

Colin Powell told the UN Security Council, among other things, that Iraq possessed between 100 and 500 tonnes of chemical weapons agent. 'Every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we're giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence,' said the Secretary of State. (*Times*, 25 Apr., p. 17) We shall see.

UNINTELLIGENT 'INTELLIGENCE'

Secret US/UK intelligence about Iraq's weapons could not be revealed, it was said, because of the risk to the lives of US/UK informants in Iraq. Why, then, was this "evidence" not revealed once the regime had fallen? Because it is perilously weak.

A 'high-level UK source' says that intelligence agencies on both sides of the Atlantic were furious that briefings they gave political leaders were distorted in the rush to war with Iraq. A British intelligence source said, 'What we have is a few strands of highly circumstantial evidence, and to justify an attack on Iraq it is being presented as a cast-iron case.' (*Independent on Sunday*, 27 Apr., p. 1)

The dossier on Iraq's "concealment mechanisms" was exposed by Glen Rangwala as inept plagiarism. (<<http://middleeastreference.org/uk/>>

The one claim that could be checked from the first weapons dossier fell apart: 'American officials have revealed how the "secret documents" on Saddam Hussein's attempted purchase of uranium were passed to the United States by MI6 and then submitted to the UN even though they contained "laughable and childlike errors". The documents, which were endorsed by Blair, the White House and Colin Powell, the US secretary of state, bore the wrong names of ministers, were stamped with incorrect dates and even carried the imprint of a junta deposed a decade earlier. "These are not the kind of forgeries that you would expect to fool a professional intelligence agency," said one US official.' (*Sunday Times*, 16 Mar., p. 2) This is the 'solid evidence' that was 'established beyond doubt'.

THE UNNECESSARY WAR

Tony Blair told us, 'our choice is clear: back down and leave Saddam hugely strengthened; or proceed to disarm him by force.' (speech, 20 Mar.) As France pointed out at the time, and as Hoon now begins to admit, allowing the inspectors to do their work in peace did not 'strengthen Saddam', they contained; and they would have disarmed, any weapons of mass destruction Iraq possessed. The war was unnecessary, unjustified, illegal, counter-productive and deeply **immoral**.

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ARROW BOOK *War Plan Iraq: Ten Reasons Against War On Iraq* by Milan Rai (Verso, 2002)

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UNNECESSARY THE AVOIDABLE WAR

**ARROW Anti-War Briefing 43 (28 April 2003)
WAR PLAN IRAQ Update Number 2 I**

WHERE ARE THE WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION?

Without weapons of mass destruction to present to the world, the US and UK are missing their central justification for the loss of life and destruction caused by the war. Reasons are being developed to explain the absence of the weapons.

US Gen. Tommy R. Franks, commander of US/UK forces in Iraq, says the search for the suspected weapons is 'probably going to carry us through several thousand sites'—which could take months. 'The administration is tripling the number of scientists and engineers assigned to the operation, to about 1,500'. (*New York Times*, 28 April 2003)

President Bush says, 'It's going to take time to find them. But we know he had them. And whether he destroyed them, moved them or hid them, we're going to find out the truth.' 'It was the first hint by Bush that US troops and others hunting for weapons might fail to find chemical and biological arms.' (*Washington Post*, 25 Apr., p. A10)

HOON'S BUFFOONERY

The Foreign Editor of *The Times* remarked that 'The most ambitious [accounts] so far were put forward yesterday by Geoff Hoon, the Defence Secretary, in a **fabulously implausible narrative** which contradicted earlier statements by his Prime Minister, his colleagues and himself.' (25 Apr., p. 17)

The central question was why weapons of mass destruction had not been found in Iraq. This is an edited version of the interview, taken from the *Times*.

Geoff Hoon: I don't think that's particularly surprising because we've known that Saddam Hussein was making determined efforts to hide those weapons, to scatter them around thousands of sites which exist across a huge country in Iraq, and it will take some time to uncover them.

John Humphrys: Here we are, a mad dictator, his regime under the most pressing threat, he has these WMD, apparently, and yet, at the moment of the maximum peril... he didn't prepare them for use.

GH: I believe the reason for that is because military action followed fairly quickly on the end of the weapons inspections programmes, and having hidden away those weapons, having dismantled missiles, having scattered them to the far

corners of Iraq... it then was extremely difficult for him in time to be able to reassemble them, not least because he was well aware that we were watching very carefully... and that would obviously have indicated the fact that he had such weapons and was able to use them.

JH: So in other words it proves how effective that this containment policy had been, and suggests there was no need to go to war at all.

GH: It does not, because the scattering of the weapons only occurred at a point at which the UN weapons inspections began. Up until then the containment policy had failed to prevent Saddam Hussein's regime from developing WMD.

IMPLAUSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

Foreign Editor Bronwen Maddox was scathing: 'On Hoon's account, the regime was organised and skilful enough to dismantle, transport and hide all these weapons beyond the detective skills of US forces, and yet so disorganised that it could not retrieve and deploy even one' weapon against the invaders.

The weapons, if they exist, are unlikely to have been smuggled to Syria because it would be suicide for Damascus to be caught with them. Terrorists are unlikely to have bought the weapons, if they exist, because the kind of chemical or biological weapons Iraq is accused of making require complex, expensive and conspicuous delivery systems, such as aircraft equipped with sprays or missiles. 'Terrorists targeting subway trains or water supplies can make do with something far simpler, such as ricin.' (*Times*, 25 Feb., p. 17) The weapons should be in Iraq.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INSPECTORS

The obvious point, not made on Radio 4's *Today* programme, was made by Robin Cook. The former Foreign Secretary said Mr Hoon's argument that Saddam had not used the weapons even in the face of the defeat because they had been dismantled to avoid detection by the UN was proof of the inspectors' effectiveness: 'Surely, for me, that would be an excuse for maintaining the UN inspectors as a way of keeping Saddam in his cage without the necessity for war and the thousands of casualties that followed.' (*Guardian*, 25 Apr.)

'The inspectors cannot in these circumstances disarm a resistant Iraq', said Sir Jeremy Greenstock, UK ambassador to the UN. (*Telegraph*, 28 Feb., p. 14) US Secretary of State Colin Powell said, 'The question isn't how much longer do you need for inspections to work. **Inspections will not work.**' (*Independent*, 23 Jan., p. 1) Now the UK says inspectors *did* effectively disarm Iraq. Inspections *did* work.

The real question before the war was not 'how long will you persist with inspections', but 'how long is it before Iraqi weapons of mass destruction are an imminent threat'. Do we have time to go down the inspections route? Dr Hans Blix, head of the UN weapons inspectorate UNMOVIC, said that with 'a proactive Iraqi attitude', it would take only months to verify sites and items,

analyse documents, and interview relevant persons: 'It would not take years, nor weeks, but months.' (*Guardian*, 8 Mar., p. 4) Inspections had not run out of steam.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The real question was: will Iraq be an imminent threat before the disarmament process can be completed? No evidence was produced in public that Iraq would develop either the capability or the intention to use its weapons aggressively within months or even within a year. Let us stress again that for there to be a 'threat' there had to be both a weapons 'capability' and aggressive 'intent'.

British Vice-Admiral Sir James Jungius KBE observed in a letter to *The Times* (11 Jan., p. 25): '**Even if the weapons do exist, where is the evidence of intent to use them?** War is too important and unpleasant a business to be undertaken on the basis of a hunch, however good that hunch may be.'

Former Tory Cabinet Minister Douglas Hogg: '**The real question is not whether he's got weapons of mass destruction, but rather whether—if he has got those weapons—he is a grave and imminent threat to the rest of us.** There are lots of other countries in the world that do have weapons of mass destruction, or are likely to acquire them, but we don't necessarily conclude that they are a grave and imminent threat sufficient to justify war.'

'So **even if he had these things**, unless he's a grave and imminent threat **there isn't a moral basis for war**, because the doctrine of self-defence isn't properly invoked.' (*The World This Weekend*, BBC Radio 4, 12 Jan.)

THE SEMI-IRRELEVANT WEAPONS

The fact is that the anti-war argument stands up even if weapons of mass destruction are discovered in Iraq. The strength of the anti-war case was that there was a legal and peaceful way of detecting and disarming Iraq's suspected weapons of mass destruction—a peaceful route which had not been exhausted. As Mr Hoon now acknowledges, the mere presence of the inspectors in Iraq was a powerful constraint on Iraqi behaviour and capabilities.

On the other hand, the pro-war argument does fall apart if it can now be shown that the confident statements by Tony Blair, Geoff Hoon, George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld and Colin Powell were all lies and deception. We were told categorically by our leaders that 'Saddam has continued to produce chemical and biological weapons, and that he has been able to extend the range of his ballistic missile programme. His military planning allows for some of the WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them'. This was 'established beyond doubt', according to the Prime Minister. (Tony Blair, foreword to *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction* dossier, 24 Sept., quoted in *Times*, 25 Apr., p. 17) If these claims turn out to be untrue, then the Prime Minister either lied or he allowed himself to be deceived with 'evidence' that he knew could not stand up to scrutiny.