

Britain to seek UN approval for war

The Times, London

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON/LONDON, Dec. 20. — Britain will seek the UN's approval for war on Iraq at the end of January if the inspection process shows Saddam Hussein to be in breach of UN demands, *The Times* has learnt.

The new British line emerged as Washington invoked its legal authority to use military force after Dr Hans Blix, the chief UN arms inspector, said Baghdad's 11,000-page arms declaration was flawed.

Mr Jack Straw, foreign secretary, said any hitch in weapons inspections could trigger conflict. "One trigger has been pulled. They... have their finger on the other. The choice as to whether this issue is resolved peacefully, or the international community is forced to solve it by military action, is a choice before Saddam."

The British government has decided to go for a second UN resolution in order to obtain full international backing for military action to disarm Iraq, and is confident it can obtain one. Whitehall sources said the Bush administration would go along with the British plan so long as it believes the resolution would be an-

proved. Sources said China and Russia had privately expressed support for the idea. France, the other permanent member of the Security Council, has, from the outset, demanded a second resolution.

President Bush is expected to announce the allies' intention to seek UN approval for war in his annual State of the Union speech on 28 January. That falls one day after Dr









sified" inspections, the Security Council agreed to seek another report from the weapons inspectors in the first 10 days of January.

Diplomats say the UN will mount an intensive inspection effort in early January armed with new intelligence information from Britain and the USA. If successful, the inspections could push Dr Blix to report Iraqi violations in its declaration.

Iraqi arms dossier

US alleges omissions in Iraq's UN weapons declaration

Missing from the report

 Growth media for anthrax: enough to produce 26,000 litres of the virus	 Aluminum tubes: attempts to procure for enriching uranium for weapons
 Botulinum toxin: 1,200 litres	 Gases: precursors for mustard, sarin and VX nerve gases
 Clostridium perfringens: 5,500 litres of toxic organism	 Missiles: has fuels for missiles that the country is not known to possess
 Uranium: attempts to procure from Niger	 MIG-21 pilotless plane: equipped to spray biological weapons

201202 AFP

Blix is due to report back to the Security Council on the progress of the inspection regime. The resolution could be approved almost immediately, leaving the allies free to invade Iraq from the beginning of February.

US officials said Pentagon will double the number of troops in the Gulf to 100,000 during January.

With the USA pressing for "accelerated and inten-

Australia 'disappointed': Australian Prime Minister Mr John Howard said today Iraq's failure to give a full account of its weapons of mass destruction was disappointing, but did not endorse a US assessment of it, adds AFP from Sydney. Mr Howard did not adopt the US assessment that the failings in the declaration constituted a breach of the UN Security Council resolution.

UK grabs Ireland govt reins

ALEX RICHARDSON

Hillsborough (Northern Ireland), Oct. 14 (Reuters): Britain seized back the reins of government in Northern Ireland today amid a crisis in the peace process provoked by a spying scandal, but vowed to try and restore home rule early next year.

After halting the province's power-sharing government with a stroke of his pen, Britain's Northern Ireland secretary John Reid said he regretted the return of direct rule from London and hoped it would be "a short-lived impasse".

"I hope the decision... marks a breathing space and a chance in a sense to gather strength and to regather confidence," Reid said at his Hillsborough Castle residence outside Belfast.

Both the British and Irish governments will now be working frantically behind the scenes to edge Northern Ireland's politicians towards a compromise that will allow them to restart the stalled process.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern, who have both invested much personal and political capital in the 1998 Good Friday peace agreement, said their governments were "saddened" by today's events.



Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams holds a copy of the Good Friday Agreement in Stormont, Belfast. (AFP)

In a joint statement, they promised to seek a restoration of devolution before Northern Ireland Assembly elections next May, and sent a message to the IRA, against whom allegations of spying precipitated the current crisis.

"It must be clear that the transition from violence to exclusively peaceful and democratic means...is being brought to an unambiguous and definitive conclusion," they said.

Blair to Saddam: comply or face regime change

DOMINIC EVANS

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Sedgefield (England), Sept. 3 (Reuters): British Prime Minister Tony Blair issued a stark warning to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein today — comply with UN resolutions on weapons of mass destruction or face “regime change”.

Blair, Washington’s close international ally, described Iraq as a real and unique threat to the world and said the Western policy of seeking to contain Saddam since the 1991 Gulf War was no longer an effective option.

“Either the regime starts to function in a completely different way — and there’s not much sign of that — or the regime has to change,” he said, using some of the strongest language yet to try to win over sceptical Britons.

Blair said no decisions had been taken by Washington or London on what kind of action should be taken against Saddam’s “despicable and loathsome regime”.

But he said he would unveil in a few weeks a long-promised dossier to highlight the danger he said the Iraqi leader posed.

Facing calls from within his ruling Labour Party not to back US military strikes against Iraq without explicit United Nations



Tony Blair at the Sedgefield Community College in Durham. (AFP)

authority, Blair said he hoped the UN could play a role but that it should not be used to block action.

“The important thing... is that the UN has to be the route to deal with this problem, not a way of people avoiding dealing with this problem,” he told a news conference in his northeast England constituency of Sedgefield.

US President George W. Bush has made “regime change” in

Baghdad a priority and his administration has used the last few weeks to set out its case for military action against Saddam, whom it accuses of developing weapons of mass destruction.

Blair, who pledged to stand “shoulder to shoulder” with Bush after last year’s September 11 attacks, said some European criticism of the US president was “a parody of the George Bush I know”.

U.K. rejects Saddam's offer

1898 By Hasan Suroor UK (u) HD-121

LONDON, AUG. 12. An offer by the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, conveyed to Britain through a Labour MP, that he is willing to allow weapons inspectors back into the country has met with a frosty response with the Foreign Office saying that it "does not change anything" in the absence of Baghdad's compliance with the relevant U.N. resolutions.

A spokesperson told *The Hindu* on Monday that Saddam Hussein knew what he needed to do to break the impasse. "The offer changes nothing. He knows what to do and that is comply with the U.N. resolutions. The ball is in his court," she said.

But George Galloway, the MP who was made the offer when he met Mr. Hussein last week, insisted that it must be explored. "Why not test the sincerity of the offer? There is everything to gain," he said, accusing the Foreign Office of pushing a "discredited" line. Mr. Galloway, whose close ties with the Iraqi leadership have led critics to call him an Iraqi "stooge" and "MP from Baghdad Central", quoted Mr. Hussein as saying that he would accept "all U.N. resolutions", including those insisting on "unfettered" access to weapons inspectors. During Mr. Galloway's meeting with the Iraqi President in a bunker at a secret location near Baghdad, Mr. Hussein called on Britain to take an "independent" line in what was seen as an attempt to wean London away from Washington's plans to attack his country.

In recent weeks, Baghdad has sought to woo Britain by talking about its traditionally warm relations with the Arab world and offering access to British experts to inspect sites suspected of holding weapons of mass destruction. Mr. Galloway said "in a sane world" Iraqi's overtures, particularly its latest offer, would be "followed and put to the test". If eventually the offer turned out to be a mere tactic, as Iraq's opponents believed, it would only strengthen the international support for action against Iraq, he said.

The offer, dismissed as a "diversionary tactic" in government circles, came amid growing pressure on the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to desist from supporting any U.S. led attack on Iraq without first exhausting all diplomatic channels to resolve the issue. In a significant development, his close ally and former cabinet Minister, Peter Mandelson, who has just returned from America, accused U.S. policy makers of causing confusion among their allies by sending out "mixed messages" with the State Department and the Pentagon speaking with "different emphases". He said he was not "anti-Bush" but the U.S. President needed to speak in a more international language in order to win international backing.

"They therefore cannot be surprised that Europe and the world is reacting in a confused way when the message we are getting from the administration is not clear," he told *The Times* as a new opinion poll showed that more than two-thirds of British voters were against military action in Iraq.

13 AUG 2002

THE HINDU

UK cautions Bush on attack against Iraq

London: British ministers and government officials have advised the US against attacking Iraq, warning that such action would intensify conflicts in the region, the 'Independent' newspaper reported on Friday, quoting senior defence and diplomatic sources.

The warning came as the 'Times' reported that British Prime Minister Tony Blair faced increasing pressure from his own Labour Party and trade unions not to back any US strike.

According to the 'Independent', British ministers and government officials have warned Washington that launching a war to topple Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein would "contaminate" crises in Afghanistan, Israel and Kashmir.

"These are issues the Americans appear not to have considered," one official was quoted as saying.

Officials added that the US had countered British worries by maintaining that existing conflicts in the region could be "containerised" and that it would be impractical to wait for every situation to be resolved before launching an attack on Iraq.

Washington has repeatedly threatened to take action to unseat Mr Saddam whom it accuses of developing weapons of mass destruction.

Britain is Washington's closest military ally, and it is believed that US President George W Bush would want to count on London's help in any campaign.

British ministers and government officials also have serious reservations about Mr Bush's call for a regime change in Baghdad because they say no alternative set-up has



Tony Blair



George Bush

been identified, according to the newspaper.

They fear that Britain could be left to lead a huge stabilisation force for "up to five

years" in a post-war Iraq. While they share the US' belief that Mr Saddam has acquired weapons of mass destruction, ministers have seen no evidence that he can deliver them in any meaningful way against the West, according to the paper.

Their concerns came as a senior Pentagon adviser insisted that Mr Bush would not hesitate to act alone. Richard Perle, head of the Pentagon's defence policy board, added however that he believed Mr Blair would win over the doubters in Britain and back a US-led war.

"I have no doubt he (Bush) would act alone if necessary. But he will not be alone when the time comes," Mr Perle wrote in Friday's edition of the 'Daily Telegraph'.

Although Mr Blair has stated that London has taken no decisions on military action, he has repeatedly stressed that the threat posed by Mr Saddam must be addressed.

However, the British leader is facing increasing pressure at home not to support Mr Bush.

The 'Times' said that his Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress are likely to vote against any strike at their annual conferences in September. AFP

1 0 AUG 2002

Straw in peace plea

Beijing, July 16 (Reuters): British foreign secretary Jack Straw urged India and Pakistan to keep up the momentum towards peace despite a bloody militant attack in Jammu's Qasim Nagar locality last Saturday.

Straw, on a three-day visit to Beijing, said he was "obviously very concerned about this terrorist outrage in general in which nearly 30 completely innocent, poor people have been killed by blatant terrorism".

"At the same time, it's very important that measures already taken to de-escalate the tension across the line of control are continued and that both sides work towards a resumption of dialogue," he said.

Five attackers, some dressed as Hindu holy men, opened fire on Saturday in a slum in Jammu, killing 27 people and rekindling tensions with rival Pakistan. "It obviously calls for a firm police response," Straw said.

Police were out in force on Jammu's streets to prevent trouble after the assault on the slum. No militant group has claimed responsibility for the grenade and gun attack and India has not assigned any blame.

Straw is to travel to India and Pakistan later in the week to urge the nuclear-armed neighbours to defuse tensions further in the troubled Himalayan region and keep inching towards the negotiating table.

"I'm going to talk to them about their feelings about how far things have reached," he said in an interview ahead of a meeting with Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

"What's important, however, is that the momentum is continued."

He said Britain welcomed the condemnation of the Jammu attack by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and the promises Islamabad has made to fight terrorism.

"We also welcome the steps which have been taken by the Government of India to draw back their forces as they have done over the next few weeks, but the next stages are important, too," Straw said.

Straw will also meet vice-Premier Qian Qichen today. Qian was quoted recently by Hong Kong newspapers as saying that Beijing was against any rapid move towards full democratic elections and universal suffrage in the former British colony.

Declining to comment on the issue, Straw said progress in Hong Kong since Britain returned it to Chinese sovereignty five years ago was "remarkable".

He is scheduled to leave Beijing for Tokyo on Tuesday and will also travel to Hong Kong. He said he hoped his first trip to China would pave the way for a visit by British Prime Minister Tony Blair next year.

THE TELEGRAPH

17 JUL 2002

Musharraf has to do more: Straw

ISLAMABAD, MAY 28. The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, said after his talks with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, today that the Pakistani leader was aware that he was expected to do more to clamp down on cross-border terrorism.

"I think that President Musharraf is under no doubt about the expectation of the international community for clear action to be taken in addition to that which has already been taken to clamp effectively down on cross-border terrorism," he said at a press conference.

Mr. Straw arrived in Pakistan on his peace mission a day after Gen. Musharraf delivered an address to his nation in which he claimed that no infiltration of militants was taking place in Kashmir.

"The test of assurances down the ages is how they work out on the ground, and it's of course against the practice that all these matters are inevitably judged," Mr. Straw said when asked about the claim.

All the member states of the United Nations, including Pakistan, had the responsibility to bear down "effectively and consistently on all forms of terrorism, including cross-border terrorism... There isn't any doubt that Pakistan has, in the past, assisted what they would describe as freedom fighters (whom) the rest of the world describes as terrorists or activists, across the Line of Control," he said.

Describing his meeting with Gen. Musharraf as "constructive and forthright," Mr. Straw said his visit was aimed at sharing "the international community's concerns" with the Pakistani

and the Indian leadership.

"This (Kashmir) is a bilateral dispute of long standing and sadly, considerable bitterness between India and Pakistan," he said. The conflict could only be resolved through a dialogue.

"Both sides have nuclear weapons and the capacity to

Third Pak. missile test-fired



Pakistan's Hatf-II (Abdall) missile takes off from an undisclosed location in a successful test on Tuesday. This was the first test of the indigenously-developed short-range surface-to-surface missile. — AP

use those nuclear weapons. With more than a million men facing each other across the border the risks are obvious and considerable."

However, there were "clear limits" to what the international community could do "since decisions about war and peace rest with the parties to the dispute."

Mr. Straw also met the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Abdul Sattar. — AFP, Reuters

THE HINDI

29 MAY 2002

Blair's rhetoric on Iraq raises hackles

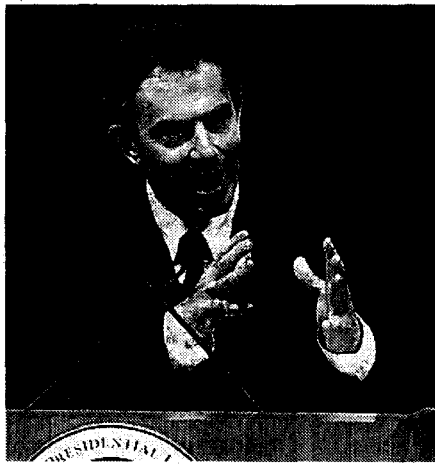
HD-15 By Hasan Suroor 9/4

LONDON, APRIL 8. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, returned home today from his summit with the U.S. President, George W. Bush and walked straight into a political row over his remarks on Iraq, particularly his threat of military action and a "regime change" in Baghdad.

Labour MPs were up in arms with a former Defence Minister, Peter Kilfoyle, calling it "Texan gung-ho commentary" which would "inflamm" opinion in the Arab world. Another senior Labour figure and former Chancellor, Lord Healey, said it would be a "folly" to attack Iraq.

Glenda Jackson, actress and Labour MP, accused Mr. Blair of "upping the rhetoric". "It is very irresponsible to be upping the rhetoric without the relevant evidence that Saddam (Hussein) is engaged in the creation of weapons of mass destruction and his ability to deliver them," she said as party MPs prepared for a showdown with the Prime Minister at a meeting with him on Wednesday.

The senior-most Labour MP, Tam Dalyell, known as the "father of the House", warned that if Mr. Blair failed to convince his critics at the meeting there could be a demand for a vote in Parliament on the issue. "Mr. Blair will be asked on Wednesday why, if King Abdullah of Jordan, the Saudis, the Kuwaitis and the Iranians do



The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, speaking in Texas, U.S. on Sunday. — AP

not want this, then how can he justify it," he asked.

In a speech in Texas, Mr. Blair had said: "If necessary, the action (against Iraq) should be military and again, if necessary and justified, it should involve regime change." It was described as his toughest public rhetoric yet on Iraq, and observers noted that even Mr. Bush had not openly spoken of military action. It caused unease even among some Tories though the Con-

servative party supports Mr. Blair's hard line against Saddam Hussein.

The former Tory Prime Minister, Edward Heath, called for a "thorough discussion" in Parliament before a decision was taken. Independent analysts saw the Prime Minister's stance as a "defiance" of domestic opinion and yet another example of his increasingly "Presidential style". Mr. Blair sought to assure his critics that nothing had been done and told journalists accompanying him, "Let's not get ahead of ourselves. We are still in the position of identifying the problem and laying down conditions for Saddam," he said.

His Ministers also tried to play down the controversy with the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, saying that a decision on military action was "a long way off". His junior colleague in the Foreign Office, Ben Bradshaw, said the focus remained on efforts to get weapons inspectors back into Iraq. "On regime changes, Mr. Blair was referring specifically to Sierra Leone, Kosovo and Afghanistan — three examples of action that Britain has taken in recent years where there has been a regime change." Critics, however, remained sceptical and accused Mr. Blair of trying to appease the "hard right U.S. administration". More than 120 Labour MPs have already signed a parliamentary motion voicing their "deep unease" over British backing for any U.S. military action against Iraq.

9 APR 2003

THE HINDU

Blair to back US war on Iraq

London, April 7

TKW HF 11 8/9

TONY BLAIR is slated to give the clearest signal yet that Britain is ready to back the US if it goes to war against Iraq in a high-risk strategy that could create damaging splits in his own party.

In his clearest statement yet that he backs America's stance that "inaction against Iraq is not an option", the Prime Minister will use a speech in Texas to spell out the need to deal with Saddam Hussein, whom he will accuse of developing weapons of mass destruction in 'flagrant abuse' of international law.

Blair will equate the military action in Afghanistan, with future policy against Saddam.

The PM is believed to have discussed the military options with Bush at a one-to-one dinner on Friday night.

We're ready: Saddam son

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S youngest son, Qusay, said Iraqis were ready to retaliate against any US military action against their country. In an open letter to his father, Qusay said: "Swords of your sons in the Republican Army are unsheathed against any foreign aggression."

Reuters, Baghdad

"Just as after September 11 action in Afghanistan was calm, measured, sensible but firm, so the approach to Iraq will be all these things again," Blair is expected to say. "Leaving Iraq to develop weapons of mass destruction in flagrant breach of no less than nine UN resolu-

tions, refusing still to allow weapons inspectors back to do their work properly is not an option." The words are an echo of the Bush's speech last month, when he said inaction in Iraq "was not an option".

Blair's statement in an America that strongly backs military action contrasts with briefings in Britain playing down this prospect. Downing Street officials insist no decision has been taken on military action, and say that if Iraq agreed to full access for UN inspectors, Saddam may avoid attack. "It has always been our policy that Iraq would be a better place without Saddam Hussein," Blair said. "We know he has been developing these weapons. We know that those weapons constitute a threat. The issue has to be dealt with."

The Observer

8 APR 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Tony Blair steps back from war on Iraq

London, April 1

THE GOVERNMENT has indefinitely delayed publishing a dossier revealing damning evidence against Saddam Hussein, just days before Tony Blair flies out to meet President George Bush at the weekend to discuss a possible military strike on Iraq.

In a sign that Britain recognises that open prosecution of a war against Iraq is politically impossible, Downing Street has deferred plans to publish the report, which purports to show how Saddam is defying the UN by building weapons of mass destruction.

The dossier, trailed by the No 10 press secretary, Alastair Campbell, will now be published when "it is believed to be appropriate".

Downing Street feared that publication would add to the fevered speculation of an imminent strike, as well as exacerbate dissent on the Labour backbenches.

Labour MPs considered the outlines of the evidence to be unconvincing. There has also been some pressure on the intelligence agencies to declassify documents to improve the quality of the evidence.

Leading members of the British clergy also warned the Prime Minister against a military strike and called on the US to publish its evidence.

Blair published a similar dossier in the run-up to the military strikes against the Taliban in Afghanistan in the wake of September 11 attacks. The new dossier, compiled by US and British intelligence, was designed to



TONY BLAIR

reveal incontrovertible evidence that the Iraqi leader was assembling weapons of mass destruction in defiance of UN security council resolutions, and would have been used to prepare European public opinion for some form of military action if Saddam continued to build up his military arsenal.

A dossier on Iraq's nuclear, biological and chemical warfare capabilities was drawn up earlier this month by the Cabinet Office's joint intelligence committee chaired by John Scarlett, a former MI6 officer, after intense discussions within the intelligence community about what should be published and how much speculation it should contain.

In the end it was agreed that the dossier should be "factual", and not contain speculation. MI6 was also concerned that it should not contain any information that could threaten its intelligence sources, according

to Whitehall officials.

However, many of the new allegations about Iraq's programme for weapons of mass destruction are based on assumption and speculation. Though the dossier contains evidence about Baghdad's development of biological weapons — including anthrax and botulinum toxin — it is largely based on what was discovered by UN weapons inspectors back in 1998.

Even the CIA admits that intelligence gathered after that date, when the weapons inspectors were expelled from Iraq, is far from reliable.

Britain's security and intelligence agencies also dismiss US claims that Mohammed Atta, the leading hijacker in the September 11 attacks, previously met an Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague.

Blair's talks with Bush in Texas at the weekend are likely to focus as much on the current explosion of violence in West Asia as on Iraq, and the growing European demands for Israel to rethink its policy of repression.

The two leaders will discuss the political, military and diplomatic consequences of military action, including the need for a specific UN resolution supporting the action.

Blair will press for sanctions against Iraq to be revised, and for clear demands to be imposed on Saddam's future behaviour.

The leaders will also assess the scale of the continuing Taliban resistance in Afghanistan, including an offensive by British troops.

The Guardian

2 APR 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Blair Govt. draws flak over Iraq again

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 26. For the second time in less than a week, the Government was on Tuesday wrong-footed over claims intended to justify military intervention in Iraq even as the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, provoked criticism for advocating pre-emptive action against regimes which are seen to pose a threat to world stability.

With the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, due to meet the U.S. President, George W. Bush, in Washington in less than two weeks for talks on the second phase of the "war" on terrorism, Downing Street has been trying to up the ante, and on Tuesday it darkly hinted at the possibility of the Saddam Hussein regime supplying chemical and biological weapons to Al-Qaeda.

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"Given what we know about Al-Qaeda's interest in the material (weapons of mass destruction), we have to have concerns about a possible marriage between those who wish to acquire it and those who have it," Mr. Blair's spokesman said.

Senior military officials, however, were quick to contradict this saying they had no "credible" evidence for it. "We are not aware... that the Iraqi Government or its agencies are passing on weapons of mass destruction to Al-Qaeda. Nor have we seen any credible evidence linking the Iraqi Government to the September 11 attacks," a military source told *The Independent*.

Critics accused the Government of planting stories to counter the growing unease

among Labour MPs and within the Cabinet over Mr Blair's backing for any U.S. military action against Iraq. The Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, infuriated his anti-war colleagues saying that such action did not necessarily require U.N. sanction. "As far as I understand the position, legally we would be perfectly entitled to use force as we have done in the past without the support of a United Nations Security Council resolution," he told ITV, intensifying the rift in the Cabinet over the issue. Clare Short, a senior Cabinet Minister, threatened last week to resign if Britain backed any military strikes against Baghdad without a fresh U.N. mandate.

The Foreign Secretary, in a major speech on Tuesday, blew

hot and cold saying on the one hand that Saddam Hussein could let himself off the hook if he allowed U.N. weapons inspectors back into the country and they gave him a clean cheat, but insisting that his regime posed a threat to world peace and Britain must "stand up to bullies like Saddam".

In what commentators described as a dangerous doctrine, Mr Straw advocated a policy based on "foresight not hindsight" to deal with potentially dangerous regimes.

"Western nations must try to prevent the rise of regimes like that of Saddam Hussein to avoid threats to world stability", he said prompting *The Times* to dub it as a "distinctly odd theory of pre-emptive action".

THE HINDU

27 MAR 2002

British Minister threatens to quit over Iraq

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 18. Reports of a simmering "revolt" in the British Government over Iraq were confirmed when a senior Cabinet Minister on Sunday publicly threatened to resign if the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, backed a U.S. military action in Iraq even as another respected Labour figure accused him of bulldozing.

Ms. Clare Short, the outgoing Secretary for International Development, whose name had been persistently linked with dissidents, became the first Minister to declare that she would rather quit than support

"instant mass bombing" of Iraq. Making clear that it was no empty threat, she said she was the "same old Clare Short" who had resigned twice in the past on issues of principle.

This was seen as by far the most serious public rift involving Mr. Blair and his Cabinet colleagues on the issue and came amid reports of a warning by the Home Secretary, David Blunkett that support for an at-

tack on Iraq might inflame Arab opinion in Britain and cause racial tension. Observers noted that Mr. Blunkett belonged to Mr. Blair's inner circle and the fact that he had chosen to speak up reflected the extent of

the Commons. Ms. Short, who was speaking to the BBC, acknowledged that the Iraq President, Saddam Hussein's policies posed a threat but she opposed any "crude military action." "With the state of the Middle East, the terrible suffering of both the Israeli and Palestinian people, with the anger there is in the Arab world, to open up a military flank on Iraq would be very unwise," she said, hoping that the Government would not do the "wrong thing". Her former Cabinet colleague, Mo Mowlam who accused Mr. Blair of disregarding domestic opinion, echoed her view. "Blair seems to be making

it clear that he has more sympathy with the wishes of Washington and their reckless attitude than he does for his own party and even members of his Cabinet," she wrote in *The Sunday Mirror*.

Government-watchers pointed out that Mr. Blair had hoped to "see off" a backbench rebellion — as he has done on several issues in the past — but with dissenting voices spreading to his Cabinet he faced a tricky situation as he prepared to travel to Washington to meet the U.S. President in a few weeks to discuss the second phase of the anti-terror campaign. Iraq is the most visible

U.S. target in Phase II of the campaign.

In a move that might give comfort to Mr. Blair but also embarrass him, the Tory leader, Ian Duncan Smith offered full-throated support to a military attack on Iraq. He said America's determination to "topple" Mr. Hussein was justified, and accused Britain's European allies of political "navel gazing" instead of supporting U.S. plans. "Until the U.S. completes its unfinished business with the Iraq leader there can be no regional stability and the risk of further attacks on the U.S. and its European allies will steadily become more grave," he said.



Clare Short

in the Government over Iraq. Another high-profile Cabinet Minister who is known to disagree with Mr. Blair on this is the former Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, currently leader of

Military slams Blair's topple-Saddam strategy

London, March 17

BRITAIN'S MILITARY leaders issued a stark warning to Tony Blair last night that any war against Iraq is doomed to fail and would lead to the loss of lives for little political gain.

As the debate over whether to commit British troops alongside American forces intensified, the leaders urged 'extreme caution' over any moves towards war, saying servicemen faced being bogged down in a perilous open-ended commitment.

Claiming that the Government had yet to give any clear political direction over committing troops — America has asked for up to 25,000 UK personnel to join an invasion force — the sources warned that Arab countries were likely to rebel over any Western attack on Iraq without a West Asia peace deal.

Failing that, the sources said Saudi Arabia was unlikely to allow its bases to be used against

Saddam Hussein. Defence sources said that, without Saudi cooperation, it would be difficult to launch a sustained attack by American and British forces.

Underlining their fears of a military strike, senior armed forces figures will warn the Prime Minister this week that without a leader-in-waiting to take over from Saddam, there is little chance of any successful move to overthrow the Iraqi dictator.

Opposition forces in Iraq are not as strong as they were in Afghanistan, Blair will be told. There seems to be no potential successor to Saddam that the West and Iraq's Arab neighbours could accept.

As it became clear that British troop commitments in Afghanistan would have to be extended beyond the April deadline set by the prime minister, the briefings revealed the level of concern over further military deployment against Saddam.

gests that increased military strikes are the only option being seriously considered by president George W Bush. He said last week that 'inaction was not an option'. In a further sign of British military anxiety, leaked Ministry of Defence papers reveal the Army is warning it will need a substantially more mon- long-running commitment overseas, which will drain resources.

The UK, which leads the international peacekeeping force in Kabul and has committed more than 5,000 troops, is due to hand over control of the force to Turkey next month. But it will now have to provide at least some troops 'until the end of its [the force's] mandate' — now June.

Yesterday, Donald Rumsfeld, the US Defence Secretary, backed up the warnings by saying he expected British troops to remain in Afghanistan for the rest of the year.

tasks will have to be found'. It is believed that the MoD has asked for £500 million in next month's Budget to pay for its increased commitments.

The papers reveal that British peacekeeping troops will stay in Afghanistan longer than expected, raising fears of the Army becoming embroiled in yet another long-running commitment overseas, which will drain resources.

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TONY BLAIR

Although Blair has insisted no decisions have been taken, Foreign Office officials have said it was unlikely that America would be satisfied with simply sending United Nations weapons inspectors back to Iraq. This sug-

Blunkett warns PM

BRITISH HOME Secretary David Blunkett warned Prime Minister Tony Blair that military action in Iraq could provoke serious civil unrest in Britain, *The Sunday Telegraph* said.

"We cannot separate Iraq from the West Asia or we will have major disturbances both internationally and in Britain," Blunkett said, according to an unnamed senior minister quoted by the paper.

His reported comments came amid growing disquiet among British ministers and European Union leaders at Blair's support for the US stance against Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. Muslim leaders backed the suggestion that tensions raised by ongoing vio-

lence in the West Asia could lead to rioting in the event of a British attack on Iraq, the paper added. "Muslim youths were angry and frustrated at the action in Afghanistan. That frustration may lead to further incidents if there is action in Iraq," said Ahtsham Ali, an author of a Government report into last year's race riots in Bradford, northern England.

European commission president Romano Prodi indicated the EU might oppose any eventual US attack on Iraq while stressing it was not being discussed at the weekend's EU summit in Barcelona.

Prodi said: "My position is one of deep worry".

AFP, London

The Observer

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 MAR 2002

Blair attacks Commonwealth

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 5. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is reported to be "furious" with the Commonwealth for postponing action against Zimbabwe, and has virtually distanced himself from the official statement issued at the end of a three-day summit in Australia.

In a sharp reaction, he said the statement represented the "lowest common denominator" and expressed doubt if it would have any impact on what he regards as the Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe's plans to "steal" the forthcoming Presidential elections. "The statement is not the statement I would have drafted. There is no point using diplomatic language about this. The statement that has appeared is in effect the lowest common denominator," he said in his latest salvo in Britain's war of words with the Commonwealth over Zimbabwe whom it wants sus-

pending from the organisation.

Mr. Blair, who has been accused by Mr. Mugabe of "interfering" in his country's affairs, maintained that it was wrong to have put off a decision saying: "We have postponed the day of judgement on Zimbabwe and I think that is the wrong thing to do." His remarks were seen what *The Times* called a "break" with the customary end-of-summit consensus.

He said the Commonwealth's "credibility" was at stake over how it dealt with Zimbabwe. Hoping that it would eventually do "the right thing" and act against Harare, he warned:

"If it does, its credibility is at issue - if it does not act in the circumstances where it is plain that a member country has held an election which has not been fair."

However, others did not share his view that a member-country should be "prejudged" and punished in anticipation, as it were.

THE HINDU

9 MAR 2002

UK to flush out illegal immigrants

London, January 21

BRITAIN WILL effect sweeping changes to employment and immigration laws shortly to flush out up to 500,000 illegal foreign workers including those from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Immigration "hit squads" will concentrate on the Indian-dominated hotel and catering, construction, clothes manufacturing, agricultural and IT industries as part of a programme to

treble the rate of removal of illegal immigrants and failed asylum seekers to 2,500 a week, *The Independent* reported today.

Home Secretary David Blunkett is expected to make the announcement next month as part of a white paper on asylum, immigration and citizenship. The government will frame a code of conduct for employers in hiring foreign workers which they will have to abide by, or face being taken to court.

Employers who are found to

have been deliberately complicit in bringing illegal immigrants to Britain to work could face up to 14 years in jail. The Government is anxious to give employees more chances to fill skill shortages by legally hiring foreign staff. It will launch an advertising campaign overseas to attract up to 350,000 specialist workers.

Lord Rooker, the immigration minister, has promised that series of "high-profile prosecutions" of employers will send a message to people-smuggling

gangs that it is no longer safe to work illegally in Britain. Lord Rooker claimed it was easier to work illegally in Britain now "than in any other country in the European Union".

Prosecutions of employers for using illegal workers were currently "virtually non-existent". "We are going to tackle this in a much more high-profile way as a means of sending the signal back down the line. A few big prosecutions will send the right signal."

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 JAN 2002

Empire strikes back: Blair rewrites script, stars as hero

Britain may have lost its territories but its PM is logging miles to help it win over at least part of the world

MARC CHAMPION

DEAN Acheson, US Secretary of State under Harry Truman, once commented that "Great Britain has lost an empire and has not yet found a role." It's a remark that has bugged British politicians ever since — but not Prime Minister Tony Blair.

As he criss-crossed the countries that make up the former British Raj last week, Blair said that Britain has at last found a "modern," post-imperial role: To use its diplomatic expertise and military clout to help snuff out trouble around the world, working in tandem with both the US and the European Union. The prime minister has become an international superstar since September 11 by shuttling around the world, making the case for the US-led war on terrorism and preaching the need for long-term commitment to rebuilding Afghanistan and other blighted countries.

But Blair's role as deputy leader of the free world carries risks. He may find that Britain's influence isn't strong enough to deliver the vision he proclaims. His high-profile diplomacy may make it harder for him to mesh with common EU policies. And he is already facing criticism at home for swanning about on the international stage while Britain's schools, hospitals and trains are crumbling.

As Blair abandoned vehicles for a walk among flag-waving villagers in Andhra Pradesh, some of them were holding up his photograph and banners reading: "Welcome, the hero, Tony Blair." "Not in Chipping Sodbury," quipped a member of Blair's travelling press corps, referring to an archetypal village in rural England.

Blair isn't being diverted by such jibes. In an interview in Bangalore, Blair dismissed most of these risks. In June he led his Labour party to a second consecutive landslide election victory. In fact, few democratic leaders have reason to feel as politically secure as Blair. He says: "I don't think there is any point in being in politics unless you

go for what you really believe in." If his six-day tour of the subcontinent is any indication, then he has the kind of star power usually accorded only to the leaders of superpowers. Wherever he went he was treated as the figurehead of something much larger than a medium-size European nation.

Visiting the annual conference of the Confederation of Indian Industry in Bangalore, Blair was introduced Saturday to a rapturous audience of 3,000 business people as the "up-and-coming statesman of the world," and a "21st century political thinker," among other paeans.

But back in Britain, newspapers

The black silk Nehru suit that Blair wore to a state dinner in New Delhi made him look like "some aging rocker who can't come to terms with black tie," wrote the foreign editor of the *Times*.

The resentment of stranded commuters and dowdy journalists are not the only risks Blair faces, however. In his new global role, he has taken on vast responsibilities without the power to control their outcomes — a potentially explosive combination.

In his six foreign trips since September 11, Blair has taken on responsibility for peace in the Middle East and between India and Pakistan, as well as the

reconstruction of Afghanistan. Another trip in the planning stage could add responsibility for peace and economic progress in Africa.

Blair's biographer John Rentoul said the question about Blair was whether he was — as former US President John F. Kennedy once described himself — an idealist without illusions, or else an illusionist without ideals. But since 1997, Blair has — in international affairs at least — built enough of a track record to show that he holds his ideals firmly. Both in driving through Northern Ireland's peace process and during the 1999 war in Yugoslavia, Blair took substantial risks to achieve the goals he had set. In the case of Yu-

Afghanistan when they drove out the Russians. We used them to drive out the Russians, then we did nothing about rebuilding their country. Ten to 12 years later we have to send our people into a situation of war."

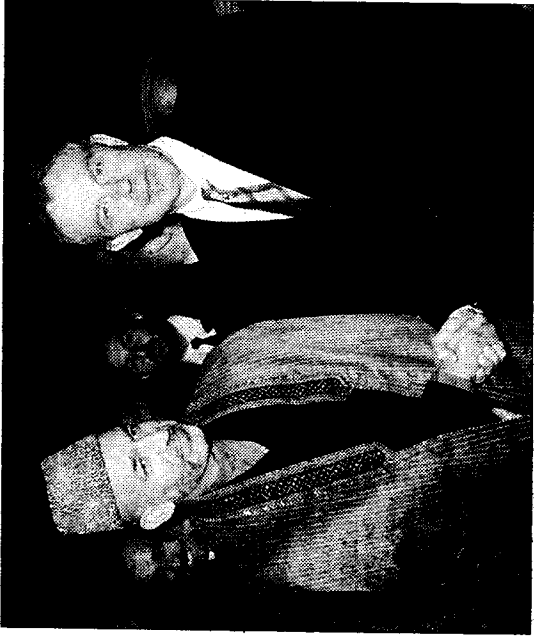
Avoiding new Afghanists, Blair says, requires fixing the problems of the Middle East, Africa and other troubled areas of the world. "OK, we can ignore (Africa), the world has for a long period of time, but I don't think it's very sensible. I think that in the longer term it's dangerous for us and I also believe that there is a human and moral obligation to act out there."

All of this raises the question of

of the empire, and that British diplomats had drawn the borders that are still causing so much tension in places such as Kashmir. But Blair also wants to put Britain's imperial legacy behind.

The Acheson quip is "quoted a lot because there was truth in it," he said. Not any longer. In Bangalore, Blair said Britain was at last finding a "modern," post-imperial role in the world.

LAST week, Blair was trying to play that role as he talked first to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and then to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf in an attempt to halt their escalation toward war. Blair insisted he



Tony Blair was introduced to a rapturous audience of 3,000 business people in Bangalore as the "up-and-coming statesman of the world," and a "21st century political thinker," among other paeans. But back in Britain, newspapers and political opponents have begun to seize on Blair's growing international prominence to attack him. Instead of jetting around the globe, they say, he should be home improving the country's crippled railways and hospitals

and political opponents have begun to seize on Blair's growing international prominence to attack him. Instead of jetting around the globe, they say, he should be home improving the country's crippled railways and hospitals.

"Other countries will not take lectures about the so-called new world order from a British prime minister who cannot deliver basic public services run by his own failing government," said Bernard Jenkins, the Conservative Party's shadow defense minister.

Even the wardrobe that Blair and his wife Cherie Booth took for the trip hit the headlines. The cost of buying and shipping the outfits came in for sniping, as did the clothes themselves.

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interventionist. Blair says he began to transfer his beliefs to the international stage with the 1998 Asian financial crisis. As the collapse of the Thai economy began to ripple across the world, he decided that with Clinton, he should act to reform the international ground rules guiding global financial markets. "It was pretty obvious that once it had started spreading ... it was important that the international community acted."

He sees the September 11 attacks as a brutal vindication of his views. "What happened in Afghanistan is the product of the failure collectively of Western foreign policy towards that country," Blair says. "We walked out of

whether Blair isn't a little naive. Visiting another village, Kelia, outside the Bangladesh capital Dhaka, Blair asked youngsters what they wanted to be when they grew up. One said he wanted to be a policeman. "Why?" Blair asked. "So that I can hang the criminals," the boy answered. "Right," Blair said, before moving on.

Blair bristles at the suggestion that he is naive or utopian. "Cynics will turn around and say Britain's not an empire anymore, you can't affect all these things, but we can have some effect and we can at least say what we believe should happen," Blair says.

He said he was very much aware that at one point South Asia was part

had arrived with no plan or blueprint for peace, just the backing of the US and the international community.

In New Delhi, Blair extracted from Vajpayee a promise to negotiate so long as he heard a clear condemnation of all forms of terrorism from Musharraf. In Islamabad, Blair appeared to extract those words from Musharraf.

As one Indian official who watched Blair's performance in Bangalore noted, star quality doesn't necessarily translate into influence. "They admire him, and they see him as a celebrity," the official said. "But that doesn't mean he can influence hard policy."

(The Wall Street Journal)

Blair's dramatic midnight dash to Kabul

HG-10 9/11 WK (10)

Bagram, January 8

TONY BLAIR flew with his wife Cherie into Afghanistan under cover of darkness on Monday night in a dramatic midnight mission to show Britain's solidarity with the country's cross-party Government and to rally British troops.

Amid chaotic scenes and unprecedented security, the Prime Minister became the first western leader to visit Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban when he arrived at the Bagram airbase in an RAF C-130 Hercules troop carrier. As the Blairs stepped off the plane in freezing temperatures, to be greeted by Hamid Karzai, the leader of Afghanistan's interim Government, they were mobbed by television crews, who had to be beaten back by armed US and British troops.

The tight security served as an uncomfortable reminder for the Prime Minister that the allies have failed to achieve two of their key war aims - the capture of Osama bin Laden and of the Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar. Blair, who briefed President Bush hours before his trip, admitted that the allies still faced a huge task when he said: "It is true that until our objectives are met our mission is not complete. But substantial progress has been made."

Blair embarked on a frantic round of talks during his visit, which was to last only a few hours, assuring Karzai that the west would not make the mistake of abandoning the country again.



British Prime Minister Tony Blair (right) with Afghanistan's interim leader Hamid Karzai at Bagram on Monday.

"Afghanistan has been a failed state for too long and the whole world has paid the price - in the export of terror, the export of drugs and finally in the explosion of death and destruction on the streets of the USA," he said.

Denouncing the Taliban as the world's "most brutal regime", Blair added that he regretted the west had waited until the events of

September 11 to take action. "If there is any criticism of the international community it is not that we acted when we did, but perhaps that we should have acted sooner."

He attempted to strike an upbeat note, insisting that a huge amount had been achieved. "If you go back to the appalling events of September 11 people were sceptical about action in

Afghanistan," he said. "Some people said there would be a humanitarian, military and political disaster. Now we are able to see that as a result of the strength of the international coalition we have managed to achieve more than people could have dreamt of."

In a reference to the bin Laden video in which the al-Qaida leader

gloated over the attacks on New York and Washington, Blair said the guilt of the terror network had been established "beyond doubt". "The coalition put together a carefully targeted military campaign aimed at destroying the terrorist training camp, then the Taliban's military infrastructure and finally attacking their frontline troops," he said.

"The result has been the destruction of the al-Qaida network inside Afghanistan and the fall of the Taliban."

After tasting at first hand the anger in the Muslim world at the allies' campaign, when Islamists protested against his visit to Bangladesh, Blair said the widespread support for the new Afghan Government had shown that the west was not at war with Islam.

"The joy that followed the fall of the Taliban nailed the lie that ours was a war against Islam," he said. "We were always on the side of the Afghan people against the Taliban and we remain on the side of the Afghan people today. This country faces a huge task of reconstruction and we will play our role in that."

In an address to British troops guarding Bagram airbase, Blair was to offer his thanks for their "brilliant work".

"I want to say a special word of thanks to the British forces," he said. "We have some of the finest forces in the world and both in the offensive operation against the Taliban and al-Qaida and now in the (international force) they have acquitted themselves brilliantly."

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 JAN 2002

71-10 Blairy Worldview 811

We in the former colonies have long suspected it, but it now comes on the authority of prime minister Tony Blair that Britain is no longer a "super power". The old empire, says the chief promoter of Cool Britannia, is "long gone". But that still leaves room for what many in the media have dismissed as Mr Blair's "pyjama diplomacy". Of course, being a Christian of strong convictions, it is perhaps entirely apt that Mr Blair should redefine his country's contemporary geopolitical role in wholly moral terms. On his second mission to India in three months — this time, ironically, to establish peace in the region whereas the last time he was here to drum up support for (Afghan) war — Mr Blair described Britain as a "pivotal force for good" in the modern world. Britain's "unparalleled" past "connections" with a number of world regions — thanks to a history in which it had conquered and colonised half the globe — felt Mr Blair, could help the country build new partnerships and evolve a "modern foreign policy role" for itself. While some of what Mr Blair said was purely for the consumption of critics back home, his rather fond and uncritical references to the "unparalleled" historical connections would have likely struck a jarring note or two in the minds of his politically-minded hosts in India. Particularly since Mr Blair had also gone on record, just a day before he expanded on his idea of Britain's new global role, that discussing the Kashmir problem was very much at the heart of his peace odyssey to the subcontinent.

Recently declassified documents from the period 1947 to 1965, reveal that Britain might have wilfully connived at the Pakistani strategy of seizing Kashmir, which started with the tribal invasion of Jammu and Kashmir backed by the Pakistani army. But for the extremely partisan role of the "rogue" minister of commonwealth relations, Philip Noel-Baker, Kashmir would not perhaps have become the problem it has today. It was Mr Baker, according to the documents, who masterminded the perpetuation of Kashmir as a dispute in the United Nations not just in violation of the Indian Independence Act but also in defiance of his own prime minister and cabinet colleagues, not to mention in disagreement with the advice of the then US secretary of state George Marshall. This pampering of Pakistan by a section of the British establishment, initially, for reasons of geopolitical influence and, later, for cold war expediency — which subsequently found an echo in the US policy — led to a situation where Pakistan was emboldened to even support cross-border terrorism so as to justify its case on Kashmir. Prime minister Tony Blair will have truly served the cause of war against terrorism and international peace during his sojourn in Islamabad if he makes it abundantly clear to General Musharraf that the international coalition against terrorism will not tolerate any more of his distinctions between terrorists and freedom fighters. With the US presence in Pakistan, it is now possible to monitor Islamabad's continued involvement in terrorism in India. Only after it gets established that Pakistan had discontinued its support to terrorism can the political dialogue begin. Mr Blair's effectiveness and commitment as a man of peace will be judged in India solely in terms of his ability to perform this mission.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

8 JAN 2002

Musharraf willing to address India's concerns

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 7. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, gave enough indications here tonight that he was willing to address the concerns of the international community and India on militancy in his country, when he declared unequivocally that Pakistan rejected terrorism in all forms and manifestations.

Addressing a joint press conference with the visiting British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, the Pakistan President promised to unveil soon a 'complete plan' to deal with extremism and sectarian violence in his country.

Despite the categorical tone and tenor of Gen. Musharraf's statement, Mr. Blair delivered a blunt message and said that the international community expected him to take action against five militant groups for their 'actions'. The British Prime Minister did not specify the groups.

Gen. Musharraf, significantly, in his comments did not link the Kashmir issue and terrorism. He complained about the 'dangerous military build-up and belligerent statements' from the Indian side, in contrast to the 'restraint' from Pakistan and talked about the urgent need to de-escalate the tension and begin the peace process.

Mr. Blair repeatedly made a specific reference to the October 1 attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and the December 13 attack on the Parliament House and emphasised that Pakistan should denounce all such incidents in categorical terms.

He asserted that there can be no justification for acts like those on October 1 and December 13. He said the international community expected Islamabad to arrest the leaders responsible for such acts, in consonance with the resolutions of the United Nations.

In response to a specific question on what more steps his Government contemplated in the



The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, at a press conference in Islamabad on Monday. — AFP

crackdown on the jihadis, Gen. Musharraf said he soon intended to address the people of Pakistan on a total plan. He claimed that Pakistan had been acting against religious extremists and sectarian outfits even before September 11 and cited his banning on August 14 two sectarian outfits.

List being 'analysed'

Answering a question about the demand made by India for extradition of 20 persons accused of committing acts of terror and currently taking shelter in Pakistan, he said his Government was in the process of 'analysing' the list and would take a decision. He also talked of the need for evidence against each of the persons mentioned in the list.

Mr. Blair disclosed that he had spoken to the United States President, George W. Bush, earlier in the day and they were in agreement that there was no scope for terror incidents like October 1 and December 13 and India and Pakistan would have to sit across the table for a meaningful dialogue process for resolution of the Kashmir issue.

Asked whether it was the people of Kashmir or the Indian Government that was guilty of acts of terrorism, Mr. Blair said "I don't think anything justifies what happened on October 1 and December 13. People confuse political causes. I am aware how strongly people here feel about Kashmir. The only real way forward for resolution of the problem is through meaningful dialogue".

Mr. Blair said that in his talks in New Delhi, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, informed him that India was willing to hold a dialogue with Pakistan on the "basis of exclusive peaceful means". Mr. Blair said that after his visit he was convinced both countries favoured de-escalation of tensions.

'Interaction with Vajpayee was useful'

Gen. Musharraf said that his informal interaction with the Indian Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, at Kathmandu was useful and certainly helped halt further escalation of tensions.

"I would say we have not moved another step forward even if we have not exactly moved a step back from the brink of war. My interaction with Mr. Vajpayee although informal was useful."

Gen. Musharraf is scheduled to preside over a high-level meeting of law and order agencies tomorrow to review the crackdown on jihadi outfits and take some concrete steps against sectarian organisations and extremist religious groups.

The meeting is expected to take a decision on banning some more outfits and on more steps to curb the jihadi outfits.

Takes RAF plane

NEW DELHI, JAN. 7. In a departure from normal practice, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and his wife Cherie chose to travel to Islamabad by a Royal Air Force (RAF) aircraft for "security reasons" and were accompanied by commandos. Members of the British delegation, which had come to India on a four-day official visit, also travelled with them.

An RAF official told PTI that Mr. Blair would "travel like a para-commando and there was no comfort" in the aircraft. The former U.S. President, Bill Clinton, had also travelled to Pakistan from here in 2000 by a U.S. Air Force plane and had switched cars in Islamabad for security reasons. — PTI

Tony blares Delhi stand on terror ✓

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 6

TONY BLAIR tonight assured A B Vajpayee that he would address India's concern on cross-border terrorism and do his best to persuade Pakistan to curb terrorists operating from its soil. The British Prime Minister had an hour-long discussion with Vajpayee before the two leaders signed the Delhi Declaration for a better and safer world.

The declaration reinforces the partnership between the two countries on terrorism, peace, security, development, education, science, technology, trade and investment. The two sides also agreed to enhance significantly their bilateral cooperation in counter-terrorism and build on the work of the UK-India Joint Working Group on Terrorism.

In their opening statements following the signing of the declaration, the two PMs highlighted the real strength and vitality of their relationship and the need for the two countries to step up cooperation, specifically in areas such as trade and investment.

Blair told the Indian leadership that the international community was anxious about the tension in the region and hoped India and Pakistan would initiate a political dialogue soon.

Reiterating the West's position that terrorism had to be curbed wherever it exists, he endorsed India's position that cross-border terrorism needs to be checked before a meaningful dialogue can begin with Pakistan. "Terrorism in all forms has to stop before a dialogue can begin."

He equated the Parliament strike to an attack on the British Parliament. Blair made it clear that strong measures would have to be taken and a half-way house wouldn't work. He steered clear of any role for his country on Kashmir and said the issue needs to be resolved by the two countries.

On his part, Vajpayee dug into history and said it was Pakistan that sent mercenaries into Kashmir and turned it into a dispute. He reiterated that India was willing to discuss with Pakistan all issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, provided it stopped cross-border terrorism.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 7 JAN 2002

Blair to discuss terrorism issue with India, Pak

By SANJAY SURI

LONDON: For British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the trip to India and Pakistan will mean taking up the issue of terrorism once again.

Mr Blair visited India House in London in 1992 when Labour was in opposition to discuss what role Britain could play in curbing terrorism in India. Then a junior MP, he accompanied Jack Cunningham who was then shadow foreign secretary.

Mr Cunningham and Mr Blair were then concerned with booking terrorists over the crash of the Pan Am jumbo at Lockerbie in Scotland. The issue the Indian media raised was that Britain had shown far less concern over the 1984 crash of the Air-India plane that was headed for London from Toronto. Mr Blair was non-committal. So was Mr Cunningham. But from his days as junior MP, Mr Blair has emerged as a world statesman, particularly over the global war on terror.

There is little doubt that Mr Blair will weigh down heavily on Pakistan to push it towards ending support to terrorism.

India is keen to seek Mr Blair's intervention in attempts to end Pakistani support to terrorism, but not in mediating over the Jammu and Kashmir issue, a senior Indian official said. But Pakistan will seek to link concessions with a plea for Mr Blair's intervention over Kashmir,

the official said.

"We are expecting Mr Blair to handle this on the same principles that he brought to the situation in Northern Ireland," the official said. The first of these is that an end to violence must be immediate and unconditional.

Mr Blair, who begins his India visit on Friday, will bring to bear considerable experience in handling terrorism, not just



Blair's record in Northern Ireland is something that should suit India; an end to violence and terrorism while talks on underlying issues get a chance

over recent months following September 11, but also over recent years in grappling with terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Mr Blair's record in Northern Ireland is something that should suit India: an end to violence and terrorism while talks to tackle underlying issues have a chance. The Northern Ireland problem is far from over, though there is progress.

The problem of terrorism in India might actually be on the rise; the grenade attack outside the Srinagar assembly on Wednesday was a reminder of that.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw went public last week with a historic shift in the British position. Terrorists in Kashmir are terrorists and not freedom fighters, he said. And Pakistan must do more to end terrorism than the arrests it announced. Mr Blair's visit is expected to give personal force to that position.

Britain has always backed the Indian position that the Kashmir issue should be resolved bilaterally and peacefully. Mr Blair's concern over the situation was evident from talks he held with U.S. President George W. Bush while holidaying in Egypt.

Mr Bush has been engaged in extensive discussions over the situation in India and Pakistan while on vacation himself in what is coming to be known as "denim diplomacy".

The Times reported on Wednesday that Mr Straw and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell had agreed in October to step up pressure on Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf to crack down on terrorists in Pakistan once the conflict in Afghanistan ended.

According to *The Times*, Mr Powell is understood to have expressed forcefully the view that while Islamabad should be let "off the hook" for its role in spawning the Taliban regime, there could be no succour for terrorist groups operating with Pakistani support or from its territory. (IANS)