likely to jolt it substantially. The US can be expected to deal quite firmly with any efforts in the UN to slow things down.”

1021. Sir Jeremy Greenstock advised that the US would not countenance the use of benchmarks. That would delay the military timetable.

1022. Reporting discussions in New York on 5 March, Sir Jeremy Greenstock wrote that the US would not countenance benchmarks; that “simply risked delaying the military timetable”.³²⁰

1023. Sir Jeremy and Ambassador Negroponte had agreed on the need to avoid the risk that Dr Blix would say that Iraq was demonstrating “unconditional, active and full co-operation”. Sir Jeremy had agreed with Ambassador Negroponte and Mr Arias that wording was needed “on Iraq demonstrating a genuine change of heart”: “But this had to be something that could not be played back at us, e.g. in a statement by Saddam saying he had taken an ‘unconditional and irreversible decision’.” One key test was Iraq yielding its WMD.

³¹⁹ [Telegram 294 Washington to FCO London, 6 March 2003, ‘Personal Iraq: UN Endgame’.](#)

³²⁰ [Telegram 353 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 6 March 2003, ‘Iraq: 5 March’.](#)

1024. Discussions between experts on the tactics for the Security Council discussion on 7 March had agreed the need to pose questions to Dr Blix and that “more material drawing out key points from the clusters document” was needed:

“We could and should use it to illustrate just how much the Iraq has not done with respect to inspections. We should also highlight the huge gaps in knowledge as an illustration that we could not benchmark, nor define key tasks, without Iraqi co-operation.”

1025. Sir Jeremy provided two alternative formulations for the draft resolution in a separate telegram.³²¹

1026. Mr Blair and Mr Straw agreed that, in the Security Council meeting on 7 March, the UK would:

- **explore additions to the draft resolution;**
- **express outrage over the lack of Iraqi co-operation;**
- **pose tough questions to Dr Blix; and**
- **demand the publication of the UNMOVIC “clusters” document.**

1027. In a meeting on the morning of 6 March, Mr Blair agreed that Mr Straw should explore additions to the draft resolution, including ultimatum language, exile and the UN role in post-conflict humanitarian assistance, with Secretary Powell and others in New York later that day.³²²

1028. Mr Rycroft recorded that:

- Subject to the views of Chile and Mexico, Mr Straw “should stick to our preference for a period of ten days between the passage of the resolution and the expiry of the ultimatum”.
- Mr Straw should see Dr Blix to “insist that the clusters document is published on 7 March”.
- The UK “should express outrage over the lack of Iraqi co-operation”.
- Mr Straw would “put tough questions” to Dr Blix.
- Mr Straw would warn Mr Annan “of the consequences for the UN if our draft resolution is not passed”.
- Mr Blair would speak to Presidents Lagos and Putin later that day; and to President Chirac after the Security Council debate.

1029. Mr Campbell wrote: “we needed to get out the idea that we wanted the clusters document out there, also the sense that Blix was just inhaling the politics in all this. We agreed we needed to publish a version of the clusters document which would help

³²¹ [Telegram 354 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 6 March 2003, ‘Iraq: 5 March’.](#)

³²² Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 6 March 2003, ‘Iraq’.

turn round the arguments.” Mr Straw was to go to New York “with the message from TB that we needed to turn the clusters document to our advantage”.³²³

CABINET, 6 MARCH 2003

1030. Mr Blair told Cabinet that the argument boiled down to the question of whether Saddam Hussein would ever voluntarily co-operate with the UN to disarm Iraq.

1031. Mr Blair concluded that it was for the Security Council to determine whether Iraq was co-operating fully.

1032. Mr Blair explained to Cabinet on 6 March that Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei would be reporting to the Security Council the following day.³²⁴

1033. Dr Blix was proposing to put forward a document which analysed the outstanding disarmament issues. It was important that the facts should be made public.

1034. The UK was discussing an amendment to the draft resolution – “to encourage support from those members who remained undecided” – with some Security Council members. The support of Mexico and Chile “could be critical to the vote”. It was not clear what Russia and France would do. The “argument boiled down to whether” Saddam Hussein “would ever voluntarily co-operate with the United Nations to disarm Iraq. Members of the Security Council needed to be persuaded on this point.”

1035. Mr Blair also said that he had agreed with President Bush on the need for the UN to be “heavily involved” in “the post-conflict situation, in the event that military action was necessary”. They had also discussed the importance of moving the Middle East Peace Process forward on the basis of a “Road Map”.

1036. The points made in discussion included:

- the amendment of the draft Security Council resolution should incorporate a deadline “since the public attached importance to the inspection work”;
- the “integrity and dignity” of the UN process was being “diminished” by the “political arm-twisting” by some members;
- reconstruction of Iraq would require a UN mandate, not just their involvement; otherwise the right of Coalition forces to engage in reconstruction work would be limited by their status as an occupation force;
- the focus on Iraq’s WMD should be maintained, not “diverted to discovery and destruction of ballistic missiles, albeit the latter could deliver toxic material in their warheads”; and

³²³ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

³²⁴ Cabinet Conclusions, 6 March 2003.

- the British media operating in Baghdad did not adequately acknowledge the restrictions under which they were working.

1037. Summing up the discussion, Mr Blair said it was “the responsibility of the Chief Inspectors to present the truth about Saddam Hussein’s co-operation with the United Nations, so that the Security Council could discharge its responsibilities in making the necessary political decisions”. The UK was “lobbying hard in favour of the draft Security Council resolution”. It was the duty of Saddam Hussein to co-operate fully, “and it was for the Security Council to determine whether that had been the case”.

1038. Mr Cook wrote that Mr Blair had been “surprisingly upbeat about the prospects of getting the six swing votes on the Security Council” and “even expressed a hope that Russia might abstain and France might not veto”. That was “not just surprising, but manifestly unrealistic”.³²⁵

1039. Ms Short wrote that her diary entry for that meeting recorded that she had said she regretted:

“... we couldn’t use our leverage to get publication of the Road Map. Arm twisting members of the Security Council looks bad and diminishes the UN. Can’t we let the Blix process have integrity. Have to have UN mandate for reconstruction, otherwise occupied territory.”³²⁶

1040. Ms Short added that, in a meeting before Cabinet, Mr Blair had said that he might need to go to see President Bush again which was the “only way he can get him [President Bush] to listen”. Ms Short asked Mr Blair to see Mr Annan too.

1041. Mr Campbell described the meeting as “scratchy”. Both Mr Cook and Ms Short had been “a bit bolder in setting out their concerns”. Ms Short had said the “idea of horse trading and bullying was bad for the authority of the UN”. Mr Blair had “hit back quite hard” saying “it was not just the US who were bullying and intimidating”; France was making threats too.³²⁷

1042. After Cabinet on 6 March, Mr Blair chaired a meeting on post-conflict issues with Mr Brown, Mr Hoon, Ms Short, Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean (the joint FCO/Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Minister for Trade and Investment), Sir Michael Jay and “other officials”.³²⁸ That meeting is addressed in Section 6.5.

³²⁵ Cook R. *The Point of Departure*. Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2003.

³²⁶ Short C. *An Honourable Deception: New Labour, Iraq and the Misuse of Power*. The Free Press, 2004.

³²⁷ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

³²⁸ [Letter Cannon to Owen, 7 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Post-Conflict Issues’](#).

USING THE “CLUSTERS” DOCUMENT

1043. Since 3 March, No.10 and the FCO had been discussing how to use the UNMOVIC “clusters” document to the UK’s advantage.

1044. Officials recognised that the document was largely historical and a list of things Iraq should have done; UNMOVIC was not due to present its analysis of “Key Disarmament Tasks” required by resolution 1284 to the Security Council until 27 March. The document was described as a “167 page-long catalogue of Iraqi intransigence”.

1045. At No.10’s request, the FCO analysis of the document was sent to all Cabinet Ministers on 6 March.

1046. Mr Rycroft advised Mr Blair on 4 March:

“Our best guess is that ... we have a reasonable chance of securing ten positive votes ... But we are also faced with an increasingly likely French veto.

“To increase the chances of securing nine or ten votes, we should take on board Chilean/Mexican concerns.”³²⁹

1047. Mr Rycroft identified Chile and Mexico as the least likely of the 10 possible positive votes. He set out options identified by Sir Jeremy Greenstock, of which “the most promising” was “a combination of an ultimatum and benchmarks”.

1048. Setting out a spectrum of options for the language of an ultimatum setting out actions Iraq would need to have taken “by [17 March]”, Mr Rycroft wrote:

“There are mixed signs as to whether the US would accept any of these approaches. But our instinct is to press on hard, and to try to persuade the Chileans/Mexicans themselves to table this amendment, after Blix’s 7 March report.”

1049. Mr Rycroft added:

“In parallel ... but outside the resolution, we should set out what we mean by full compliance by picking out benchmarks based on Blix’s clusters document ... [I]f we end up with ultimatum language at the soft end of the spectrum, we shall need to say what we mean [by the language of the resolution] ...”

1050. Mr Rycroft advised:

“There is no guarantee that these moves would help prevent a French veto. But they should help ensure a Russian abstention and increase France’s isolation. We shall have to decide, at the last minute, whether the costs of a French veto outweigh the advantages of a vote showing majority Security Council support. At present, our view

³²⁹ [Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 4 March 2003, ‘Iraq: A Strategy’.](#)

is that we must test the French veto threat to destruction and put our resolution to the vote ... Certainly we should give no hint to the French of looking at options short of putting our text to a vote.

“It is possible that a find by the inspectors would be what it takes to move [President] Chirac away from a veto. If there were a find (see separate note), it would be well worth your talking to Chirac to see if it will do the trick.”

1051. On the timing for a vote, the “preference, shared by the US,” was to seek a vote “as soon after 7 March as we are confident that we have nine positive votes”. With the planned ultimatum, there would then be “a week or so before the start of military action to work on public opinion, rather than attempting to do this before the vote”.

1052. Mr Rycroft concluded:

“On 7 March, we need to turn Blix’s ‘clusters’ document to our advantage. We need to stress that it is not exhaustive, yet it still offers a damning indictment of Iraq’s failure to co-operate. It comprises sections on 29 different weapons/agents ... for each of which Blix includes outstanding questions for Iraq to answer. (I am sending you the complete list ...) At 167 pages, it shows not only what Iraq would have to do in the future to give full co-operation, but also what Iraq should have done over the last 12 years. This is further compelling evidence, if any were needed, of Iraq’s failure to co-operate fully.”

1053. Responding to a request from Mr Blair for further information on the UNMOVIC “clusters” document; a minute from Mr Nicholas Cannon, Mr Blair’s Assistant Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, described it as “rather historical” and that most of the information was drawn from UNSCOM’s work.³³⁰ The UK had “urged” Dr Blix to “give appropriate weight to post-1998 unresolved issues”. He had “promised to try”, but argued that while it was “possible to establish material balances for the earlier period”, it was “less clear what one could do with the flat Iraqi denial of any activity in the latter period”; and it was “unclear whether all gaps could be resolved”.

1054. Mr Cannon reported that France, Germany and Russia had pressed for the “clusters” document and the UNMOVIC work programme, to be released to the Security Council. The UK thought that they intended:

“... to distil ... a few benchmarks to assess Iraqi compliance. We doubt whether it would be possible to define ‘key tests’ that did not allow Iraq room to fudge compliance or Security Council members room for debate about whether Iraq was meeting the criteria or not. Saddam would be encouraged to continue to dribble out concessions piecemeal rather than offer a step change on co-operation. So far we have argued that without full co-operation from Iraq, specific disarmament tasks are at best irrelevant and at worst allow Saddam off the hook.”

³³⁰ [Minute Cannon to Prime Minister, 4 March 2003, ‘Iraq: “Clusters” Document’.](#)

1055. Addressing two questions, Mr Cannon advised that the document:

- Exposed the “scale and range” of Iraq’s WMD and the “long-term pattern of concealment and deceit”. It flagged up “recent examples of Iraqi deception”. It could be used as “evidence of Iraq’s failure to co-operate” and its UN provenance “gave it more credibility than products of potential belligerents”.
- Could be used after publication as a quarry for benchmarks, but it “tended to focus on hardware rather than interviews” and the “sheer number of outstanding questions” made it possible for the Iraqis reasonably to ask for more time. Boiling down the list might open the way to suggestions that Iraq had partially complied.

1056. Mr Cannon concluded:

“But we can draw on the ‘clusters’ in drawing up our own ‘benchmarks’ ... We need to ensure that on balance it is seen as a list of the things that Iraq should have done, not a list of things for Iraq to do in the future.”

1057. FCO analysis of the draft “clusters” document sent to No.10 on 5 March explained that the document was “intended to form the basis for UNMOVIC’s determination of the ‘Key Disarmament Tasks’”, which the terms of resolution 1284 (1999) stipulated were to be submitted to the Security Council for discussion by 27 March. A revised draft would be submitted to the Council on 7 March.³³¹

1058. The FCO suggested that France, Germany and Russia would “try to use the document to draw up a ‘leisurely’ timetable for those issues to be addressed”. The UK position had been that “without full and active Iraqi co-operation, it is not possible to draw up a comprehensive list of disarmament tasks”; and that: “In any case, the requirements of resolution 1441 take precedence.”

1059. The FCO drew attention to a number of points in the draft document, including:

- Iraq had “admitted refurbishing some equipment previously destroyed by UNSCOM, in particular some chemical facilities”.
- There had been “a modest expansion of biological industries ... UNMOVIC also acknowledge that there have been a number of intelligence reports concerning bio-weapon production facilities.”
- There had “been ‘a surge of activity’ in missile technology over the past four years”.

1060. The FCO commented that the draft document was “not exhaustive” but did reveal “the enormous amount of Iraqi non-co-operation over the years; a 167 page-long catalogue of Iraqi intransigence”.

³³¹ [Fax Owen to Rycroft to, 5 March 2003, attaching Papers prepared by Patrick Davies \(MED\) for Peter Ricketts, ‘Iraq: Key Papers’.](#)

1061. The FCO identified a number of “key points”, including:

- The report was “inevitably not comprehensive”. It was: “Impossible to provide a comprehensive list of disarmament tasks without Iraqi co-operation and given the inspectors were out of Iraq for four years.”
- A “huge number of questions remain unanswered”. More than 100 specific actions had been identified which Iraq “must take”. Those were “not difficult, mostly concerning the need to present documents, evidence and more coherent accounts of Iraq’s work”. Iraq “could have provided this at any time”.
- Iraq could “give no credible account of the surge of activity in the missile technology field over the last four years”.
- Destruction of the Al Samoud 2 missiles had begun by the UNMOVIC set deadline of 1 March and 28 had been destroyed by 5 March: “No end-date has been set for the process.”
- There were “uncertainties about Iraq’s use of mobile ‘factories’”.
- Iraq’s failure to co-operate over private interviews raised “further suspicions that Iraq has something to hide”.
- UNSCOM had a list of 3,500 names of those it might wish to interview.

1062. At No.10’s request, the FCO analysis was sent to all Cabinet Ministers on 6 March.³³²

1063. A further analysis of the “clusters” document by Downing Street officials on 6 March picked out the areas which demonstrated Iraqi non-co-operation. As there was only limited material on ongoing production programmes (other than ballistic missiles), the two key sets of concerns related to leftover questions from UNSCOM on chemical and biological weapons, and evidence of a “systematic pattern of deceit and concealment”.³³³

1064. In his discussions with President Lagos on 6 March, Mr Blair stated that the US would go ahead without the UN if asked to delay military action until April or May.

1065. In his discussion with President Lagos on 6 March, Mr Blair was reported to have stated that:

- Saddam Hussein would not make concessions unless he was under pressure.
- If the US was asked to delay action until April or May, “they would simply go ahead without the UN”; we could not expect President Bush to wait after the end of March.

³³² Letter Owen to Prout, 6 March 2003. ‘Iraq: Report from UNMOVIC Chairman, Hans Blix’.

³³³ [Minute Cannon to Prime Minister, 6 March 2003, ‘Iraq: “Clusters” Document’.](#)

- If “Saddam co-operated, war could even now be averted”, but Mr Blair now “did not think” that Saddam Hussein would co-operate.
- He was “prepared to sign up to a statement that war was avoidable if Saddam co-operated ... if Saddam really co-operated he could have more time to complete disarmament. But the Security Council had to be the judge of co-operation”.
- He “needed to know whether he had Chilean and Mexican support”.³³⁴

1066. Mr Rycroft reported that President Lagos was opposed to a short deadline and had decided to wait to see what happened at the Security Council the following day.

ASSESSMENT OF IRAQ’S INTENTIONS, 6 MARCH 2003

1067. An assessment of Iraq’s intentions on 6 March concluded that the strategy was to play for time, and Iraq thought that strategy was working.

1068. The Assessments Staff was confident that Saddam Hussein’s aim would be the eventual re-creation of his WMD capability.

1069. Mr Miller provided an assessment of ‘Saddam’s possible next moves’ for Sir David Manning on 6 March.³³⁵ The document was also sent to officials in the FCO, the MOD and the Cabinet Office.

1070. Mr Miller described Saddam Hussein’s strategy as “to play for time, gradually releasing limited information on Iraq’s terms or when there is no other option”. Iraq thought its strategy was working. Mr Miller stated: “Even if he [Saddam Hussein] does opt for a declaration of WMD, we are confident that his aim would be the eventual re-creation of his capability.”

1071. Mr Miller advised that the decision to destroy the Al Samoud 2 missiles was “indicative of Saddam’s strategy: a drawn out debate with UNMOVIC over legality; an offer to form a ‘technical committee’ to review the weapon; compliance; and an attempt to portray compliance as a major concession”. Mr Miller predicted that Iraq would “draw out the destruction process”, which might take “as long as two months to complete”.

1072. Other points made by Mr Miller included:

- Iraq was “likely to follow a pattern of a drip feed of information to UNMOVIC”.
- Passing over documents only in Arabic might be a deliberate tactic to delay verification.
- It could take two to three weeks to validate any documentation to back up Iraq’s claims to have destroyed VX.

³³⁴ Letter Cannon to Owen, 6 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with President of Chile, 6 March’.

³³⁵ [Minute Miller to Manning, 6 March 2003, Iraq: Potential Compliance with UNMOVIC’.](#)

- Progress with interviews continued to be “unsatisfactory”, although there had been “some improvement”. Iraq was likely to continue attempts to monitor interviews and to resist interviews outside Iraq.
- Iraq was likely to support proposals – for more time for inspections or an agreed timetable or checklist – put forward by those in the UN reluctant to authorise a resolution permitting war.

1073. Mr Miller concluded:

“In short, we have seen no indication that there will be a change in Iraq’s strategy ... Iraq will continue to put the onus on the inspectors to set out what they want rather than pro-actively provide information ... Saddam will be prepared to offer further concessions – or at least to say he is ready to. But based on current behaviour any information will be incomplete, will be difficult to interpret and will not represent a full declaration of Iraq’s capability. On overseas interviews and any proposal for a substantial UN military force, agreement is likely only in the face of imminent military action.”

MR STRAW’S MEETINGS IN NEW YORK, 6 MARCH 2003

1074. In a meeting with Mr Annan, Mr Straw set out the thinking on revising the second resolution.³³⁶

1075. Mr Straw told Mr Annan that military considerations could not be allowed “to dictate policy”, but the military build-up “could not be maintained for ever”, and:

“... the more he had looked into the Iraq dossier the more convinced he had become of the need for action. Reading the clusters document made his hair stand on end.”

1076. Mr Straw set out the UK thinking on a deadline, stating this was “Iraq’s last chance”, but the objective was disarmament and, if Saddam Hussein did what was demanded, “he could stay”. In those circumstances, a “permanent and toughened inspections regime” would be needed, possibly “picking up some earlier ideas for an all-Iraq NFZ [No-Fly Zone]”.

1077. Other points in the discussion included:

- Mr Kieran Prendergast, UN Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, pointed out that the UK was “reversing the veto: if there were no positive finding, then there would be war”.
- Mr Ricketts stated that “it had to be this way round if there were to be a clear deadline”.

³³⁶ [Telegram 366 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 7 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Meeting with UN Secretary-General, New York, 6 March’.](#)

- It had been decided not to include a provision about exile, but “we were telling our Arab friends that we had got exile language”.
- Mr Prendergast stated that giving Saddam Hussein impunity would cause a “big public problem: how could we ignore the ICC [International Criminal Court]”.
- Mr Straw responded that “if the choice was between war or immunity”, he had the sense that “people would breathe a sigh of relief”.
- If there were to be a conflict, “the UN had a role in humanitarian aid and reconstruction, and only the UN could give legal authority for any post-Saddam government”.
- Mr Annan was reported to be “disturbed” by the American position that everyone had to vote for the resolution “or else the UN would be irrelevant”. The US knew it needed the UN on a range of issues. The UN was “bigger than Iraq”.
- Mr Straw responded that “if we failed the cohesion of the Security Council would be weakened”.

1078. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that Mr Annan had approved.

1079. In a meeting with Dr Blix on 6 March, Mr Straw had “acknowledged” that the draft resolution:

“... missed out a necessary intermediate step. We now proposed to offer Saddam an opportunity to show full compliance accompanied by a slightly longer time frame ...

“... [the Government’s] agenda was disarmament and not regime change. The Prime Minister had told Ivanov that if Saddam gave up his WMD he could stay. President Bush could not say this publicly, but he too would prefer peaceful voluntary disarmament to war. If Dr Blix, as the most important witness in the whole process, reported to the Security Council that Iraq was co-operating then the bunting would go up in London.”³³⁷

1080. Mr Straw had also “stressed that the underlying intelligence picture which was agreed by a number of services from several countries was clear – Saddam was not complying and was misleading the inspectors”.

1081. Dr Blix told Mr Straw that he would report that the Iraqis had made “some progress but they still had a long way to go”. Dr Blix “did not personally doubt that the Iraqis were self sufficient in precursors and had the capability to jump start production of a range of agents. But the inspectors had found little ... although the Iraqis had been ‘hyperactive’ of late in handing over documents and making other gestures, overall they were not co-operating fully.” Dr Blix had agreed with Mr Straw that “while difficult to define we would all soon realise what constituted compliance when the Iraqis started co-operating fully”.

³³⁷ Telegram 373 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 7 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Your Meeting with Blix: 6 March’.

1082. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that Mr Fischer had told Mr Straw that: the problem was the US agenda of regime change and the timelines created by the military build-up.³³⁸ He could not accept a resolution with language setting an ultimatum plus a trigger because it would lead directly to war.

AGREEMENT ON A REVISED DRAFT RESOLUTION

1083. The UK, US and Spain agreed a revised resolution to be tabled in the Security Council on 7 March.

1084. Following a telephone call between Mr Straw and Secretary Powell, Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that the US was “relaxed about the exact language in the second resolution; they will agree to what works for us”.³³⁹

1085. The key elements of the draft are set out in the Box below.³⁴⁰

UK/US/Spanish draft resolution, 7 March 2003

The draft resolution recalled the provisions of previous Security Council resolutions on Iraq and noted that:

- the Council had “repeatedly warned Iraq that it will face serious consequences as a result of its continued violations of its obligations”; and
- Iraq had “submitted a declaration ... containing false statements and omissions and has failed to comply with, and co-operate fully in the implementation of, that resolution”.

The draft stated that the Council:

“Mindful of its primary responsibility under the Charter ... for the maintenance of international peace and stability;

“Recognising the threat Iraq’s non-compliance with Council resolutions and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles poses to international peace and security;

“Determined to secure full compliance with its decisions and to restore international peace and security in the area;

“Acting under Chapter VII ...;

“Reaffirms the need for full implementation of resolution 1441 (2002);

“Calls on Iraq immediately to take the decisions necessary in the interests of its people and the region;

³³⁸ Telegram 377 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 7 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Meeting with German Foreign Minister, 6 March’.

³³⁹ Telegram 360 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 7 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Meeting [sic] with US Secretary of State, New York, 6 March’.

³⁴⁰ Telegram 378 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 7 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Draft Resolution’.

“Decides that Iraq will have failed to take the final opportunity afforded by resolution 1441 (2002) unless, on or before 17 March 2003, the Council concludes that Iraq has demonstrated full, unconditional, immediate and active co-operation in accordance with its disarmament obligations under resolution 1441 (2002) and previous relevant resolutions, and is yielding possession to UNMOVIC and the IAEA of all weapons, weapon delivery and support systems and structures, prohibited by resolution 687 (1991) and all subsequent resolutions, and all information regarding prior destruction of such items;

“Decides to remain seized of the matter.”

7 March 2003

Security Council, 7 March 2003

DR BLIX’S REPORT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL, 7 MARCH 2003

1086. In his report to the Security Council on 7 March, Dr Blix stated that there had been an acceleration of initiatives from Iraq since the end of January, but they could not be said to constitute immediate co-operation. Nor did they necessarily cover all areas of relevance; but they were nevertheless welcome.

1087. As required by resolution 1284 (1999) UNMOVIC was drawing up a work programme of key disarmament tasks for approval by the Security Council which would be ready later that month.

1088. It would take “months” to complete the task.

1089. Introducing UNMOVIC’s 12th quarterly report of activity to 28 February 2003, as required by resolution 1284 (1999), which had already been circulated to the Security Council, Dr Blix stated that, when the report had been finalised, there had still been “relatively little tangible progress to note” and the report had been “cautious”. By 7 March, there had been a number of relevant events on which he would bring the Council up to date.³⁴¹

1090. The key points from Dr Blix’s report are set out in the Box below.

Dr Blix’s report, 7 March 2003

Inspections process

Inspections had begun on 27 November 2002, and “faced relatively few difficulties”. Initial difficulties about helicopters and aerial surveillance had “been overcome”. While there were “frictions”, “at this juncture”, UNMOVIC was “able to perform professional no-notice

³⁴¹ UN Security Council, ‘4714th Meeting Friday 7 March 2003’ (S/PV.4714).

inspections all over Iraq and to increase aerial surveillance” and its capabilities were being increased.

Documents and interviews

Iraq, “with a highly developed administrative system”, should have been “able to provide more documentary evidence”.

It was “a disappointment” that Iraq’s declaration of 7 December 2002 “did not bring new documentary evidence”. Dr Blix hoped that “efforts ... including the appointment of a governmental commission” would “give significant results”:

“When proscribed items are deemed unaccounted for, it is, above all, credible accounts that are needed – or the proscribed items, if they exist.”

Where “authentic documents” did not become available, interviews “may be another way of obtaining evidence”. Iraq’s provision of “many names” had prompted two reflections:

“... with such detailed information existing regarding those who took part in the unilateral destruction, surely there must also remain records regarding quantities and other data concerning the various items destroyed.

“... with relevant witnesses available it becomes even more important to be able to conduct interviews in modes and locations, which will allow us to be confident that the testimony is given without outside influence.”

Iraq seemed “to have encouraged interviewees not to request the presence of Iraq officials ... or the taping of interviews” but “conditions ensuring the absence of undue influence were difficult to attain inside Iraq. Interviews outside Iraq might provide such assurance. It is our intention to request such interviews shortly.”

Thirty-eight individuals had been asked for interviews and 10 had accepted UNMOVIC’s terms, seven during the last week.

Inspections

Iraq had denied the existence of mobile production units for biological weapons and that proscribed activities were being conducted underground. Inspections had taken place at declared and undeclared sites but no evidence of proscribed activities had “so far been found”. Iraq was “expected to assist in the development of credible ways to conduct random checks of ground transportation”.

Inspectors were examining Iraq’s programmes for remotely piloted vehicles and data was being collected to assess the range and other capabilities of the models found.

In relation to “reports of proscribed activity conducted underground”, which Iraq had denied, Dr Blix stated that “no facilities for chemical or biological production or storage have been found so far”. Iraq should provide information on any underground facilities that were suitable for the production or storage of weapons of mass destruction.

Dr Blix stated that UNMOVIC would need some more staff to monitor ground transportation and to inspect underground facilities, but he:

“... would rather have twice the amount of high quality information about sites to inspect than twice the number of expert inspectors to send.”

Recent developments

Dr Blix stressed the importance of Iraq's acceptance of the destruction of Al Samoud 2 missiles and associated items, which constituted a "substantial measure of disarmament ... the first since the middle 1990s".

Other points covered by Dr Blix included:

- UNMOVIC was reviewing the legality of the Al Fatah missile.
- Papers on anthrax, VX and missiles had recently been provided. Many re-stated what Iraq had already declared, but some required further study and discussion.
- There was "a significant Iraqi effort under way to clarify a major source of uncertainty" about the "quantities of biological and chemical weapons" that had been "unilaterally destroyed in 1991", by excavating a site that was formerly "deemed too dangerous". Eight intact bombs had been unearthed, two of which had a "liquid fill". That "should be followed by a serious and credible effort to determine" how many R-400 bombs had been produced.
- Iraq had informed UNMOVIC that there would be further legislation on prohibiting work on weapons of mass destruction.

Dr Blix stated that, in relation to Iraq's recent initiatives:

"One can hardly avoid the impression that, after a period of somewhat reluctant co-operation, there has been an acceleration of initiatives from the Iraqi side since the end of January. This is welcome, but the value of these measures must be soberly judged by how many question marks they actually succeed in straightening out. This is not yet clear."

Dr Blix stated that the question which was being asked was "whether Iraq has co-operated 'immediately, unconditionally and actively' with UNMOVIC, as required" by resolution 1441.

Dr Blix stated: "The answers can be seen from the factual descriptions I have provided." He added that, "if more direct answers are desired":

- Iraq had not "persisted" in attaching conditions on the exercise of the inspectors rights.
- The recent Iraqi initiatives to address long-standing issues could be "seen as active or even proactive". But "three to four months into the new resolution" they could not be said "to constitute 'immediate' co-operation. Nor do they necessarily cover all areas of relevance. They are nevertheless welcome, and UNMOVIC is responding to them in the hope of solving presently unresolved disarmament issues."

Key disarmament tasks

Dr Blix stated that UNMOVIC was working under several resolutions and that resolution 1284 (1999) instructed "UNMOVIC to 'address unresolved disarmament issues' and to identify 'key remaining disarmament tasks' ... to be submitted for approval by the Council in the context of a work programme". UNMOVIC was required to submit only the work programme to the Council, and the draft would be ready "this month as required".

Dr Blix added that, as he understood “several Council members are interested in the working document with the complete clusters of disarmament issues, we have declassified it and are ready to make it available to members of the Council on request”. It provided “a more up-to-date review of the outstanding issues”; and each cluster ended “with a number of points indicating what Iraq could do to solve the issue. Hence, Iraq’s co-operation could be measured against the successful resolution of issues.”

1091. Dr Blix concluded that “co-operation can and is to be immediate”, but “disarmament and ... verification ... cannot be instant”. “Even with a pro-active Iraqi attitude” it would still take “months” to “verify sites and items, analyse documents, interview relevant persons and draw conclusions”.

DR ELBARADEI’S REPORT, 7 MARCH 2003

1092. Dr ElBaradei reported that there were no indications that Iraq had resumed nuclear activities since the inspectors left in December 1998 and the recently increased level of Iraqi co-operation should allow the IAEA to provide the Security Council with an assessment of Iraq’s nuclear capabilities in the near future.

1093. Dr ElBaradei reported that the IAEA was focused on the “central question” of “whether Iraq has revived, or attempted to revive, its defunct nuclear weapons programme over the last four years”.³⁴² Dr ElBaradei noted that:

“... in the past three weeks, possibly as a result of ever-increasing pressure by the international community, Iraq has been forthcoming in its co-operation, particularly with regard to the conduct of private interviews and in making available evidence that could contribute to the resolution of matters of IAEA concern.”

1094. That “should enable” the IAEA “in the very near future to provide the Security Council with an objective and thorough assessment of Iraq’s nuclear-related capabilities”.

1095. The key points made by Dr ElBaradei are set out in the Box below.

Dr ElBaradei’s report, 7 March 2003

Iraq’s industrial capacity had deteriorated sharply, including through the departure of foreign support present in the 1980s and large numbers of skilled Iraqi personnel in the preceding decade.

Interviews were continuing, including two “private interviews in the last 10 days”. Interviews outside Iraq might be the best way to ensure that interviews were “free”, and the IAEA intended to request such interviews “shortly”.

³⁴² UN Security Council, ‘4714th Meeting Friday 7 March 2003’ (S/PV.4714).

The primary technical focus of the IAEA in the field had been on the possible resumption of Iraq's efforts to enrich uranium. In relation to the three key issues, the IAEA had:

- Failed to uncover any evidence that Iraq's attempts to purchase high strength aluminium tubes was for "any project other than ... rockets". The documents provided and interviews had allowed the IAEA "to develop a coherent picture of attempted purchases and intended usage".
- Verified that none of the magnets Iraq had declared could be used directly for the magnetic bearings in centrifuges. It was likely that Iraq possessed the expertise to manufacture such magnets and the IAEA would continue to monitor and inspect equipment and materials.
- Stated that documents relating to the reports of possible acquisition of uranium from Niger were not authentic, but it would continue to follow up any additional evidence.

Dr ElBaradei concluded that there was no indication:

- "of resumed nuclear activities" in buildings identified as new or reconstructed since 1998";
- "of nuclear-related prohibited activities at any inspected sites";
- "that Iraq has attempted to import uranium since 1990";
- "that Iraq has attempted to import aluminium tubes for use in centrifuge enrichment";
- "to date that Iraq imported magnets to use in a centrifuge enrichment programme".

Dr ElBaradei stated that Iraq's procurement efforts, including those in relation to magnets and aluminium tubes, had been conducted "in contravention of the sanctions controls" imposed by the Security Council. The IAEA would continue to scrutinise and investigate those issues and hoped "to continue to receive from States actionable information relevant to our mandate".

SECURITY COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS, 7 MARCH 2003

1096. In the discussion, there was unanimity in calls for Iraq to increase its co-operation.

1097. But there was a clear division between the US, UK, Spain and Bulgaria who spoke in favour of a further resolution, and China, France, Germany and Russia and most other Member States who spoke in favour of continuing to pursue disarmament through strengthened inspections.

1098. The UK, US and Spain circulated a draft resolution deciding that Iraq would have failed to take the final opportunity offered by resolution 1441 (2002) unless the Security Council concluded, on or before 17 March 2003, that Iraq

had demonstrated full, unconditional, immediate and active co-operation in accordance with its disarmament obligations and was yielding possession of all weapons and proscribed material to UNMOVIC and the IAEA.

1099. Mr Fischer stated that the international community was united in its condemnation of the Iraqi regime but had different views about how to achieve that “common goal”.³⁴³ He added that the briefings from Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei made clear that Iraq’s co-operation did “not yet fully meet” the UN’s demands. Iraq “could have taken many of its recent steps earlier and more willingly”, but co-operation had “notably improved”. That was “a positive development” which made it “all the less comprehensible why that development should now be abandoned”.

1100. In line with the French/German/Russian joint memorandum presented to the Security Council on 24 February, Mr Fischer called for a “tough regime of intensive inspections” with “a time frame for every single problem”. Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei should present the Security Council “with a detailed, comprehensive working programme ... without delay”.

1101. Mr Fischer added that the disarmament of Iraq had to be “pursued energetically and systematically” and the Iraqi Government had to co-operate fully with the inspectors. But there was “no need for a second resolution” and the use of force: peaceful means were “very far from having been exhausted”. Progress in recent days showed that there were “efficient alternatives to war”. Taking that path would “strengthen the relevance of the United Nations and the Security Council”.

1102. Mr Farouk al-Sharaa, the Syrian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, reminded the Council of calls by the Non-Aligned Movement, the Arab Summit and others for the inspectors to be given time to complete their work. Syria was “confident” that the United Nations, which represented the “will of the international community”, would opt for peace.

1103. Mr Derbez expressed concern about the “lack of active, immediate and effective co-operation” from the Iraqi regime. But Mexico was “greatly distressed” by the erosion of relationships and common values caused by different visions of how to disarm Iraq and “worried by the distance” between members of the Council. Mr Derbez called on members to “avoid taking up inflexible positions”.

1104. Mr Derbez stated that Mexico:

- called on the Iraqi Government “radically [to] change its attitude” to “carry out immediately clear and unequivocal actions” to demonstrate it had chosen the path of disarmament;
- was “convinced that we have to explore all options and take advantage of all opportunities to resolve this issue in a peaceful manner”;

³⁴³ UN Security Council, ‘4714th Meeting Friday 7 March 2003’ (S/PV.4714).

- insisted “on the importance of working towards a consensus position” on future action with respect to Iraq; and
- urged members of the Security Council “to work with greater creativity” on the issue.

1105. Secretary Powell stated that the Security Council had “one very, very important question” of intent to address: “Has the Iraqi regime made the fundamental strategic and political decision to comply with United Nations Security Council resolutions and to rid itself of all of its weapons of mass destruction and the infrastructure for the development of weapons of mass destruction?” It was not a question of “clusters of unanswered questions” or benchmarks, but of whether Iraq had made the choice actively to co-operate. In his view, the presentations by Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei had been “a catalogue of non-co-operation”. Iraq’s “initiatives” were only small steps, which had been “taken only grudgingly; rarely unconditionally; and primarily under the threat of force”.

1106. Secretary Powell argued that the inspectors should not need more resources to look for prohibited facilities. That showed Iraq was not co-operating. The Council “must not allow Iraq to shift the burden of proof onto the inspectors”. Nor could the Council “return to the failed bargain of resolution 1284 (1999), which offered partial relief for partial disclosure”. Iraq had to be held to the terms of resolution 1441, which required “full and immediate compliance”.

1107. Secretary Powell stated that progress was “often more apparent than real”. Missiles were being destroyed but Iraq had the infrastructure to make more, which had not yet been identified and destroyed.

1108. In the light of events in 1991, when the IAEA had mistakenly been about to determine Iraq did not have a nuclear programme, Secretary Powell urged caution in relation to Dr ElBaradei’s report, citing further information calling into question the conclusion that the aluminium tubes were for unguided rockets.

1109. Secretary Powell welcomed UNMOVIC’s “compilation of outstanding issues” which added up to “a damning record of 12 years of lies, deception and failure to come clean on the part of Iraq”. Iraq had lied to previous inspectors and planted false evidence. The US view was that those activities were “still ongoing”. In 1998, when faced with the threat of military action, Iraq had made promises, but had not delivered. In Secretary Powell’s view, that position had not changed and the UNMOVIC document revealed:

“... a strategic decision to delay, to deceive, to try to throw us off the trail ... to hope that the will of the international community will be fractured ...”

1110. Secretary Powell stated that the Iraqi regime had not taken the decision to disarm. The Security Council “must not walk away”. If it failed to meet its responsibilities, “the credibility of the Council and its ability to deal with all the critical challenges we face will

suffer". It was time for the Council to send a "clear message" to Saddam Hussein about the political will of the Council and its willingness to use force, if necessary, to achieve the disarmament of Iraq.

1111. Secretary Powell concluded that the draft resolution for action by the Council was appropriate, and that it should be put to a vote "in the very near future". He added: "The clock continues to tick and the consequences of Saddam Hussein's continued refusal to disarm will be very, very real."

1112. Mr Ivanov stated that the Council's "united, energetic efforts" and the pressure on Iraq "from all sides, including the build up of a military presence" had produced progress in implementing resolution 1441. There was "a real disarmament process in Iraq for the first time in many years".

1113. Mr Ivanov said that he "agreed in principle" with Dr Blix that if the latest steps taken by Baghdad had been taken earlier, "the results could be more convincing". But they opened the way to resolving outstanding problems. In those circumstances, Mr Ivanov questioned whether it was "now reasonable to halt inspections" and resort to force. Russia was "firmly in favour of continuing and strengthening inspection activities and making them more focused". The UNMOVIC work programme should include a list of key disarmament tasks which should be "formulated with utmost clarity" and be realisable: "That would allow us to evaluate objectively Iraq's level of co-operation and, most importantly, to provide an exhaustive answer to all the remaining open questions regarding banned Iraqi military programmes."

1114. Mr Ivanov concluded with a plea that the differences in the Security Council should not produce a rift, and that:

"Only by acting in solidarity will we effectively face up to new global threats and challenges. We are certain that the Security Council has to emerge united and strong from the Iraq crisis, not weakened and divided. Russia will continue to work towards that goal."

1115. Mr de Villepin stated that the inspectors had revealed that Iraq had been actively co-operating for a month. He asked why, in those circumstances, the Security Council should engage in a war with Iraq and "smash instruments that have just proved their effectiveness". It was "clear to all that in Iraq, we are resolutely moving towards the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction programmes".

1116. Mr de Villepin argued that the Council should proceed "with information, verification, destruction"; and Iraq had to provide "further information in a timely fashion". Iraq was less of a danger than in 1991. Diplomatic action was bearing fruit and the American and British presence in the region lent support to the international community's collective resolve.

1117. Mr de Villepin proposed that the pace of inspections should be stepped up on the basis of:

- a hierarchy of key disarmament tasks drawn from UNMOVIC's work programme;
- a progress report from the inspectors every three weeks to maintain the pressure on the Iraqi authorities; and
- a schedule for assessing implementation: France was willing to shorten the time-frame of 120 days set out in resolution 1284 if the inspectors thought that was feasible.

1118. Mr de Villepin stated that the "military agenda must not dictate the calendar of inspections". France could not "accept an ultimatum as long as the inspectors are reporting progress". He asked whether "by imposing a deadline of a few days", that would be "merely seeking a pretext for war". Some countries might believe that problems could be solved by force, but not France. It believed that the use of force could "give rise to resentment and to hatred, and fuel a clash of identities and civilisations – something that our generation has a prime responsibility to avert".

1119. Mr de Villepin stated:

"To those who believe that war would be the quickest way to disarm Iraq, I can reply that it would create divisions and cause wounds that would be long in the healing ...

"... force is certainly not the best way of bringing about democracy. In this case and in others, it would encourage a dangerous instability.

"... War would only increase it [terrorism], and we could then be faced with a new wave of violence. Let us beware of playing into the hands of those who want a clash of civilisations or a clash of religions."

1120. Mr de Villepin stated that France understood the "profound sense of insecurity with which the American people had been living since the tragedy of 11 September 2001", but there was nothing to indicate a link between the Iraq regime and Al Qaida and the world would not be a safer place after a military intervention in Iraq.

1121. Mr de Villepin argued for priority to be given to addressing the crisis in the Middle East, which represented "our greatest challenge in terms of security and justice".

1122. Mr de Villepin concluded that the Council would face a choice of disarming Iraq through war or peace, and that to make that choice heads of State and Government should meet.

1123. Mr Tang stated that resolution 1441 had been "widely welcomed and supported" because it manifested the determination of the Council to destroy Iraq's WMD and "truly reflected the desire of the international community for a political settlement". There had been "much progress" on inspections. It was "true" that there were "problems and difficulties", but that was "exactly why" it was "necessary to continue the inspections".

1124. China believed that a political settlement could still attain the goal of destroying Iraq's WMD. That would "need resolve and determination and, more importantly, patience and wisdom". China was "not in favour of a new resolution, particularly one authorising the use of force". The power of the Security Council was derived from all UN member states and it had "no reason to remain indifferent" to the calls for "peace not war" from the peoples of many countries. The Chinese Government strongly appealed "to the Council to shoulder its responsibility and to do all it can to avoid war and to maintain its efforts to achieve a political settlement".

1125. Mrs Alvear stated that the reports by Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei allowed Chile "to infer" that Iraq's co-operation was "inadequate" and the signs of progress in specific areas did not detract from that conclusion. Chile reaffirmed the need for the "immediate, full and effective disarmament of Iraq" and reiterated its "urgent appeal to Iraq" to co-operate. Chile supported "a solution in keeping with international law and with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter", which was the only source of legitimacy for the Council's decisions.

1126. Chile appealed to the five Permanent Members of the Council to find a point of convergence and "advocated the continuation of rigorous inspections subject to a time limit". The use of force under Chapter VII of the Charter could be invoked "only when all peaceful means of disarming Iraq have been exhausted". Chile believed a solution was possible through a "strengthening of inspections ... with clear deadlines and concrete demands".

1127. Ms Palacio stated that the Council had "been marking time for 12 years" and that the Council found itself in the "same situation as in 1991". Saddam Hussein's strategy remained to deceive. She questioned how much time was necessary to take the strategic decision to collaborate. Saddam Hussein had managed to divide the international community and to reverse the burden of proof. Only maximum pressure and the credible threat of force could make an impression on the Iraqi regime. Why should the international community believe Saddam Hussein's claims that he had destroyed all his weapons without being able to detect a "genuine will to disarm".

1128. Ms Palacio stated that the Security Council should send clear messages to Iraq about its determination to achieve complete disarmament and that the Council should assume its responsibilities to respond. A strategy of more inspectors or more time was "merely the strategy of impotence". It was possible to envisage results with respect to nuclear material and missiles without Iraq's pro-active collaboration, but that was "not true for chemical or bacteriological weapons". Spain wanted a peace that was "safe and that ensures that those weapons will not be used by Iraq and that they will not fall into the hands of terrorist groups".

1129. In his speech to the Security Council, Mr Straw stated that everyone agreed Iraq must be fully disarmed and that "Iraq's failure to co-operate immediately, unconditionally

and actively with the inspectors” had to be “dealt with”.³⁴⁴ The first question for the Council was, “has Iraq taken this final opportunity”? His answer was that, as no-one had said Iraq was “now fully, actively and immediately in compliance”, it had “not so far taken this final opportunity”.

1130. Dr Blix’s “clusters” document to the Council was a “chilling” account of Iraq’s non-compliance over 12 years and there had “not been active co-operation in the areas which matter”. The examples cited by Mr Straw included:

- Iraq had “dragged its feet on as many elements of procedural and substantive co-operation as possible”.
- Iraq was still refusing to pass a law prohibiting State authorities from engaging on work relating to weapons of mass destruction.
- Iraq had “done everything possible to prevent unrestricted, unrecorded interviews”. Of the 3,500 people on UNSCOM’s lists, “just twelve private interviews had been allowed”, and “all of those ... were threatened and intimidated beforehand”. He understood that “the scientists most likely to have the most incriminating evidence have been locked away”. There had been no interviews outside Iraq. Mr Straw stated: “The restrictions placed on [these] interviews is itself the most incriminating evidence that Saddam has something to hide.”
- Under-reporting of the import of Al Samoud 2 missile engines and the missile’s range were examples of Iraq’s “calculation that it can satisfy the Council with a partial response”.

1131. Addressing the memorandum produced by France, Germany and Russia, Mr Straw stated that “it defies experience to believe that continuing inspections with no firm end date” would achieve complete disarmament “if Iraq’s full and active co-operation” was not “immediately forthcoming”. The memorandum was “not even a formula for containment, given Iraq’s proven ability to develop weapons of mass destruction”.

1132. Mr Straw welcomed the progress the inspectors had reported. His “earnest wish”, and that of the UK Government, was to achieve Iraq’s disarmament, “if possible by peaceful means”. But it was necessary to recognise that “the progress that has been reported represents only the tip of a very large iceberg of huge unfinished business required of Iraq”. He also welcomed the diplomatic pressure on Iraq but suggested it was the presence of US and UK troops in the region which had influenced the recent increase in Iraq’s co-operation.

1133. Addressing Mr de Villepin’s statement that “the choice before us was disarmament by peace or disarmament by war”, Mr Straw pointed out that that was

³⁴⁴ UN Security Council, ‘4714th Meeting Friday 7 March 2003’ (S/PV.4714).

“a false choice”. The paradox was that diplomacy had to be backed by a credible threat of force to achieve Iraq’s disarmament by peaceful means. He wished:

“... we lived in a different world where this was not necessary, but ... the choice is not ours as to how this disarmament takes place – the choice is Saddam Hussein’s ... he can act with astonishing speed when he chooses to ... It may take time to fabricate falsehoods but the truth takes only seconds to tell.”

1134. In response to Mr de Villepin’s concerns about automaticity, Mr Straw added that the threat of force or its use had:

“... always been conditional. It would be utterly irresponsible and in defiance of our solemn duties to the Council for us to walk into a situation where force was used automatically ...”

1135. In conclusion, Mr Straw stated that the UK remained “committed to exploring every reasonable option for a peaceful outcome and every prospect of a Council consensus”. He asked, on behalf of the UK, US and Spain as co-sponsors, for a revised draft of the second resolution to be circulated.

1136. In his memoir, Mr Straw wrote that he had deliberately picked up Mr de Villepin’s words and “There was not a word in my speech about the intelligence. It was the indisputable facts of Saddam’s behaviour that convinced me we had to act.”³⁴⁵

1137. Mr Georges Chikoti, the Angolan Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, stated that the reports from Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei showed that Iraq’s co-operation was “relatively insufficient” and called on Iraq to take a more energetic and pro-active role.³⁴⁶ He suggested that the progress made was associated with specific benchmarks and dates. That might be a model for strengthening the scope and intrusiveness of inspections.

1138. Mr Chikoti noted that international community, regional and sub-regional organisations and international public opinion had been calling for the peaceful disarmament. Those were “valid and legitimate concerns” but they could not be “interpreted or transformed into an unwillingness to act”. The responsibilities of the Council included “exhausting all diplomatic and peaceful means to achieve such disarmament”.

1139. Mr Belinga-Eboutou stated that Cameroon was pleased to note the momentum of inspections was “well established”. UNMOVIC’s report from the inspectors showed real progress but also made clear that the results had “been very limited so far”. Cameroon did not believe that Iraq had “yet taken the final opportunity afforded by ... resolution 1441”. It was in favour of inspections but they should not go on “indefinitely”. The Council should “together seek, in good faith, a credible alternative to war and to endless inspections”.

³⁴⁵ Straw J. *Last Man Standing: Memoirs of a Political Survivor*. Macmillan, 2012.

³⁴⁶ UN Security Council, ‘4714th Meeting Friday 7 March 2003’ (S/PV.4714).

1140. Mr Belinga-Eboutou identified the “major and central problem” was to “induce the Iraqi authorities to co-operate actively, fully and unconditionally”. The “gravity of the situation and the need for effectiveness” required the Council to “harmonise viewpoints through mutual concessions” to find a solution based on consensus. Council members should build a common position to make it clear to Iraq that if it wanted peaceful disarmament it had “no alternative but to abide by the decisions of the international community”.

1141. Mr Tafrov stated that Dr Blix’s report was nuanced. Results to date had been “modest”. Co-operation was “insufficient” and Bulgaria’s view was that Iraq was still in material breach of resolution 1441.

1142. Mr Tafrov thought that the tripartite memorandum and the draft resolution submitted by Spain, the US and the UK were “not incompatible”. Bulgaria agreed with France, Germany and Russia that the pressure on Iraq must be increased and the draft resolution was an effective means to do so. Its adoption would be “a logical continuation of the efforts of the Security Council to make Iraq understand that patience has its limits”. Bulgaria called for unity of the Council to preserve the credibility of the United Nations and a means to achieve Iraq’s disarmament, and for an additional effort for peaceful disarmament.

1143. Mr Akram stated that, if war was to be avoided, the Council must impress on Iraq that it must comply “fully and faithfully”. It was “unfortunate” that “divergent approaches” had emerged within the Council. Pakistan believed that “an agreed approach can and must be evolved”. He stated: “Once we establish the ways to credibly achieve the disarmament of Iraq ... we can also agree on a relatively short time frame.” That proposition “would be better than propositions that could result in the early use of force”. Pakistan did not believe there was an “imminent threat to international peace and security” and the “cost of delay” would be “much less than the cost of war”. War would “have grave consequences for the Iraqi people, for peace and stability in our fragile region, for international security and for a world order based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and the rule of law”.

1144. Mr François Louceny Fall, the President of the Council and the Guinean Foreign Minister, stated that Guinea “remained convinced” that “while the opportunity for a peaceful solution still exists”, it could “be seized only if the Iraqi authorities co-operate sincerely”. Guinea was “in favour of continued inspections” but believed they could not “go on indefinitely”. A more unified approach from the Council was the “only course” that could give the Council’s actions “the necessary authority and legitimacy”.

1145. Mr Aldouri underlined Iraq’s “pledge to continue pro-active co-operation” with UNMOVIC and the IAEA. He drew attention to the position of France, Germany, Russia and China who had demanded that the work of the inspectors should continue and that they should “be given enough time to complete their tasks by peaceful means”.

1146. Responding to Secretary Powell’s statement that there was a lack of a strategic political decision by Iraq to demonstrate its commitment to comply with the UN resolutions, Mr Aldouri stated that Iraq had taken “the strategic decision to rid itself of weapons of mass destruction” in 1991. He added that:

“All weapons that have been proscribed fall into one of two categories: they have been either declared or unilaterally destroyed by Iraq. All the declarations that Iraq has been repeatedly asked to present concerned the details and verification of that unilateral destruction and nothing ... else. It is for the accusers to prove otherwise, if they possess any evidence.”

1147. Mr Aldouri stated that Iraq had no VX programme.

1148. Mr Aldouri stated that the issues of concern identified by the US and UK were “an attempt to confuse the issue” and mask their real agenda to take over Iraq’s oil and the political and economic domination of the region. Iraq continued to hope for justice from the Security Council and called on the Council to thwart aggression and prevent “a crime whose impact would far surpass that of any crime of the past century”. He concluded:

“... war against Iraq will wreak destruction, but it will not unearth any weapons of mass destruction, for one very simple reason: there are no such weapons, except in the imagination of some ...”

1149. **Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that questions had been raised about what would demonstrate that Iraq had taken the strategic decision to disarm. There was no visible indication of additional votes.**

1150. **A “side statement” including benchmarks could be needed to bring Chile and Mexico on board.**

1151. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that, during the lunch for Foreign Ministers hosted by Mr Annan:

- Mr Annan had appealed for Council unity and for UN responsibility post-conflict on humanitarian relief and administrative matters.
- Mr Straw had “defended the ultimatum idea and focused it on Iraqi co-operation, which needed no time at all to signal convincingly”.
- Secretary Powell had said the “US would not have come to the UN unless it believed in collective action” and that the US “would want the UN in Iraq as soon as circumstances allowed”.
- Dr Blix had said that the “months he needed were for verification with a compliant Iraq ... if Saddam could turn out 13,000 pages in a month, he could manage one and a half pages of a convincing commitment to compliance in a very short time”.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷ Telegram 389 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 8 March 2003, ‘Iraq: 7 March Open Debate and Lunch’.

1152. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that “no votes were visibly harvested”. The “body language” of African members “much improved” over the two days Mr Straw had been in New York; but:

“We have not yet avoided the benchmarks problem ... what would demonstrate that Iraq had taken the strategic decision to disarm... We could well need a side statement to bring the Latins on board.”

1153. The Council was followed by “a long session of informal consultations”.³⁴⁸

1154. Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that discussion had centred on three questions raised by Mr Zinser:

- “What did the Security Council have to do to avoid the use of force?”
- “What did Saddam Hussein have to do?”
- “How long did the Council have to address these issues?”

1155. The points made by Sir Jeremy included:

- The core issue was making “best use of the limited time left”.
- The Security Council “could not, in the light of existing resolutions ... set itself the aim of ‘avoiding war’ ... The real question was how the Council could ensure full implementation of the relevant resolutions (ie complete disarmament without resort to force.”
- The Council “should unite in exerting the heaviest pressure on Iraq so that Saddam Hussein embarked on the road to peace before the road to war was authorised”.
- “Indefinite delay was an abdication of the Council’s responsibilities. Time would be needed to reach ‘full and verified disarmament’; but the alternative was not an open-ended invitation to conduct investigations”.
- Saddam Hussein “had to convince the co-sponsors and the Council that he and his regime had indeed changed their attitude and taken a strategic decision to disarm voluntarily”.
- There was “no real evidence of non-compliance on the nuclear weapons file”.
- The “key question” was whether Iraq had WMD: “The UK was sure they did. But the WMD could not be located because Iraq had hidden them, and they would not be found without unconditional and immediate Iraqi co-operation.”
- The US and UK “had invested time and money in finding out the truth. So we knew that WMD were being moved every 12 hours; that mobile weapons facilities existed; and that documents and materials were being moved around.”

³⁴⁸ [Telegram 388 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 8 March 2003, ‘Iraq: 7 March 2003: Informal Consultations’.](#)

- The Council “had not made the best use of its time since adoption of [resolution] 1441. In an understandable wish to avoid war, colleagues had perhaps not really believed the UK/US warnings: but we had taken a decision to put our need for long term security over our wish to avoid war.”

1156. Sir Jeremy reported that he had asked Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei a series of questions:

- “How could they be sure the interviewees were not being bugged or threatened?”
- “What real chance was there of UNMOVIC resolving the mobile biological facilities issues without Iraqi co-operation?”
- “Was there any evidence of Iraqi procurement and sites associated with this programme?”
- What was UNMOVIC’s “assessment of Iraq’s declaration in relation to UAVs”?

1157. Ambassador Cunningham stated that the French and German proposals assumed Iraqi co-operation, but “it was hard, reading the UNMOVIC cluster document, to conclude that verifiable disarmament could happen in the near future or was ever feasible”. Iraq was “behaving now as it had always done”. Subsequently, he stated that if the Council “spent the next 10 days dreaming about benchmarks it would miss its final opportunity to secure a peaceful outcome”. The Council “could assist by bringing maximum pressure to bear”; but since 20 January, “Baghdad had felt under no pressure”.

1158. Mr de La Sablière was reported to be “troubled that the Council’s timetable was being fixed by the US military agenda, and by having to discuss the choice between war and peace when inspections still offered a real chance of peaceful disarmament”. The “clusters” document gave the Council an objective basis to address the state of Iraqi disarmament and: “Only a few questions were left to be addressed: Iraq was ‘largely disarmed’ ...” The inspectors “should list the priority issues to be addressed and the key remaining disarmament tasks”.

1159. Sir Jeremy reported that:

- Spain questioned Mr de La Sablière’s comments and whether the Council was “really being asked to believe that Saddam Hussein had complied fully with resolution 1441”.
- Russia said it was clear that, to avoid war the Council had to continue inspections. It also asked whether any of the intelligence received had helped the inspectors to find anything.
- China said the inspections were working and producing results; they should continue. The draft resolution would “strangle the 1441 system in its infancy”.

- Germany stated that it made no sense to break off inspections, especially when the process was delivering results. The only way forward was for UNMOVIC and the IAEA to produce objective criteria.
- Cameroon stated that the threat of force had been a key element in the progress so far and military forces could not be left in place indefinitely, but 17 March might be too soon.
- Bulgaria had been ready to support the previous draft and “was studying the latest proposal positively”.
- Syria said there had to be a peaceful resolution of the issue and the inspectors should produce a specific work programme.
- Chile agreed that the Council should work for a consensus; the inspection process must be allowed to mature; and Iraq must comply immediately. But he questioned how Saddam Hussein was to be judged. The real question was “whether the threat posed by Iraq was such that there had to be an end now to inspections”.
- The US responded to Chile that the Council should judge Iraq on the basis of its experience. Iraqi co-operation over the years was grudging at best.
- For the UK, Sir Jeremy Greenstock said that, if Saddam Hussein admitted he had lied about Iraq’s WMD over the years, “that would go a long way to convincing us that he had had a real change of heart. If he came forward with the truth; that would be respected. If he lied, he would be dealt with.”

1160. In response to the points raised, Dr Blix stated that UNMOVIC worked under resolutions 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002). The former asked for “a work programme and key disarmament tasks”. UNMOVIC “did not yet know which of the many issues ... were the key remaining tasks”; it “aimed to submit a list to the Council in the week beginning 19 [sic] March”. The Council had asked UNMOVIC to “complete” the “remaining” disarmament tasks. Resolution 1441:

“... imposed a greater sense of urgency on the inspection and disarmament process, but he did not think the Council’s resolutions necessarily led to the conclusion that UNMOVIC’s activities should cease as soon as next week. The resolutions did not demand ‘immediate disarmament’ but ‘immediate co-operation’ ...”

1161. Dr Blix was also reported to have stated:

- Iraqi co-operation “sometimes seemed grudging”, but “only if UNMOVIC found that Iraq was concealing things could one say that there was a real lack of co-operation”.
- With the Al Samoud missiles and UAVs, Iraq was “trying to push to the boundaries of what was permissible”. On the former, Iraq had arguably “trespassed over the border”; the resolution did not prohibit UAVs, but they were “on the border of what was allowed”. UNMOVIC was “still investigating”.

- Iraq “seemed to be trying to find ways of assisting UNMOVIC” on mobile BW facilities.
- Walls “might contain eavesdropping devices, but even taking witnesses to Cyprus might not necessarily guarantee truthful evidence”.
- UNMOVIC “could be expected to deal with the key remaining disarmament tasks in a matter of months”. The timetable proposed in the draft resolution “could not conceivably allow completion”.
- Iraq was “frantic” but “selective” in its co-operation.
- A “strategic decision” by Iraq to co-operate would be easily recognised.
- “Various intelligence agencies were sure Iraq had retained ‘a jumpstart’ capacity, but UNMOVIC had seen no hard evidence.”
- Not all the evidence the inspectors had been given “was convincing, and some of it was not even trustworthy”.

1162. Dr ElBaradei stated that the IAEA had nearly reached a satisfactory outcome and two to three more months would lead to a conclusion. The test applied to Iraq had to be “an objective results oriented one”.

1163. Sir Jeremy reported that initial reactions to the revised draft resolution had focused on “the short time offered to Iraq to comply and on the ultimatum”.

1164. Following a meeting between Mr Straw and Mr Tang, Sir Jeremy Greenstock reported that China did not want a second resolution “now”; was concerned about the economic, political and humanitarian consequences of a conflict; and the consequences for the UN of a public split amongst the P5.³⁴⁹

1165. Dr Blix recorded that the US and UK had made pre-emptive use of the “clusters” document before it was formally circulated after the Security Council meeting on 7 March.

1166. Dr Blix wrote that although the members of the Security Council knew of the existence of the draft, they were not aware of its contents before finalised copies of the text were presented on 7 March.³⁵⁰ The German and Russian Foreign Ministers had been:

“... keen that it should become public to show that precise requirements could be placed on Iraq, rather than nebulous demands for a ‘strategic decision’ or a ‘change of heart’ ... neither the US nor the UK was opposed to a declassification of what was still an internal document. As it turned out, both the US and the UK Foreign Ministers

³⁴⁹ Telegram 379 UKMIS New York to FCO London, 7 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister, 7 March’.

³⁵⁰ Blix H. *The Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction: Disarming Iraq*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2005.

got copies of the not yet declassified draft, presumably through the American and British members of our College [of Commissioners].

“The German and French foreign ministers, who had been eager to make use of the document but did not have such a channel of quick provision ... could not make use of it to show what concrete benchmarks might look like. Their US and UK colleagues, by contrast, were therefore able to make extensive and preemptive use of the draft to show how unreliable Iraqi declarations and conduct had been in the past.”

1167. Dr Blix added that Mr John Wolf, the US Commissioner, had been critical of the relevance of the draft “clusters” document, which provided “only a readable historical account testifying to Iraq’s deception” and had only a few pages on what had happened after 1998. The US was interested in whether Iraq had taken “a strategic decision”, and that “was all that mattered”. The US “did not afford the smallest window to the benchmark approach that Washington saw London working on”. The US “disdain” had “shocked and surprised the other members of the College”.

Mr Blair’s conversation with President Putin, 7 March 2003

1168. President Putin told Mr Blair on 7 March that Russia would oppose military action.

1169. Following the discussions with Mr Ivanov on 4 and 5 March and the observation in Mr Brenton’s telegram of 6 March, that the Americans were sanguine about avoiding a Russian veto, Sir Roderic Lyne wrote to Mr Ricketts on 6 March with advice, including for Mr Blair’s planned telephone conversation with President Putin.³⁵¹ The letter was copied to Sir David Manning.

1170. Sir Roderic wrote that he was “less sanguine” about avoiding a Russian veto unless the French position changed. Mr Ivanov’s aim was to help deny nine positive votes for the resolution and thereby avoid the need to take a definitive decision. He would have reported to President Putin that the UK was not totally confident of success and was looking at concessions over language.

1171. Sir Roderic suggested that when Mr Blair spoke to President Putin, he should repeat and reinforce the message that he had given to Mr Ivanov, and argue that the issue was about two fundamental questions of principle:

- The need to deal with the problem of proliferation. That was: “big ... and ... getting worse ... The international community had let this drift ... We have to work together on this. We can’t go around attacking everyone; but if Iraq gets away with it, it’s open house for everyone ... we’ve got to send the message

³⁵¹ [Letter Lyne to Ricketts, 6 March 2003, ‘Iraq/Russia: Ivanov’s Visit, the End Game, and the Prime Minister’s Call to Putin this Evening’.](#)

that the Iraqi threat is over. Dealing with it ... will help us stabilise the Middle East (it's what moderate Arabs privately want). And, with this behind us, we can get together to bring the full range of diplomatic pressures to bear on those who proliferate or support terrorism."

- A multilateral approach to the problem was "hanging in the balance". Mr Blair had "persuaded" President Bush to go through the UN because he wanted to "preserve the Security Council" and wanted "the UN – and all of us, Russia included – to have a say in what happens thereafter in and around Iraq". That was "as much in Russia's interest as the UK's".

1172. The conversation with President Putin lasted over an hour. Mr Blair emphasised the importance of working with Russia as a partner and the need to stand firm in dealing with the threat of terrorism and WMD.³⁵² The record stated that Mr Blair had told President Putin that resolution 1441 had given Saddam Hussein a final opportunity:

"He had made some concessions with troops on his doorstep, but he was not co-operating fully and had no intention of disarming. We must carry out what we had said we would do to uphold UN authority and avoid unilateral action. So we would put the second resolution to a vote, with terms to be discussed. We would have nine or ten votes."

1173. During the conversation – and in response to a suggestion that Iraq was currently co-operating, presented no threat to its close neighbours or to the US or UK, had nothing to do with fundamentalist terrorists, and that inspections should continue on the basis of the disarmament tasks based on resolution 1284 (1999) – Mr Blair argued that the time required was that needed to make a judgement about whether there was full Iraqi co-operation; and that Dr Blix's "clusters" document would set out the outstanding items. In his view:

"In the absence of full co-operation, Iraq was in breach ... we must explore every possibility to resolve the issue peacefully, including through forcing Saddam into exile. Saddam would only do so if he thought the alternative was force."

1174. Mr Rycroft recorded that President Putin thought military action would be a mistake which Russia would oppose. He commented that President Putin had been:

"... unyielding, but at pains to spell out his reasoning in great detail ... On the face of it, a clear intention to veto. But there may have been just a hint that if negotiations begin in New York, and engage Moscow, that he will at least be ready to listen."

³⁵² Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 7 March 2003, 'Iraq: Prime Minister's Conversation with President Putin, 7 March'.

Lord Goldsmith's advice, 7 March 2003

1175. Lord Goldsmith wrote to Mr Blair on 7 March, recording that he had been asked for advice on the legality of military action against Iraq without another resolution of the Security Council.³⁵³

1176. That is addressed in Section 5.

Mr Blair's conversation with President Bush, 7 March 2003

1177. When Mr Blair spoke to President Bush at 1800 on 7 March, he emphasised the importance of securing nine positive votes in the Security Council for Parliamentary approval for UK military action.

1178. Mr Blair argued that while the 17 March deadline in the draft resolution was not sufficient for Iraq to disarm fully, it was sufficient to make a judgement on whether Saddam Hussein had had a change of heart. If Iraq started to co-operate, the inspectors could have as much time as they liked.

1179. Sir David Manning discussed the response to French and Russian tactics to try to prevent a vote on the draft resolution with Dr Rice on 7 March.³⁵⁴ Sir David told Dr Rice that the UK “had to have” a vote: that it “had to have one that was understood to be an ultimatum”; and that it “had to have nine votes”. The UK “could probably manage the political fall-out if there were a veto, or perhaps even two vetoes”, but the UK “could not take part in military campaign if they did not reach the nine vote threshold. We would not be able to get the necessary Parliamentary support.”

1180. Sir David Manning subsequently told Dr Rice that President Putin was opposed to the resolution and would reject it. There was also a further discussion of the political position in the UK: Sir David “repeated at length” the point he had made that morning and said that “we had to do whatever it took to secure nine votes”. That “might mean adjusting the wording of the second resolution; it might mean time; or it might mean some sort of benchmarking”.

1181. Sir David reported that Dr Rice had assured him that President Bush was determined to deliver nine votes. Sir David also commented: “But although the Administration is clearly pulling out all the stops, there is still no sign of willingness to accept that this may mean extending the time lines.”

1182. Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries:

“Condi [Rice] had told David [Manning] overnight that Putin had been clear with Bush that they would veto a second resolution. Also we still didn't have a clue as to whether Chile and Mexico would come over. The mood was gloomier than ever.

³⁵³ Minute Goldsmith to Prime Minister, 7 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Resolution 1441’.

³⁵⁴ Letter Manning to McDonald, 7 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Conversations with Condi Rice’.

TB was keen to get up the clusters document and also move towards the sense of an ultimatum. He and David were both now expressing their irritation at the US. David was even of the view that we should be pushing the US to a version of the Franco-German idea of inspections with force, a blue beret [UN] force involved on disarmament.”³⁵⁵

1183. When Mr Blair spoke to President Bush, they discussed progress and further lobbying.³⁵⁶

1184. Mr Blair emphasised again the importance of securing nine positive votes for Parliamentary approval for military action.

1185. Mr Blair stated:

“... there remained a confusion in many minds ... about time. If Saddam had decided to co-operate fully, the inspectors could have as much time as they wanted. But he had not – no-one believed he was co-operating unconditionally and fully. Ten days was of course not enough for him to disarm fully, but it was enough to make a judgement on whether there was a change of heart. In 1441 we had all agreed to full, immediate and unconditional co-operation, not concessions dribbled out under the threat of force.”

1186. Mr Campbell wrote that Mr Blair had:

“... wanted to give him [President Bush] a clear message about the political realities, namely that we couldn’t do this without a Commons vote and it was not going to be easy without a second resolution, or with a resolution that was vetoed. The Russian veto was a new element ... Putin’s position had clearly hardened. During their call Putin was very clear that he felt taken for granted by the Americans ...”³⁵⁷

1187. Mr Campbell also wrote that President Bush:

- was agreeing to a slightly later deadline, 17 March;
- had told Mr Blair that he would “certainly go for a vote on the second resolution”, although he was “still making clear he didn’t feel he needed a UNSCR”;
- “was at least conscious of the difficulties they gave us”; and
- had said to Mr Blair, “don’t worry, I’ll be more subtle than you fear ...”

1188. Mr Blair had a meeting with Mr Powell, Baroness Morgan, Mr Campbell and Mr Pat McFadden, Mr Blair’s Deputy Chief of Staff, to discuss the “what-ifs”, including

³⁵⁵ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

³⁵⁶ Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 7 March 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Conversation with Bush, 7 March’.

³⁵⁷ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq*. Hutchinson, 2012.

if he lost the vote in the House of Commons.³⁵⁸ Mr Campbell wrote that Mr Blair “still felt we were doing the right thing. He said even though we were all rightly irritated by the Americans, it was the French we should be really angry with.”

1189. Mr Campbell added:

“We were all outraged at the Blix report. TB said it was political and dishonest ... Scarlett said he was wrong in saying the Iraqis were trying to co-operate more ... TB was very philosophic about it all. As I sat listening to him on the phone, I lost count of how many times he said: 1. we are right on the issue; 2. we have to see it through; 3, I’m philosophical about what it means for me and whether I survive or not. TB was keen to push the idea that the only reason the concessions were coming was because of the pressure we were applying. But there were very real divisions and dangers and the UN was on dangerous terrain. There was a very clear picture, clearer than ever, of the US in one place, us in another, the French in another, the Russians in another, and the UN as an organisation really worried about where it was heading.”

1190. Mr Campbell wrote that on 8 March: “Blix didn’t come out as badly as it might have done. In a sense he was almost irrelevant now.”³⁵⁹ He had agreed with Mr Blair “the lines to push for the Sundays [Sunday newspapers] – namely there are two routes by which he can avoid conflict: 1. he disarms, or 2. he goes.” The key was winning the necessary votes at the UN. Mr Blair “was clear we just had to keep our nerve and keep striving to get their votes”.

1191. Mr Cook wrote that Dr Blix’s report was “carefully balanced” and “painfully honest”, which was not what the US and UK needed: “No.10 desperately wanted Blix to lay into Saddam and to report no progress, in order that they could mobilise the Security Council for war.”³⁶⁰

1192. In his evidence to the Inquiry, Mr Blair drew attention to the passage in Dr Blix’s report which stated:

“It is obvious that while the numerous initiatives which are now taken by the Iraqi side with a view to resolving some longstanding, open disarmament issues can be seen as active or even proactive. These initiatives three or four months into the new resolution, cannot be said to constitute immediate co-operation. Nor do they necessarily cover all areas of relevance. They are nonetheless welcome.”³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq.* Hutchinson, 2012.

³⁵⁹ Campbell A & Hagerty B. *The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq.* Hutchinson, 2012.

³⁶⁰ Cook R. *The Point of Departure.* Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2003.

³⁶¹ Public hearing, 29 January 2010, page 114.

1193. In his memoir, Mr Blair subsequently wrote:

“Having stated that it [co-operation] was increasing, which as he [Dr Blix] put it in somewhat of an understatement, ‘may well be due to outside pressure’, he then addressed the matter of interviews and documents:

‘It is obvious that, while the numerous initiatives, which are now taken by the Iraqi side with a view to resolving some long-standing open disarmament issues, can be seen as ‘active’ or even ‘pro-active’, these initiatives some 3-4 months into the new resolution cannot be said to constitute ‘immediate co-operation.’

“Most of all, on the crucial matter of interviews, Blix was never going to get co-operation. That only came after March 2003 with the ISG [Iraq Survey Group, see Section 4.4] ...”³⁶²

1194. The development of UK strategy and options from 8 March is addressed in Section 3.8.

³⁶² Blair T. *A Journey*. Hutchinson, 2010.