

## Meetings with Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei, 6 February 2003

272. 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”.

273. Dr Blix told Mr Straw he thought Iraq had prohibited programmes, and it “definitely possessed the ability to jump-start BW programmes”. 4.3 | Iraq WMD assessments, October 2002 to March 2003 345

274. On 6 February, Dr Blix and Dr ElBaradei met Mr Blair and Mr Straw.

275. 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.<sup>111</sup> He also said that intelligence leads had so far produced only one success.

276. 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.”

277. 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.”

278. 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.

279. 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”.

280. 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”.

281. Mr Rycroft 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.”

282. Mr Campbell wrote in his diaries that Dr Blix felt that Secretary Powell had done well but was avoiding comment.

<sup>112</sup> 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

<sup>111</sup> Letter Rycroft to Owen, 6 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Meetings with Blix and ElBaradei, 6 February’.

<sup>112</sup> Campbell A & Hagerty B. The Alastair Campbell Diaries. Volume 4. The Burden of Power: Countdown to Iraq. Hutchinson, 2012. The Report of the Iraq Inquiry 346 trying to resolve the issues of anthrax and VX: “On the remnants of old programmes they should be able to tell us.”

283. In his subsequent meeting with Mr Straw, Dr Blix was reported to have said he 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”.<sup>113</sup> The trick would be to find evidence.

284. 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.

285. 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.

286. Mr Straw encouraged Dr ElBaradei to focus on interviews. Dr ElBaradei reported that the scientists he had interviewed were clearly extremely nervous, but he saw great difficulties with conducting interviews overseas.

287. Dr ElBaradei told Mr Blair that: “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.”<sup>114</sup>

288. In Dr ElBaradei’s view, CBW (chemical and biological weapons) was the key.

289. 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.”

**290. Dr ElBaradei told Mr Blair that: “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 ...”**

<sup>113</sup> Telegram 79 FCO London to UKMIS New York, 7 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Foreign Secretary’s Meetings with Blix and El-Baradei, 6 February’.

<sup>114</sup> Letter Rycroft to Owen, 6 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Meetings with Blix and El-Baradei, 6 February’. 4.3 | Iraq WMD assessments, October 2002 to March 2003 347

291. 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”.

292. The wider issues discussed are addressed in Section 3.7.