

UK minister faces contempt for al-Qaida tag on suspect

Richard Norton-Taylor,
Matthew Taylor and
Owen Bowcott
London, November 29

THE UK Attorney-General will investigate whether Home Secretary David Blunkett's outspoken comments about the arrest of an alleged al-Qaida terrorist are a breach of the laws of contempt of court.

Lord Goldsmith's office promised the politically embarrassing inquiry into possible contempt of court — by one Cabinet minister of another — after the Attorney-General by coincidence delivered a critique of reporting practices that undermine the laws of contempt of court.

"Some lawyers are concerned...", Lord Goldsmith, QC, told a conference of journalists in London, "that these days we may see reporting about the background of the suspect at the time of the arrest that in previous years was usually only seen after a conviction".

Blunkett had said: "This individual posed a very real threat to the life and liberty of our country.. This person has

Turkey suspect

TURKISH POLICE have arrested a man they say ordered and helped plan a suicide bomb attack on an Istanbul synagogue earlier this month. The suspect was arrested with a false identification while trying to pass across Turkey's border to Iran, Istanbul deputy police chief Halil Yilmaz said. The bombing of the Beth Israel synagogue was one of four truck bomb attacks on British and Jewish targets in Istanbul in November.

Reuters, Istanbul

connections with the network of al-Qaida groups."

It appears that the seriousness with which the security and intelligence services are treating the case, and their confidence about the evidence, explained the Home Secretary's robust response.

The Attorney-General's office conceded he would investigate whether the Home Secretary's comments technically constitute a breach of the laws of contempt of court.

On Friday, Blunkett attempted to distance himself from his comments, insisting he had not said the suspect was from al-Qaida. "He said he was from the al-Qaida network rather than from al-Qaida," a Home Office spokesman said. "He's trying to strike the balance between reassuring the public that steps are being taken and recognising that due process must take place."

Some lawyers believed the remarks constituted a clear breach. Keith Mathieson, a media lawyer at Reynolds Porter Chamerberlain, said: "It was an extraordinary thing for the Home Secretary to say. It's hard to think of anything more prejudicial to say about anybody now than that they are linked to al-Qaida."

In Gloucester, the suggestion that Sajid Badat was a potential suicide bomber was met with disbelief and anger.

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 NOV 2003

Blair arms cops with 'anti-people' law

Associated Press

LONDON, Nov. 26. — The Tony Blair government, outlining its legislative programme today, proposed sweeping new powers for police to deal with terrorist attacks and other emergencies — a plan which has alarmed some civil liberties campaigners.

Queen Elizabeth II read the government's programme to lawmakers crowded into the House of Lords for the tradition-laden ceremony.

Other new legislation would allow universities to levy increased fees on students — a proposal bitterly opposed by many lawmakers in Mr Blair's governing Labour Party; prepare for the introduction of compulsory identity cards in Britain; simplify the appeals system for asylum seekers; and grant same-sex couples the same legal rights as married couples.

The government proposed draft legislation making it possible to hold a referendum on joining the European single currency — but without signaling any move from its long-held position that the economic conditions must first be right.

The past year has been dominated by a divisive war in Iraq and unease over Mr

Blair's domestic agenda, and the Prime Minister's standing in opinion polls has dropped.

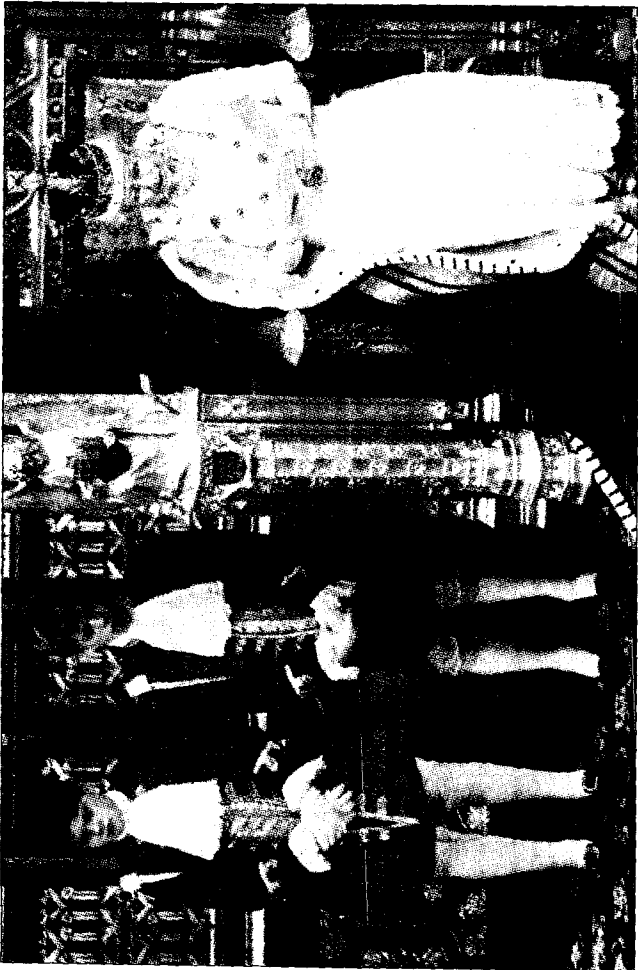
"I think we do want to get back into bread-and-butter issues. Over the past year, or year and a half, we have been preoccupied in many cases, in the headlines at least, with foreign affairs," health secretary Mr John Reid said in a pre-speech interview with BBC TV.

The Civil Contingencies Bill would give authorities the power to evacuate dangerous areas in the event of a "catastrophic incident," and impose no-go zones.

"The threat of international terrorism and a changing climate have led to a series of emergencies and heightened concerns for the future," said the queen, who sat at a golden throne during the speech.

"My government will introduce a Bill creating a long-term foundation for civil contingencies capable of meeting these challenges at national and local level."

The proposal has already raised concerns from human rights groups in Britain, who fear it represents a threat to civil liberties and will give authorities the power to ban peaceful protest and destroy private property without compensation.



A ROYAL DUTY: Queen Elizabeth II delivers her speech to members of the House of Lords and the House of Commons during the State Opening of Parliament in London on Wednesday. — AFP.

Osama bodyguard sentenced

Associated Press

DUSSELDORF, Nov. 26.

— A Jordanian was convicted of helping plan terror attacks in Germany and sentenced to four years in prison today, but he received less than half of the maximum term after giving what prosecutors said was valuable testimony about the Al-Qaida during his trial.

A court here found Shadi Abdellah (27) —

who testified he once briefly served as Osama bin Laden's bodyguard — guilty of membership in a terrorist organization and falsifying passports. He had faced a possible maximum term of 10 years.

Abdellah was one of nine alleged members of the Al-Qawhid group arrested in Germany in April 2002 on suspicion of plotting imminent terror attacks in the country.

During his five-month trial he spoke openly of Al

Tawhid's aims, naming Berlin's Jewish Museum and a Jewish-owned discotheque here as possible targets.

Terror dolls seized: Israeli customs agents seized 400 Osama bin Laden and 50 Saddam Hussein dolls today, saying they were "terror inciting" material, adds a report from Jerusalem. An Arab Israeli had ordered the singing and dancing dolls that carry toy guns as a "gimmick" for sale to Arabs and Jews in Israel.

Imran bashes Bush over terror war

Agence France Presse

LONDON, Nov. 26. — Pakistani cricket hero-turned politician Mr Imran Khan has attacked the U.S.-led war on terrorism, accusing Mr George W. Bush of lacking leadership.

Addressing students at the Oxford University, Mr Khan also accused Mr Tony Blair of "total subservience" towards Mr Bush.

"I think the response to 9/11 was wrong. It wasn't properly calculated," he said. "There is more terrorism in the world today than there was two years back (following 9/11)," he told the Oxford student union yesterday.



Khan

spy charges leave British govt in piquant position

Press Trust of India

LONDON, Nov. 9. — The British government is facing a piquant situation over a bungled spying operation by its Internal Intelligence Service MI5 against the Pakistan High Commission.

An MP has demanded to know why the espionage was apparently carried out without the sanction from Home Secretary Mr David Blunkett.

The operation has raised concerns among MPs that the MI5 may be running a team of "rogue" agents to carry out illegal bugging. According to the *Sunday Times*, under the cover of restoration work at the Pakistan High Commission here, MI5 agents stole secret codes used by diplomats for sending messages to Islamabad. They also worked out how to bug an internal telephone system and closed-circuit TV camera in the office of then High Commissioner Mr Abdul-Kader Jaffer.

Mr Normal Baker, a Liberal Democrat MP who takes a close interest in security matters, said the operation had echoes of rogue MI5 missions in the 1960s. "Peter Wright described in his book *Spy-catcher* how MI5 bugged and burgled its way across London," he said. "It seems nothing has changed."

THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

10 NOV 2003

UK police in racist row

Vijay Dutt
London, November 2

THE METROPOLITAN Police, Britain's largest police force has been caught up in a new row following allegations that it allowed a racist culture to develop unchecked, with Asian and Black officers facing insults, discrimination and intimidation by white colleagues.

The report details almost 20 cases of Asian and Black officers and civilians across the Force who have felt that they have been discriminate against. In one case an Asian officer was called "Paki" and in another a Black receptionist was arrested on suspicion of stealing a purse. But later charges were dropped.

The damning confidential internal report also says the police has not done enough to eradicate racism, has a poor image with black and Asian people both inside and outside the force, and often approaches grievances from ethnic minority staff with "apathy and misdirection".

It says that a greater proportion of black and Asian officers leave the force during their training or probationary period than equivalent white officers. Police confirmed that claim admitting that this number is

more than double.

The report quotes an officer at the force's training centre in Hendon, north London, saying to an Asian trainee: "If one of my daughters came home with a black man I'd probably kick him out of the house."

The report, 'What is Happening to Our Ethnic Minorities?', will reignite the debate about racism in the police sparked by the BBC documentary, *The Secret Policeman*, which was largely filmed at Bruche training centre in Warrington. Last month the programme showed a police officer donning a Ku Klux Klan-style hood and showing how he would "kill a Paki".

The report by the Metropolitan Police Black Police Association, which has been handed to commissioner, Sir John Stevens, says problems exist, particularly at Hendon. Hendon is the country's leading training centre.

The Metropolitan Police has confirmed it had launched an inquiry into the report which has also been passed to the Home Office which has overall responsibility for the force. The inquiry will be headed by the assistant commissioner of the force, Tarique Ghaffur, Britain's most senior Asian officer.

LABOUR MEET / A TESTING TIME, SAYS PRIME MINISTER

Blair justifies Iraq invasion

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, SEPT. 30. For someone facing the toughest test of his leadership since he came to power six years ago, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, today struck a remarkably defiant posture when he addressed the Labour Party's annual conference in Bournemouth, a day after his rival and the "PM-in-waiting", Gordon Brown, received a standing ovation for distancing himself from the more controversial aspects of Mr. Blair's domestic agenda.

Mr Blair was under enormous pressure to regain the trust of the party's increasingly rebellious rank and file but far from waving the white flag, he ruled out any compromise on policies which have seen his own and the Government's ratings plunge to an unprecedented low in recent months.

He started off by reminding the delegates that he was the first Labour Prime Minister to address a party conference for the seventh consecutive time.

"We have never been here before, never governed so long," he said and then asked rhetorically whether they wanted to "give up on it, or get on with it?"

Mr Blair admitted that it was a "testing time", but made clear that there was no question of rolling back his contentious programme of public services reforms, seen both in and outside the party as a lurch towards privatisation.

MPs who still behaved as though they were still in Opposition.

Mr Blair justified the invasion of Iraq, shrugging off polls, which show that an overwhelming majority of Britons believe his Government misled them over the threat from Saddam Hussein.

He acknowledged that the issue had "divided" the party and the country and many believed that the action he had taken was "wrong". But he said he would take the same decision again, if he were confronted with a similar situation.

There was no hint of contrition as Mr Blair lectured the delegates on the virtues of his policies and the achievements of his Government.

Unlike Mr Brown, who pointedly spoke of "Labour" values, Mr Blair stuck to the "New" Labour theme, which a growing number of party activists believe runs against the grain of the organisation's "core" philosophy.

In his speech on Monday, Mr Brown used the word "Labour" 63 times and, parodying Mr Blair's remarks that "we are at our best when we are at our boldest", he said the party was at its best when "we are boldest, when we are united, best when we are Labour".

Mr Blair retorted today that it was wrong to confuse "values" with policies, and insisted that he was taking the party and the Government in the right direction. Mr Brown was seen grinning from ear to ear.



The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, waves to delegates at the Labour Party conference in Bournemouth on Tuesday. — Reuters

He warned that a "retreat" would be disastrous for the party, and had a dig at his

Not sexed up, but Blair's claim criticised

Associated Press

LONDON, Sept. 11. — Prime Minister Tony Blair's government did not deliberately "sex up" a dossier on Iraqi weapons by including a disputed claim about chemical and biological weapons, Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee reported today.

But the committee criticised the government's presentation of the claim that Iraq was prepared to launch some chemical and biological weapons on 45 minutes notice. That claim was prominent in the dossier published by the government in September as it laid out its case for military action in Iraq. The committee, drawn from both houses of Parliament, was also critical

of defence secretary Mr Geoff Hoon and said his defence ministry had been "unhelpful and potentially misleading" by initially failing to disclose that some of its staff had expressed concerns about the dossier.

"We are disturbed that after the first evidence session (before the committee), which did not cover all the concerns released by the intelligence staff, the defence secretary decided against giving instructions for a letter to be written to us outlining the concerns," the report said.

Blair's government has been under increasing pressure because coalition forces have not found evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction — which was the heart of the government's case for military action. The gov-



ernment has been embroiled in a dispute with the British Broadcasting Corp. over a report which cited an unidentified source as saying the government overruled intelligence advice to "sex up" the dossier by including the

45-minute claim, and that it probably knew the claim was wrong.

The BBC reporter, Andrew Gilligan, subsequently said his source had blamed Blair's communications chief, Mr Alastair Campbell, for insisting on including the claim. The Intelligence and Security Committee rejected those charges, and accepted the government's assertion that the Joint Intelligence Committee which prepared the dossier did not come under political pressure.

The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, in a report issued on 7 July, also absolved the government and Mr Campbell. The apparent suicide of government weapons adviser David Kelly, who was identified as the source of the BBC report, is the

subject of a continuing judicial inquiry led by an appeals judge, Lord Hutton.

Hutton's inquiry has heard evidence that intelligence officials within the defence ministry were unhappy with the dossier and a senior official wrote to his superiors to express such concern. Mr Brian Jones, who till recently headed a section of the Defence Intelligence Staff, told the Hutton inquiry that some of his staff felt that the dossier was "over-egging certain assessments".

The chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Mr John Scarlett, however, assured the ISC that he did not "at any time feel under pressure, nor was he asked to include material that he did not believe ought to be included in the dossier", today's reports said.

Breach in protocol

Blair jeered at Highland games

For the first time in the 900-year-old history of the Highland games there was a political protest; a 12-year-old girl presented a posy of flowers to Queen Elizabeth, then looked at the Prime Minister standing next to her and called him a "nasty man"; the 18,000-strong crowd booed at Tony Blair and his wife Cherie as they arrived. The writing is clearly on the wall. Blair protests that he is determined to stay; if he had a choice he would not be giving voice to his determination. The British public is revolted. Popularity polls show a significant drop, particularly since the Hutton Inquiry started, and a recent poll shows that only about 40 per cent of the British public trust him or want him in Downing Street. But the open show of distrust and displeasure must have been a worse shock. The "sexed-up" Iraq dossier has been Blair's undoing. For a man who turned around a dormant Labour Party and went on to win another term, boos and jeers can be a severe jolt. Blair was so unnerved as to breach royal protocol in a hurry to leave the games.

Britain's unqualified support of America's war on Iraq was the biggest blunder Blair could have made. He ignored public opinion — an unprecedented half a million people gathered at Trafalgar Square to oppose the attack on Iraq before it was launched. He used spin-doctors to "sex-up" the case of terrorism against Saddam Hussein which did not exist. In the process he forgot the nature of the British electorate as well as the strength of British institutions. If the Labour Party is to retain its electoral support it may be necessary to replace Blair. Britain has 11,000 troops deployed in Iraq and has pledged another 1,200 in response to President Bush's call for help. As body bags going home to the USA increase, Bush is getting more and more jittery. He wants other countries to help pay for the damage so wantonly caused but will not loosen control over the future of Iraq. Not yet but it will come!

THE STATESMAN

11 SEP 2003

Straw admits role in 'strengthening' dossier

London, September 9

BRITISH FOREIGN Secretary Jack Straw on Tuesday admitted he wanted a "killer paragraph" inserted into the government's dossier on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Straw requested that part of the document be "strengthened" to highlight the "centrality of weapons of mass destruction to Saddam Hussein's role", according to an email presented to the Hutton inquiry.

Details of how the foreign sec-

retary who has so far avoided the spotlight in the affair surrounding David Kelly's suicide — wanted the dossier hardened, emerged alongside the revelation that Foreign Office officials agreed to the scientist's name being made public.

According to emails released by the inquiry, Peter Ricketts, the former political director of the Foreign Office and now Britain's ambassador to Nato, alongside Straw's Press secretary, John Williams, both agreed that Kelly should be named.

The foreign secretary attempted to play down the importance of their contents, highlighted by Tuesday's *Independent* newspaper, saying they had been on the inquiry website "for weeks".

Asked whether he had requested, through his private secretary Mark Sedwill, that a "killer paragraph" be inserted into the September 2002 dossier, Straw said: "This is an accurate reference to an email that was sent on my behalf by a private secretary, and what I wanted was to raise the prominence of Sad-

dam Hussein's defiance of the UN over 12 years. I still do."

Straw has not been called to give evidence to Lord Hutton's inquiry, but the senior law lord may want the foreign secretary to testify when he begins his second phase next week.

Straw told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme: "As to any role I had in the dossier, of course I had a role in the dossier. That's well-known and well-advertised on the website."

"Whether Lord Hutton wishes to talk to me is a matter entirely

for Lord Hutton. I am not going to get into the detail because there are questions about the comments which I made.

"I am very, very happy to answer those questions if Lord Hutton wishes me to do so."

In an email copied to senior figures in the government — including Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's former director of strategy and communications — Ricketts stated: "I don't think there is a problem for us if the Press name him (Kelly)."

"No need for us to be defen-

sive; so I agree with John that if the name is presented to us, we should confirm. But let's do it in an organised way.

"I suggest we leave it to John W. (Williams), and deflect attempts to get half a dozen of us to say different things!" Ricketts was responding to an email from Williams. In his memorandum, also copied to Campbell, Williams wrote: "... I am very happy for him to be named. Nothing personal." The email exchange took place on July 9.

Agencies

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 SEP 2003

Tories want Blair to go Campbell way

London, Aug. 31 (Reuters): Britain's opposition Conservatives launched a bitter attack on Prime Minister Tony Blair today, insisting that the departure of his media chief would not end his government's culture of spin and deceit.

Blair's communications director Alastair Campbell announced his resignation on Friday after six years of masterminding the government's presentation.

Blair's office said his successor David Hill, would head a "new structure" in government communications, suggesting the slick political spinning and media management favoured by Campbell was on the way out.

But Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith said an obsession with presentation and manipulation was ingrained in Blair's government and would continue to dominate it unless and until Blair himself stepped down.

"The machinery of spin and deceit power's Blair's government," Duncan Smith wrote in the *Independent on Sunday* newspaper. "Tony Blair, the leader, has become the 'misleader'." Duncan Smith, whose Conservatives are still struggling in the polls despite growing public mistrust in Blair fuelled by an ongoing inquiry into whether he exaggerated the threat from Iraq to justify war,

sought to paint Campbell's departure as a reason for Blair to follow.

"It's not the resignation of the servant that matters but the departure of his master," he wrote. "The real Downing Street director of communications must go — Tony Blair himself."

Blair is very unlikely to do so, but instead is widely expected to use Campbell's resignation as an opportunity to relaunch his government's image.

The *Independent* reported that a new "ministry of truth" would be set up by Blair to handle the media in a different way, with Hill — a straight-talking public relations expert and former Labour Party press officer — seeking to rid the government of its spinning reputation.

But Hill was already facing trouble, with some Sunday newspapers zeroing in on his financial affairs and pointing to a potential conflict of interests emerging from his ownership of thousands of share options in a political lobbying firm.

A spokesperson for Blair's Downing Street office said Hill would comply with the "rigorous rules governing the employment of special advisers, including those in relation to any potential conflict of interests".

In a sign that Blair may find it hard to leave the spin culture behind, newspapers said his new media strategy is being devised by Peter Mandelson, another master of presentation who is widely seen as the architect of Blair's political success.

Political commentators used the pages of Sunday newspapers to warn Blair he would find it lonely without Campbell, a colleague, friend and right-hand man who helped him rebuild and rebrand his party into the New Labour which won power in 1997.

"Tony Blair... will feel most acutely the loss of the alter ego who has been closest to him through every disaster and triumph of his premiership," wrote analyst Andrew Rawnsley in the *Observer* newspaper.

Political commentator Matthew D'Ancona, writing in the *Sunday Times*, also pointed to Blair's isolation at the top. "Can Blair manage without Campbell?," he asked. "Of course he can. But he will have to manage alone."



Tony Blair

1 SEP 2003

Aide straw for Blair ^{uk(1)}

London, Aug. 30 (Reuters): British newspapers today hailed the departure of top government media handler Alastair Campbell as offering Prime Minister Tony Blair a chance to shake off a reputation for putting style before substance.

They said Blair, in the midst of political turmoil over his policy on Iraq, should seize the moment and re-launch his government as he battles to regain the public's trust. The left-leaning *Guardian* newspaper said Campbell's resignation "creates the chance of a fresh start, not just for the government, but for our whole political culture."

The *Financial Times* urged Blair to re-launch his Premiership at the autumn Labour Party

conference "focusing more on the substance of policy than on the spin for which Campbell was often blamed."

Campbell resigned yesterday, a day after Blair had been forced to appear before a judicial inquiry — into the death of an arms expert — to answer questions about a BBC report of claims that officials in the prime minister's office had hyped intelligence on the threat posed by Iraq.

The BBC report triggered a dispute between Campbell and the broadcaster which many commentators had predicted would lead to his resignation.

"When the communications chief becomes the story, it is time to move on," the *Financial*

Times said. Newspapers hailed Campbell's role as one of the architects of the election landslide that swept the Labour party to power in 1997 after 18 years in the wilderness.

But they said that as an unelected appointee he had been given too much power and by his heavy-handed media manipulation he had corroded public trust in the Labour government.

"This is a man who has so corrupted our political culture that nobody now believes a word this government says," said the right-wing *Daily Mail*.

A survey this week showed that public trust in Blair has fallen dramatically, to just 27 per cent now from 74 per cent in 1998.

Campbell resigns

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, AUG 29. In a dramatic move, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair's controversially powerful chief of communications, Alastair Campbell, announced his resignation on Friday afternoon in what was seen as an attempt to pre-empt any damaging headlines in the event of a negative verdict from the Hutton inquiry into the weapons expert David Kelly's death.

Though it was known for sometime that Mr. Campbell intended to quit, he was expected to stay on until the Kelly affair was out of the way. For it was believed that if he left now, he would be seen to be leaving with a cloud hanging over his head for his role in the events that led to Kelly's death.

The suddenness of the announcement took the media by surprise and led the TV news bulletins throughout the evening. Even now, no date for his departure has been set and it is not known who would succeed him though the name of a former Labour Party 'spinner' is being mentioned.

In a statement, Mr. Campbell said it had been a 'privilege' to work for Mr. Blair, and



the Prime Minister in turn described him as an 'immensely' able and fearless official. Mr. Blair said Mr. Campbell would remain a friend.

Mr. Campbell, who joined Mr. Blair's New Labour team in 1994, saw him through two hugely successful elections and was widely believed to be the real power behind the throne. His influence extended far beyond Downing Street and the power he came to wield in recent years was resented by MPs and senior civil servants who saw him as an extra-constitutional figure. His abrasive style alienated many in the media, and of late he had begun to be portrayed as a liability to Mr. Blair.

THE HINDU

30 AUG 2003

Blair denies 'inflating intelligence'

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, AUG 28. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said today that the allegation that his Government inflated intelligence to justify an attack on Iraq was so serious that if it were true it would have 'merited' his resignation.

Giving evidence before the Hutton inquiry into the death of the weapons scientist, David Kelly, a tense Mr. Blair claimed that he was unaware of any unhappiness in the intelligence community over the contents of the Iraq intelligence dossier, published by his Government last September. He insisted that the document had the full backing of intelligence chiefs and rejected the view that, while presenting it to MPs, he gave undue prominence to the claim that Iraq could deploy its weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes.

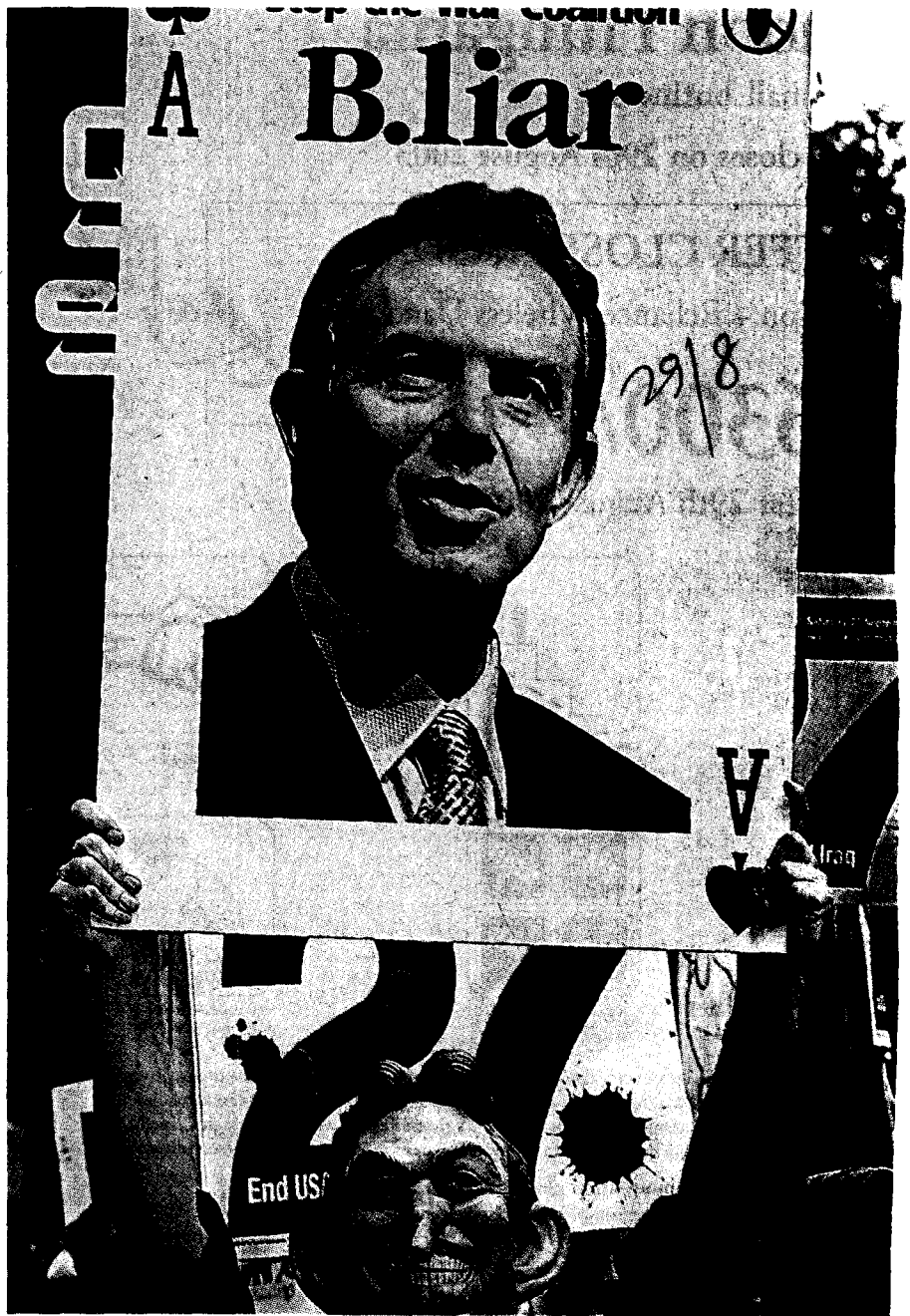
The allegation that his Government "sexed up" the dossier and included the 45-minute claim despite unease about its authenticity among intelligence officials was broadcast by the BBC on May 29 in a controversial report based on a briefing by Kelly touching off a political storm that was to claim the scientist's life.

Mr. Blair said the BBC claim was 'extraordinary' and an "extremely serious one". He also rejected the charge that his communications chief, Alastair Campbell, embellished the dossier against the wishes of the intelligence community. He said Mr. Campbell only helped with the dossier's presentation but it was the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, John Scarlett, who had been always in control of the project. About the controversial 45-minute claim, which later turned to be based on flimsy intelligence, he said he was satisfied with it.

Mr. Blair is only the second British Prime Minister ever to appear before a judicial inquiry, the other being John Major who gave evidence to an arms deal probe nearly a decade ago. Mr. Blair's appearance was billed as the most difficult moment of his Prime Ministership, and the pressure on him was seen to have increased greatly after the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon's deposition on Wednesday passing the buck for the Kelly affair to Downing Street.

Anti-war protesters, wearing Blair look-alike masks and red noses, shouted slogans and waved placards as he stepped out of his car, looked around with a frown and was escorted into the courtroom.

But, contrary to expectations, there were no fireworks, and Mr. Blair firmly stuck to



An anti-war protester at the Royal Courts of Justice in London on Thursday where the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, testified in Kelly's death. — AFP

the line that his Government had done nothing wrong — either in the way it presented intelligence, or handled the issues surrounding Kelly either before or after he was identified as the BBC's source.

During his more than two-hour deposition, Mr. Blair remained unmoved by the crisis facing his Government over the Kelly affair even as a TV poll showed further erosion of his credibility among voters.

Hoon defends Iraq policy

Associated Press

LONDON, Aug. 27. — Defence Secretary Mr Geoff Hoon said today that a government weapons adviser, whose death triggered a major political crisis, had supported the British government's policy on Iraq.

Mr Hoon, the most senior official to appear before a inquiry into the death of David Kelly, said the scientist told him that he backed the government's drive to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr Hoon said Kelly made the remarks during a discussion in the defence ministry's cafeteria earlier this year. Mr Hoon said he did not know Kelly's identity at the time and the conversation was a casual encounter.

The defence minister said his ministry

is cumulative, that it builds up into a picture," he said.

Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair is scheduled to appear before the inquiry on Thursday. A small group protesting the war in Iraq demonstrated outside the Royal Courts of Justice in central London as Mr Hoon testified.

Mr Hoon gave evidence about his involvement in the Defence Ministry's naming of Kelly as the possible source for a British Broadcasting Corp. report that questioned the government's case for war with Iraq and sparked a huge political storm.

The BBC report alleged that the government dossier about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction had been "sexed up" to assist Mr Blair's argument for war, including a warning that such weapons could be fired within 45 minutes.



Anti-War protesters outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London on Wednesday. — AFP supported a government dossier on Iraq. British intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. He said was reliable. "It is my view that intelli-

Blair played key role in naming Kelly

HT Correspondent
& The Guardian
London, August 24

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair gave the go-ahead to the strategy that led to David Kelly being named, believing it was "inevitable" that the weapons expert would eventually be unmasked.

A confidential Cabinet Office note of a series of meetings held in Number 10 reveals that the Prime Minister supported "making public that a source had come forward", but left the specifics of the two-stage "naming strategy" to the defence ministry.

Further evidence released on Saturday night also revealed that John Scarlett, chairman of the

Joint Intelligence Committee, said there was "general agreement" within Number 10 that Kelly's name would be revealed.

"Agreement that the issue would inevitably become public," he wrote in memo following a key meeting in Downing Street with the Prime Minister two days before Kelly was finally named. "We are already open to criticism for not coming clean about the existence of a possible source."

The disclosures, which come four days before Blair's appearance before the Hutton inquiry, is contained in a minute passed to the law lord's team last week and extended this weekend. They put Blair at the heart of the decision-making process that led

to Kelly being subjected to a public grilling by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee.

The government scientist committed suicide last month a week after he was named. Hutton has made clear that a key part of his inquiry into the circumstances of Kelly's death will focus on why there was so much pressure within the government to reveal him.

Number 10 has tried to distance itself from the decision to name Kelly, saying it was put in the hands of Geoff Hoon, the secretary of state for defence, and MoD officials. But far from leaving the issue to the MoD, a series of telephone calls between Hoon, Jonathan Powell, the Number 10 chief of staff, and

Alastair Campbell, Blair's director of communications, over the weekend before Kelly was named, reveal Downing Street's intense interest in the issue.

The MoD press statement, which gave clues to journalists attempting to uncover the source, was also originally drafted in Number 10, by the permanent secretary to the MoD, Campbell and Powell both annotated the document in detail before it was agreed.

BBC may sack Gilligan

Andrew Gilligan, the BBC correspondent at the centre of the storm over allegations that the Government "sexed up" intelli-

gence to make a stronger case for war against Iraq, has been removed from reporting duties and may soon be sacked.

Gilligan has been told to spend all his time preparing for a possible recall before the Hutton inquiry. Gilligan's departure from day-to-day reporting on the Radio 4 Today programme could be linked to revelations last week that he sent emails to two MPs on the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee suggesting questions they could ask Kelly that would be "devaluing" for the government.

Gilligan, the programme's defence correspondent, did not refer to the emails during his own evidence to Hutton two weeks

ago, and they were not submitted as part of the BBC's evidence, despite Hutton's demand that all relevant documents should be handed over. BBC managers were "extremely surprised" when the emails were disclosed at the Hutton inquiry. A manager reportedly said this could cause Gilligan's downfall.

Saddam's name dropped

A mosque named after former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in Aston, Birmingham has been renamed Jama Masjid after the mosque management received death threats. In 1988, Saddam donated £2 million for the construction of the mosque.

Diplomat spills Kelly premonition of death

London, Aug 21 (Reuters): Iraq weapons expert David Kelly eerily predicted his death six months ago, telling a British diplomat that if Baghdad was attacked he would be found "dead in the woods", the inquiry into his death revealed today.

The premonition was recounted at the investigation into the suicide of Kelly, sucked into the heart of a row over whether Prime Minister Tony Blair's inner circle hyped evidence about Iraq's weapons capability to win support for the war.

Blair is due to testify to the hearing next week and the inquiry is expected to finishing taking evidence late next month, judge Lord Hutton announced today.

Kelly, a former Iraq weapons inspector whose body was found in woodlands near his home last month, told diplomat David Broucher in February he advised Iraqi officials that if they cooperated with the inspectors "they would have nothing to fear".

"The implication was if the invasion went ahead, that would make him a liar and he would have betrayed his contacts, some of whom might be killed as a result of his actions," Broucher told the inquiry probing the death of the weapons expert.

Broucher said he asked Kelly what would happen if Iraq were attacked. "His reply was, which I took to be a throw-away remark: 'I will be found dead in the woods'."

"I thought he might have meant that he was at risk of being attacked by the Iraqis in some way," Broucher said.

But he added that Kelly, described by one of his former bosses as a man "welded to the truth", believed that the invasion "might go ahead anyway and that somehow this put him in a morally ambiguous position". Less than a month after his conversation with the diplomat, US and British forces invaded Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein, saying Saddam had failed a last chance to prove he had scrapped his weapons of mass destruction programmes.

Broucher said Kelly, who was the source for a BBC reporter's accusations that Blair's government "sexed up" a dossier making the case for war, believed British intelligence services had come under pressure to produce compelling evidence.

Hoon sees end of road for cabinet career in Kelly inquiry

FRANCISELLIOTT

London, Aug. 17: British defence secretary Geoff Hoon has told close colleagues that he has accepted he must "carry the can" for the death of David Kelly, the government scientist at the centre of claims that Downing Street exaggerated the case for war on Iraq.

Hoon telephoned colleagues last week to tell them he expected to have to "fall on his sword" over the affair. Last week, the Hutton inquiry into Dr Kelly's death disclosed that Hoon had overruled his most senior civil servant's request that the scientist be spared a public grilling by the Commons' foreign affairs committee.

The defence secretary told Sir Kevin Tebbit, permanent secretary at the ministry of defence, that Kelly would have to face MPs for "presentational" reasons.

Hoon has informed friends that he believes the disclosure, and the allegations that he was prepared to put political expediency ahead of Kelly's welfare, spell doom for his cabinet career. Despite mounting evidence that officials at No 10 and Tony Blair himself were intimately involved in pressure exerted on Kelly in the days before his apparent suicide, the defence secretary has made clear he intends to shoulder the blame.

"He's told us he's going to carry the can," one close col-

league said last night. "He said, 'You don't dump on the boss.'"

While Hoon's allies insist that he will mount a stout defence of his actions when he appears before the Hutton inquiry, probably next week, the defence secretary has privately admitted that he believes his ministerial career is over. "Geoff knows you don't come back from something like this," said one friend.

Hoon's acceptance of his fate will cheer No 10 as its most senior officials, including Alastair Campbell and Jonathan Powell, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, prepare to give evidence to Lord Hutton this week.

The inquiry will be told that Blair made clear he wanted Kelly "handled within the MoD

had exaggerated the case for war in its September dossier triggered the row between Downing Street and the BBC.

Blair's official spokesperson has repeatedly claimed that the MoD was the "lead department" in the handling of Kelly's case and that the widely-criticised decision to release a statement leading to his identification last month was taken "in accordance with MoD procedures". Downing Street officials are also preparing to tell the inquiry that they made "strenuous" efforts to keep the scientist's name out of the public domain in the days after he had confessed to his MoD managers that he had met Gilligan.

Lord Hutton will be told of an

approach by senior officials at No 10 to the intelligence and security committee, a group of MPs and peers appointed to oversee the intelligence and security services, with an offer to interview Kelly in absolute confidence about his meeting with Gilligan.

The Downing Street staff are expected to claim that the committee rejected the offer, on the grounds that it would leave its members open to charges of collusion and impropriety.

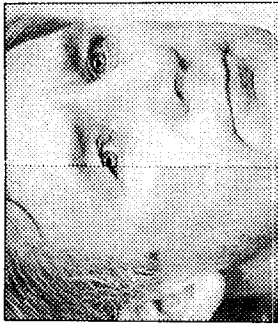
The committee insisted that the fact of such a meeting with an official — even if he was unnamed — should not be suppressed.

The committee's insistence allegedly necessitated Hoon's

public statement that an unnamed official had come forward, which led in turn to Kelly's speedy identification by the media. No 10 staff are expected to claim, however, that it was Hoon's decision alone to allow Kelly's public cross-examination before the foreign affairs committee.

It emerged last week that Hoon overruled Sir Kevin who had urged him to "resist" any request from MPs to interview Kelly in public. He asked Hoon to "show some regard for the man himself", pointing out that he had "come forward voluntarily, is not used to being thrust into the public eye and is not on trial".

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH



Geoff Hoon

as a personnel matter" as soon as he was told that the weapons inspector had admitted to having met Andrew Gilligan, the defence correspondent for BBC

Radio 4's *Today* programme. Gilligan's allegations in reports on May 29 that the government

1 8 AUG 2003

Blair's name figures in Kelly affair

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, AUG. 17. For the first time, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair's name has cropped up in connection with the controversy over the sort of pressures to which the weapons expert, David Kelly, was subjected after being identified as the source of BBC's contentious report in which his Government was accused of exaggerating the threat from Iraq.

The Hutton inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Kelly's death has been told that Mr. Blair wanted him to be questioned a second time on BBC's version of his briefing to its correspondent Andrew Gilligan. This was after Kelly had already been closely questioned at a disciplinary hearing, and read out the "riot act". He was called for a more rigorous questioning

after Mr. Blair's intervention and a few days later Kelly was publicly named by the Ministry of Defence as the BBC's source, triggering a chain of events which ended with Kelly's apparent suicide on July 17.

Mr. Blair's intervention came to light during the Deputy Chief of Defence Intelligence, Martin Howard's testimony to the Hutton inquiry. He said he had seen correspondence "which recorded the Prime Minister's views that before we decided what are the next steps that should be taken, it would be sensible to get into a bit more detail into the differences between what Dr. Kelly had said and what Andrew Gilligan had claimed."

It also emerged from the documents submitted to the inquiry that the Prime Minister's senior aides were aware of — if not directly involved in — the key deci-

sions relating to Kelly's treatment. This included the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon's decision to expose Kelly to an examination by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee overruling the advice of MoD's Permanent Secretary, Kevin Tebbit, that the scientist was not used to "being thrust into the public, and is not on trial".

In a letter, setting out Mr. Hoon's views, his private secretary said: "I understand that No 10 would be content with this approach (making Kelly appear before the committee). I am copying this letter to Jonathan Powell (Prime Minister's chief of staff) and Alastair Campbell (PM's communications chief)."

Two days after his nervous appearance before the committee, Kelly disappeared from his home and was found dead the next day.

THE HINDU

1 8 AUG 2003

BBC pushed scribe to back report

Agencies

LONDON, Aug. 13. — A senior BBC journalist today described how she was pressurised by her managers to back up a report by radio journalist Andrew Gilligan that the government had “sexed up” the Iraq dossier.

Susan Watts, science editor of BBC Two's *Newsnight*, also told the inquiry into the death of David Kelly that BBC managers had wanted her to identify the government weapons expert as the source of her reports on the dossier.

But Watts, who ran two stories on *Newsnight* based on her conversations with Kelly, said that she believed that there were “significant differences” between her reports and those of Gilligan.

She told the inquiry, headed by Lord Hutton, that she had felt under such pressure from Mr Richard Sambrook, the BBC director of news, that she had been forced to take independent legal advice. “I felt under some considerable pressure to reveal my source. I also felt the purpose of that was to help corroborate the Gilligan allegations and not for any proper news purpose.”

She added: “I was most concerned that there was an attempt to mould them so that

they were corroborative which I felt was misguided and false.”

During the inquiry today, the inquiry also heard that Kelly was uneasy with the wording of the British government's intelligence dossier on Iraq, but didn't “think they (government officials) were being willfully dishonest”.

“Sometimes you've to put things into words that the public will understand,” the former UN weapons inspector said in a tape recorded conversation with a BBC reporter.

Kelly said Mr Ton Blair's aides had seized on intelligence that Mr Saddam Hussein could launch chemical and biological weapons at 45 minutes' notice and felt it had “got out of all proportion.” “They (the government) were desperate for information,” Kelly said in the interview. “That was one that popped up and it was seized on, and it was unfortunate that it was,” Kelly told Watts.

Kelly acknowledged that the government would change the wording of intelligence material for “public consumption.” “I don't think they're being willfully dishonest, I think they just think that that's the way the public will appreciate it best,” he said.

In a related development, London's press began lining up Gilligan for blame as the Hutton inquiry entered the third day today.

Judicial evidence into Kelly's death deepens mystery

W.D. 128

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

London: Less than 100 hours before his mysterious death, Britain's leading Iraqi weapons expert David Kelly was busy making plans to meet an old friend and colleague, who said he would pass through the UK, the weekend after Kelly apparently committed suicide.

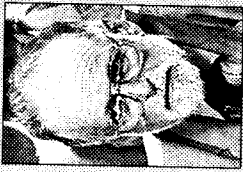
Within hours of the conversation, Kelly slashed his wrists, causing international outrage and leading to a major British judicial inquiry.

The events between that key conversation and Kelly's apparent suicide are set to become Britain's hottest whodunit.

With the needle of suspicion and frenzied speculation worldwide apparently pointing at Tony Blair's Gulf War II strategy, Monday's first day of judicial evidence into Kelly's death appeared only to deepen the seriousness of events.

Kelly's friend and colleague, Terence Taylor, a former British ministry of defence official and currently head of Amer-

Hottest whodunit



- Kelly had e-mailed a journalist about the pressure being put on him by 'dark actors'

- Kelly had the 'highest security clearance' in the British ministry of defence

ica's International Institute of Strategic Studies, revealed by video-link to a London courtroom, the dead man's plans to meet him two days after his death.

The dead man, derided by some British officials in the run-up to the inquiry, was believed to have had the "highest security clearance" in Britain's ministry of defence. He reportedly worked with both the British and American intelligence agencies, the MI6 and the CIA respectively.

Asked when he last had contact with

Kelly, Mr Taylor said: "I think it was about four days before his death. I spoke to him by telephone from the US because I was coming to the UK and I was discussing plans in order to meet him the following weekend ... 20 July".

Kelly, he said, had sounded quite "normal". Just hours after that conversation, it later emerged, Kelly had emailed a journalist about the pressure being put on him by "dark actors".

On July 18 he was found dead, just hours after he had been named as the "British government mole" who tried to discredit Mr Blair's case for Gulf War II.

Adding to the bizarre mismatch in the court on Monday, Britain's ministry of defence, accused Kelly of violating civil service rules by speaking to the media. Meanwhile, the British foreign office praised Kelly for his reliable press briefings.

The defence ministry grudgingly insisted that Kelly was not its "main" Iraqi weapons expert. But, oddly enough, Kelly was acknowledged as one of Britain's "main" weapons experts.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

1 2 AUG 2003

British defence secretary to take blame for Kelly episode

London, August 10

BRITAIN'S DEFENCE Secretary Geoff Hoon is being lined up as the government's "fall guy" over the suicide of David Kelly, the weapons expert at the centre of an uproar over the way Britain was led into the Iraq war, a British newspaper reported on Sunday.

As a judicial inquiry into Kelly's death prepares to begin hearing testimonies on Monday, the *Sunday Express* said Hoon would resign once presiding judge Lord Brian Hutton delivers his concluding report into the affair. The Ministry of Defence was responsible for "outing" Kelly as the source of a BBC report that alleged the government beefed up a dossier on Iraq ahead of the US-led war in March.

"Hoon will be the fall guy for the whole government," the *Sunday Express* quoted a government source as saying. "He is going to be hung out to dry in the hope that his resignation will get (British Prime Minister) Tony Blair off the hook."

The source added: "Nobody believes that Hoon was the one behind the leaking of Kelly's name, that would never have been done without Downing Street's clearance, but Hoon is expendable while the Prime Minister isn't."

The defence ministry's most senior civil servant is said to have told the BBC that his department had deliberately "outed" Kelly.

According to a report in the *Sunday Telegraph*, the ministry's permanent secretary Sir Kevin Tebbit, also allegedly branded Kelly an "eccentric" shortly before he died. Both revelations may be used by the BBC in evidence to the inquiry, the paper said.

Meanwhile, the leader of Britain's



Floral tributes on the grave of David Kelly in Oxfordshire on Sunday.

Conservative Party on Sunday demanded that the Prime Minister must apologise for attempts by his officials to smear the name of Kelly.

The Kelly inquiry may last two months, casting a shadow over the party conferences. The first witnesses consist mainly of journalists and civil servants. Hoon and Tony Blair — both abroad on holiday — are likely to be called later. Civil servants have been told they will escape disciplinary action over what they tell the inquiry into the death of Kelly, in a bid to encourage "full and frank" evidence.

Agencies

London police given shoot-to-kill order

Vijay Dutt & PTI
London, August 10

POLICE HAVE been ordered to "shoot to kill" suicide bombers following intelligence warnings that an al-Qaida terrorist attack may be imminent in Britain.

Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir John Stevens placed his force on its highest alert last week, according to media reports. He also took the unprecedented step of ordering all frontline officers to be trained in how to spot potential suicide bombers and how to respond. FBI has warned that London, along with several other foreign cities, was facing an increasing threat of suicide bomb attack.

Sir John has now ordered that hundreds of armed officers in London must shoot to kill if they believe that someone is trying to detonate explosives carried on their body or in a vehicle. One officer said that they have been ordered to shoot the potential bomber first and ask questions later.

Gangsters can buy UK visa

Gangsters are being allowed to live and work in the UK for a £200,000 fee. The new Home Office rules, which came into effect on August 1, could lead to organised criminal operations relocating in the UK, the *Sunday Express* reported.

Kelly buried, but row continues



Janice Kelly during the funeral of her husband David in Oxfordshire, England. (Reuters)

Longworth (England), Aug. 6 (Reuters): An expert on Iraqi weapons whose suicide has put British leader Tony Blair in the worst crisis of his six-year rule was buried today at a country church near woodland where his body was found.

While friends and family attended the funeral at the picturesque 13th century St Mary's Church a few kilometres from David Kelly's house, there was little let-up in the row over his death convulsing British politics and media. Government critics demanded the resignation of a Blair spokesman who caused outrage earlier in the week by

comparing Kelly with fictional fantasist Walter Mitty.

The scientist was the anonymous source for a damning BBC report alleging London hyped Saddam Hussein's weapons capacity. "It is bitterly ironic that a government that saw fit to employ Dr Kelly at the highest level, which trumpeted his expertise and praised his work for the UN, should now turn on him so monstrously," Prof. Alastair Hay, a colleague of Kelly's, wrote in a newspaper article.

"And for Dr Kelly's circle, the agony must be all the greater because the aftermath of his departure is being played out on a

public stage, with controversy raging all around."

At the funeral in Longworth, a village in the central county of Oxfordshire, mourners carried Kelly's body into the church as a single bell tolled and police kept onlookers away. "We are here because of the tragedy that has taken place. We are not here for the media or to make a political statement or to apportion blame," vicar Roy Woodhams told the 160 mourners.

The former UN arms inspector and government scientist was found dead on July 18 after becoming embroiled in the vicious political row over Blair's case for war in Iraq.

Kelly, 59, had endured growing pressure since his off-the-record briefing to the BBC led to a May 29 report saying the government had hyped up intelligence that warned that Saddam could deploy weapons within 45 minutes.

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7 AUG 2003

Blair spokesman sorry for Kelly jibe

London, August 5

BRITISH PRIME Minister Tony Blair's official spokesman, Tom Kelly, apologised on Tuesday for comparing scientist David Kelly with fictional fantasist Walter Mitty, just hours before the expert's funeral.

The admission, which comes a day after Blair's office denied anyone had made the remark, drove Blair's government deeper into turmoil and further undermined its credibility at a time of plummeting public trust.

Tom Kelly said the comment had been made in a "private conversation" with a reporter. "I now recognise that even that limited form of communication was

a mistake," Tom Kelly said in a statement. "I therefore unreservedly apologise to Dr Kelly's widow and family for having intruded on their grief." Mitty, a fictional character created by US author James Thurber, is a fantasist with delusions of grandeur.

Tories in the lead

Trust in Blair has collapsed and Labour party's rating has fallen to its lowest ever in 16 years as a second national opinion poll on Tuesday indicated that the Tories are ahead of the Labour. A Mori poll for *The Financial Times* gave the Conservatives a three-point lead for the first time.

Agencies

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

6 AUG 2003

KELLY'S DEATH / HUTTON PROMISES IN-DEPTH PROBE

Blair, aides and BBC to testify

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, AUG. 1. The judicial inquiry into the death of the British weapons expert, David Kelly, opened here today with its chairman, Lord Hutton, indicating that it would not be restricted to the circumstances immediately surrounding the scientist's death on July 18, but look into the wider background starting with the BBC's allegation that the Government exaggerated the threat from Iraq in its September 2002 intelligence dossier.

Setting down its parametres, Lord Hutton said it would be a "detailed and careful examination of relevant facts" and announced that the witnesses would include the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, his Communications Chief, Alastair Campbell, the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, the three BBC correspondents who broadcast reports based on interviews with Kelly, and the BBC Chair-

man, Gavyn Davies. He said Kelly's widow had also offered to testify and at some point he might call one or more of Kelly's daughters.

In a terse statement, read out in a packed courtroom, Lord Hutton provided little comfort either to the Government or the BBC who have been engaged in a bitter row over almost everything — from Kelly's official status to what he said to the BBC correspondents, particularly its defence reporter, Andrew Gilligan, whose report alleging that Downing Street "sexed up" the September dossier, triggered a chain of events culminating in Kelly's suicide.

Lord Hutton, a senior law lord with a reputation for uncompromising independence, made clear that he alone would decide how the inquiry was to be conducted. This was seen as a veiled rebuff to the Government's desire to restrict the inquiry to Kelly's death. He said he would hold his sittings in

public and the press would be allowed to report "every word" and the contents of "every document". The transcripts of the proceedings would also be made available on its website.

Both the Government and the BBC would be under close scrutiny judging from Lord Hutton's opening remarks. He intends to insist on knowing exactly how Kelly's name came to be put in public domain in view of his family's criticism at the way he was publicly identified after apparently being assured that his identity would be protected.

He will also insist on Kelly's status being clarified because of the conflicting claims by the Government and the BBC as to how credible he was as an intelligence source. The BBC would be asked to explain its conduct in refusing to identify its source until after Kelly's death, and Mr. Gilligan is likely to be subjected to some tough questioning over his controversial report.

THE HINDO

2 AUG 2003

'OUR INTEGRITY IS UNDER ATTACK'

BBC levels gag charge at Blair

Associated Press

LONDON, July 27. — The chairman of the BBC's board of governors today accused the government of trying to pressure the broadcaster to change the tone of its coverage of the fallout of the Iraq war.

The BBC and Mr Tony Blair's government have locked horns in a spat over a story in which the broadcaster had quoted an unidentified official as having said that the government had exaggerated intelligence on Saddam Hussein's weapons.

The government had denied the accusation, but the debate intensified with the suicide of scientist David Kelly, who was attached to the defence ministry and whom the BBC identified after his death as the main source of the story by Andrew Gilligan. Gavyn Davies, chairman of the BBC's board of governors, wrote in *The Sunday Telegraph* that officials had threatened anonymously in press reports to cut the broadcaster's funding, remove its director general and rewrite its charter.

"Our integrity is under attack and we're chastised for taking a different view on editorial matters from that of the government and its supporters," Davies wrote. "Because we've had the temerity to do this, it's hinted that a system that has protected the BBC for 80 years should be swept away and replaced by an external regulator that will 'bring the BBC to heel'."

Culture secretary Ms Tessa Jowell said on Friday that she would "consider" any recommendations from an inquiry into Kelly's death when she would review the BBC's funding and charter later this year. Today, she insisted that the dispute between the government and the BBC wouldn't affect her decisions. "We've made it plain that we'll uphold completely the BBC's independence," she said. "We reject the BBC chairman's attempt to confuse our desire to correct the original story by Mr Gilligan."

Davies wrote that during the war, the BBC "was under constant attack" from politicians for coverage they perceived as anti-war. But, he said, the network had "upheld its attachment to impartiality and the truth under almost intolerable pressures".

'Blair to run for another term' Mr Tony Blair will run for another term in office, a Cabinet colleague said today. Lord Falconer, constitutional affairs secretary, scotched speculations that Mr Blair would hand over the leadership of the Labour Party to treasury chief Mr Gordon Brown and step down as Prime Minister.

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Kelly: Blair faces new questions

WKC

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JULY 24. After a marathon five-nation tour, dogged by echoes of domestic controversies over the Kelly affair, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was back in Downing Street today as the issue threatened to become more serious following fresh allegations.

The Prime Minister's office was accused of deliberately playing down the status of the Defence Ministry's weapons scientist, David Kelly, to discredit the controversial BBC report alleging that the Government had exaggerated the threat from Saddam Hussein. The report was based on a background briefing by Kelly who committed suicide last week after being caught up in a row between the Government and the BBC about the source of that report.

Contrary to Downing Street's attempt to portray Kelly as a marginal figure, it emerged that he played a central role in

assessing the intelligence which went into the dossier published by the Government last September claiming among other things that Iraq had the capability to deploy its weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes. Security experts claimed today that he was privy to secret intelligence reports and had briefings from defence intelligence officials.

"Far from being an obscure scientist, Dr. Kelly was one of the British intelligence services' most valuable advisers, inextricably involved in the analysis of secret intelligence on Iraq," said Glenmore Trenor-Harvey, a security specialist in *The Daily Telegraph*.

The revelation appeared to vindicate the BBC's claim that its report was based on a 'credible' source — a claim which Downing Street had consistently sought to question in an attempt to undermine the seriousness of the allegations made in the report. Among other things, Kelly had questioned

the credibility of the "45-minute" claim and suggested that the Government had included it in the dossier simply to hype up the threat from Saddam Hussein.

There was also pressure on the Government to explain who decided to make Kelly's name known to journalists as the BBC's source, exposing him to media glare and the consequent pressure that drove him to suicide.

After Mr. Blair emphatically declared that he "did not authorise the leaking of the name of David Kelly," fingers were being pointed at the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, who visited Kelly's family on Wednesday amid reports that it was extremely bitter at the way Kelly was treated by the Ministry.

The judicial inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Kelly's death is expected to look closely at allegations that it was the decision to leak his identity that triggered events leading to his suicide.

THE HINDU

25 JUL 2003

25 JUL 2003

Blair denies authorising Kelly's identification

Shanghai: British Prime Minister Tony Blair said on Tuesday that he did not authorise the identification of a weapons inspector as the news source for a British Broadcasting Corp. report questioning the honesty of a government dossier on Iraqi weapons.

The inspector, David Kelly, killed himself last week following his interview by a parliamentary committee and after being identified by the British ministry of defence as a possible source. The BBC subsequently confirmed that Mr Kelly had been its source for the report.

"I did not authorise the

leaking of the name of David Kelly," Mr Blair told reporters on a flight from Shanghai to Hong Kong. The ministry of defence declined to comment on who authorised Mr Kelly's identification, saying it preferred to wait for the judicial inquiry into his suicide. "We are not speculating about that at all," the ministry said, adding that it would "cooperate fully" with the inquiry.

Journalists have said the ministry offered to confirm or deny to journalists whether they had guessed the correct name, and Mr

Kelly's name quickly became public. The BBC had infuriated the government with a report in May which quoted an unidentified source as questioning the claim in the September dossier that Iraq was poised to deploy some chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes.

The BBC reporter, Andrew Gilligan, subsequently said his source had accused Mr Blair's communications director, Alastair Campbell, of insisting on including the claim despite the skepticism of some intelligence officials. AP

UK, China hail 'frank' talks

China Daily/ ANN & PTI

BEIJING, July 21. — China and Britain today hailed the “frank” and “open” discussions between the two countries and resolved to work together to produce a “stable, prosperous and peaceful” world.

On his first trip to China in five years, British Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair today held talks with his Chinese counterpart Mr Wen Jiabao at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Mr Blair said: “The discussions we have just had privately now are an indication of how open and frank we are able to be with each other across a range of issues and also how much agreement there is on how we produce a world that is stable and prosperous, peaceful, where we are diminishing the possibility of conflict.”

Mr Blair also said he thought highly of the China’s way of resolving latest problems in Hong Kong.

Mr Wen said he was fully confident that the trade volume between the two countries could reach \$15 billion in three to five years, from \$11.4 billion last year. Mr Wen also welcomed British companies to invest in central and western China.

The Chinese Premier also put forward four proposals to guide bilateral ties, namely, to maintain high-level mutual visit of government officials, to expand trade and economic cooperation, to enhance cultural and educational exchange, and to resolve each other’s discrepancies and difference through consultations and talks.

Mr Blair expressed his belief that the strengthened relationship between Britain and China would, beyond any doubt, continue to develop in economic and political fields. Britain is China’s largest investor in Europe.

Mr Blair also spoke highly of the policy of “One Country, Two Systems”. The British Prime Minister said he is glad to see the policy of ‘One Country, Two Systems’ is proved effective in Hong Kong in the past six years. He told Mr Wen that he hoped Hong Kong could maintain stability, believing the latest “problems could be properly solved”. To this end, Mr Blair promised that the British government was willing to do its part.

Earlier, Mr Wen held an impressive welcome ceremony for Mr Blair, who arrived here late last night on the last leg of his three-nation tour of Japan, South Korea and China.

Blair, BBC brass face Kelly inquiry

By Hasan Surroor

LONDON, JULY 21. The Blair administration and the BBC have promised full cooperation with the judicial inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of the British weapons inspector, David Kelly, who committed suicide last week after being caught up in an ugly row between the Government and the corporation over Iraqi intelligence.

The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, would personally appear before the inquiry, to be conducted by Lord Hutton, one of the most senior law lords. The BBC, which is under attack for its conduct in the days before Kelly's death, has said that will make a "full and frank submission" about its dealings with Kelly who was the main source for its controversial report alleging that the Government hyped up intelligence in the run-up to the Iraq war.

Lord Hutton said today that the inquiry would be conducted 'urgently' and "mostly in public". Amid calls that its scope should be widened to include the way the Government used intelligence to exaggerate the threat from Saddam Hussein, Lord Hutton made it clear that "it will be for me to decide as I think right within my terms of reference the matters which will be the subject of my investigation". The main issues before the inquiry are the way the Ministry of Defence and the BBC conducted themselves in relation to Kelly, a senior adviser to

the MoD on biological and chemical weapons, who is widely seen as a victim of a personal battle between the government and the broadcaster. It is expected to look at what exactly Kelly told the BBC's defence correspondent, Andrew Gilligan, the author of the contentious report, and how his remarks were reported.

The BBC, which belatedly admitted on Sunday that Kelly had been its main source, insists that it "accurately interpreted and reported the factual information obtained by us during interviews with Kelly". But its claim is being regarded with scepticism in the light of Kelly's own statement that he did not recognise the remarks attributed to him, and there have been other inconsistencies in the BBC's stance in recent weeks, which have put a question mark on its credibility.

Meanwhile, the MoD has come in for criticism from Kelly's family. His daughter, Ellen Wilson, was quoted as saying that the Ministry demonstrated a "total lack of support" for her father who believed he had been "badly treated" in the way he was thrust into media glare. It emerged that Kelly had been greatly upset when the Ministry publicly identified him by name as the BBC source. "I was told the whole thing would be confidential," he told a journalist at that time. Kelly's wife said he was very 'stressed' by what happened. "This was really not the kind of world he wanted to live in," she said.

ONE HIND

22 JUL 2003

Blair, broadcaster drove expert to death'

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X1
Jason Burke
London, July 20

THE GRIEVING family of David Kelly, the Ministry of Defence scientist who, police said, committed suicide by slashing his wrist and bleeding to death, appeared on Saturday night to blame both the Government and the BBC for the events leading to the tragedy.

In their first public comments shortly after formally identifying the body of Kelly, 59, the family issued a statement saying the actions of all parties in the affair had driven him to suicide.

"Events over recent weeks made David's life intolerable and all those involved should reflect long and hard on this fact," the statement said. The family said they were "utterly devastated and

heard broken" by the death of "our husband, father and brother".

"We loved him very much and will miss his warmth, humour and humanity... A loving, private and dignified man has been taken from us all. Those who knew him will remember him for his devotion to his home, family and the community and countryside in which he lived," the statement said.

"David's professional life was characterised by his integrity, honour and dedication to finding the truth. It is hard to comprehend the enormity of this tragedy."

The family — Kelly is survived by his wife Janice and three daughters — issued the statement hours after Superintendent David Purnell of Thames Valley police stood outside Wantage police station and said the scientist

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killed himself by cutting a wrist with a knife, possibly after taking powerful painkillers.

Kelly killed himself hours after sending an email to an unnamed journalist in which he told of "many dark actors playing games". The words appeared to refer to officials at the Ministry of Defence and the UK intelligence agencies with whom he had sparred over interpretations of weapons reports, the *New York Times* reported.

The message gave no indication that he was depressed, and said he was waiting "until the end of the week" before judging how his appearance before the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee had gone.

It also emerged on Saturday night that Kelly took his life 24

hours after being called to give evidence in private to the Intelligence and Security Committee at Westminster.

The disclosures came after police confirmed that the body found in woodland two miles from the village of Southmoor on Friday was Kelly, who was suspected of being the BBC's mole in the row over the threat posed by Iraq. Purnell said a knife and an open packet of Coproxamol tablets, a paracetamol-based painkiller, had been found at the scene.

Details from the post-mortem examination, completed on Saturday morning after the identification of the body at Oxford's John Radcliffe Hospital by his widow ended the mystery over how, if not why, the microbiologist died.

The Guardian

BBC confirms Kelly as source

WHD
SFI

21/7

Associated Press

LONDON, July 20. — David Kelly, the 59-year-old defence ministry scientist whose suicide intensified a debate over whether the government had inflated its claims about Iraq's weapons, was the BBC's main source for a story, the network confirmed.

"We can confirm that Kelly was the principal source" for a radio piece in which reporter Andrew Gilligan quoted an anonymous official as saying the government had exaggerated claims of Iraqi weapons, the BBC said in a statement.

Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair, who arrived in Beijing tonight, said he was "pleased that the BBC has made this announcement". He also ruled out recalling Parliament following Kelly's death, as demanded by Opposition leader Mr Iain Duncan Smith. Earlier, Mr Blair had emphatically dismissed demands for his resignation as he braved the worst crisis of his political career.

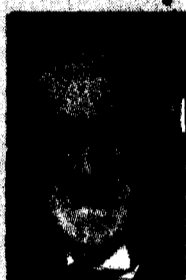
Kelly, a renowned weapons expert, had told a Parliamentary committee that he spoke privately to Gilligan but did not recognise his claims in the reporter's piece. "I believe I am not the main source," he had told the committee on Tuesday. "I don't see how he (Gilligan) could make the authoritative statement." He said the same to his ministry bosses.

The BBC and the government had been engaged for weeks in a heated public debate on Gilligan's story.

Blair to testify

SEOUL/ LONDON, July 20.

— Mr Tony Blair today said he was ready to appear before a judicial probe into the death of David Kelly. Lord Hutton has been chosen to head the inquiry.



David Kelly

Speaking to reporters in Seoul, Mr Blair said he would depose before the inquiry into Kelly's suicide. "Of course there are things I will talk about to the inquiry, as will others." The BBC report had prompted two Parliamentary probes into the government's claims on Iraq's arsenal. — Agencies.

Another report on page 2

The reporter quoted his source as saying the government had "sexed up" its evidence on Iraqi weapons to justify war and insisted on publishing a claim that Saddam Hussein could deploy some chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes despite Intelligence experts' doubts.

In a related development, former minister and one of Mr Blair's closest allies, Mr Peter Mandelson, alleged today that Kelly's death was a fallout of BBC's "obsession" with exposing Mr Campbell.

THE STATESMAN

21 JUL 2003

Body blow to Blair

London, July 19 (Reuters): Tony Blair's government was reeling over the death of a mild-mannered scientist caught in a vitriolic row over allegations that London exaggerated the case for war in Iraq.

Police today said former UN weapons inspector David Kelly had bled to death from a cut wrist and gave details that left little doubt that it was suicide. "The post-mortem has revealed that the cause of death was haemorrhaging from a wound to his left wrist," a spokesman said.

A knife and a box of the pain-killer Coproxamol had been found close to where a body matching Kelly's description was found yesterday in a wooded spot near his rural Oxfordshire home in central England, the police said.

On a tour of Asia, Prime Minister Blair appealed for "respect and restraint" as accusations flew over the cause of the tragedy. "I hope we can set aside the speculation and the claims and the counter-claims," he said in Tokyo, asked if Kelly's death was on his conscience.

"Have you got blood on your

hands, Mr Prime Minister? Are you going to resign over this?" shouted a reporter. Blair responded with stony silence.

The bearded and bespectacled 59-year-old microbiologist, who worked for the defence ministry, disappeared on Thursday — apparently to take a walk from his family home. Two days before, Kelly had been grilled in Parliament over his possible role as a "mole" who had given the BBC a hotly-disputed story that Blair's communications chief Alastair Campbell "sexed up" a dossier on Saddam Hussein's arsenal.

The allegation that Campbell played up intelligence suggesting Saddam could mobilise weapons of mass destruction in 45 minutes is at the centre of claims that Blair misled the public and Parliament over the case for war.

Kelly's relatives were formally identifying the body as the police scoured the area for clues. The widespread assumption is that Kelly committed suicide. "I guess he couldn't cope with the firestorm," said journalist Tom Mangold, a close friend.

Opposition Conservative lea-

der Iain Duncan Smith called on Blair to cut short his trip to handle what is shaping into one of the biggest crises of his six-year rule. An ex-minister from the ruling Labour Party, Glenda Jackson, called for his resignation: "Bullets should be bitten."

Critics say Kelly was "sacrificed" to clear Blair and Campbell's reputation by pressuring him to come forward in an effort to discredit the BBC report.

The media ripped into the government, accusing it of being so obsessed with public relations gloss that a man lost his life. "Spun to Death," said the *Daily Mirror*. "Casualty of War," was *The Independent's* verdict.

"Yesterday a decent, shy civil servant who had been savagely chewed up and spat out by a malign, amoral Downing Street machine met a tormented and tragic end," the *Daily Mail* wrote.

There was criticism for the BBC, too, which had refused to confirm whether or not Kelly was the "mole" for the 45-minute allegation, thus heightening the speculation around him.

■ See Page 4

20 JUL 2003

Blair Govt. faces a major crisis

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JULY 19. The Blair Government was today bracing itself for a damaging political crisis after it was confirmed that David Kelly, the missing weapons expert at the heart of its row with the BBC over Iraq intelligence, was dead.

Police declared it as a case of suicide and said the cause of the death was 'haemorrhaging', a result of bleeding from a cut in his left wrist. A knife and some painkillers were found at the scene but he it was not known if he left behind any suicide note. Police ruled out any foul play, emphasised that there was no indication of any third party involvement. Kelly left home on Thursday afternoon telling his family that he was going for a walk.

There were calls today for the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to cut short his foreign trip and return home to deal with

the issues surrounding Kelly's death, and one former Labour Minister suggested that he resign accepting responsibility for his government's actions leading up to the tragedy. "Bullets should be bitter," said the former Transport Minister, Glenda Jackson.

Pressure was also growing on Mr. Blair's influential Communications Chief, Alastair Campbell, a key figure in the intelligence row; and the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, who was accused of throwing Kelly to the 'wolves' by naming him as the most likely source for a BBC report alleging that Downing Street had hyped up intelligence to justify invading Iraq.

Sensing the mood, the Government moved swiftly to announce an independent judicial inquiry by Lord Hutton — a law lord — into the circumstances behind the death. It is also expected to inquire into the way he was hounded by the Government as a BBC 'mole' and then subjected to some

rather aggressive questioning by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiring into allegations of manipulation of intelligence by Downing Street in the run-up to the attack on Iraq.

A Sky TV poll showed that 60 per cent people wanted Mr Blair to resign.

The Defence Ministry, where Kelly (59) worked as an adviser on biological weapons, was accused of letting him "hang out to dry" in its fight with the BBC exposing him to enormous media pressure. A former U.N. weapons inspector in Iraq, Kelly was hounded by the media and mocked by MPs on the foreign affairs select committee asking him if he believed he had been "set up" by the government and was a "fall guy".

Though the committee chairman, Donald Anderson, has denied that the questioning was 'aggressive', Kelly's wife was reported to have told a family friend that he was "very stressed and unhappy".

FORNIA

British expert on Iraq dead?

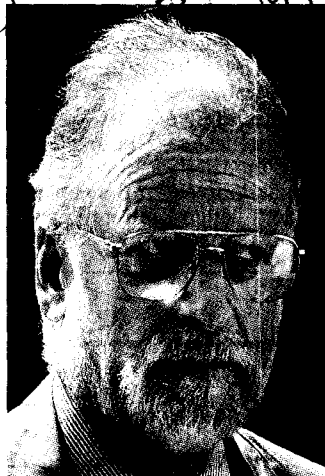
By Hasan Suroor ^{uk 1917}

LONDON, JULY 18. David Kelly, a former British UN weapons' inspector in Iraq, who had emerged as a key figure in the Blair Government's row with the BBC over allegations that it "sexed up" an intelligence dossier on Baghdad's weapons capability in the run-up to the war, is feared to have died mysteriously after he disappeared from his Oxfordshire home on Thursday afternoon, telling his family that he was going for a walk.

Police said on Friday evening that a body found in a heavily wooded area, not far from his house, matched Dr. Kelly's description, and the clothes he wore at the time of his disappearance. But a formal identification would be announced tomorrow. Pending the post-mortem report it was being treated as "unexplained death".

Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who is on a foreign tour, promised a judicial inquiry if it was confirmed that the body was Dr. Kelly's.

The disappearance of Dr. Kelly (59), who was an adviser to the Ministry of Defence, came



David Kelly

two days after he deposed before the Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiring into allegations that the Government manipulated intelligence about the threat from Iraq to justify a military attack. He was called to appear before the committee when the Defence Ministry claimed that he was the most likely source for the BBC's report alleging that Downing Street had played up the threat from Saddam Hussein by inserting in its September 2002 dossier the claim that his re-

gime had the capability to deploy weapons of mass destruction at 45 minutes' notice.

Ever since the MoD "flushed out" Dr. Kelly as the possible BBC "mole", there had been speculation that he was being "used" by the Government in its battle with the corporation. One MP on the committee pointedly asked him if he thought he was being made a "fall guy". To which the soft-spoken Dr. Kelly simply said: "I accept the process that is happening". That he looked tense and unable to cope with the pressure was palpable, according to those present at the hearing and the committee later said it felt that he had been "poorly treated" by the Government and that it did not think he was the BBC's primary source.

The dominant view was that Dr. Kelly was not used to the intense media glare into which he had been thrust, and that he probably simply "cracked up" under the pressure. But there were also dark hints, articulated by at least one committee member, that may be there was "more" to his disappearance than it seemed.

BBC 'mole' found dead

Press Trust of India

LONDON, July 18. — Police found the body of David Kelly, the British government adviser named as the possible source for the BBC's report claiming the government "sexed up" a key intelligence dossier on Iraq, in central England today.

The body of 59-year-old Kelly, who was missing since yesterday, was found by a member of the police team searching for him in a wooded area at Harrowdown Hill, eight km from his house in Oxfordshire. The development comes four days after Kelly was grilled by the Foreign Affairs Committee on the Iraq dossier.

Acting superintendent of police Mr Dave Purnell said the body matched Kelly's description but formal identification would take place on Saturday. The case was

tion continues at the scene at Harrowdown Hill."

The body was discovered lying face down. No note was found either at the scene or at Kelly's



David Kelly had admitted speaking to a BBC journalist who reported claims that government aides 'sexed up' a dossier on Iraq. The BBC, however, has refused to confirm whether Kelly was the unidentified official cited in the story

being treated as an "unexplained" death, he said at a brief press conference, adding: "We will be awaiting the results of the post mortem and also waiting while the forensic examina-

house, the police said.

The British government said an independent judicial inquiry would be held in to the circumstances of his death if the body is confirmed to be that of Kelly.

He worked in the defence ministry's counter-proliferation and arms control secretariat and was reported missing by his family yesterday as he did not return after telling his wife was going for a walk.

Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair was informed of the discovery of the body as he flew from Washington to Tokyo, the PMO said.

"I was shocked when I heard the news and I am sure the hearts of all the committee go out to his family at this deeply anxious time," chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Mr Donald Anderson said. "The Committee interviewed him on Tuesday and he seemed to be relaxed and on top of things."

IRAQ WAR / U.S. WILL NOT TOLERATE DANGEROUS ENEMIES: BUSH

History will forgive us, says Blair

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JULY 18. Faced with intense questions over the war with Iraq and deep political troubles at home, the United States President, George W. Bush, and the visiting British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, staunchly defended their roles, especially on the intelligence components that were used to justify the conflict.

Mr. Blair even went to the extent of giving himself and Mr. Bush a way out of the mess on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, arguing that even if they were wrong, history "will forgive".

"If we are wrong, we will have destroyed a threat that at its least is responsible for human carnage and suffering. That is something I am confident history will forgive", Mr. Blair said in a historic address to a joint session of Congress on Thursday afternoon. "If our critics are wrong, if we are right, as I believe with

every fibre of instinct and conviction I have, that we are, and we do not act, then we will have hesitated in the face of this menace when we should have given leadership. That is something history will not forgive". In his 40-minute address, Mr. Blair touched upon a number of themes.

He said the immediate threat to world order comes not from any conflict between the world's powerful nations. "And why? Because we all have much to lose", Mr. Blair said. "Because technology, communication, trade and travel are bringing us ever closer together. Because, in the last 50 years countries like yours (the United States) and mine have trebled their growth and standard of living.

Because even those powers like Russia, China and India can see the horizon of future wealth clearly and know they are on a steady road toward it. And because all nations that are free, value that

freedom, will defend it absolutely, but have no wish to trample on the freedom of others.

"The purpose of terrorism is not the single act of wanton destruction. It is the reaction it seeks to provoke: economic collapse, the backlash, the hatred, the division, the elimination of tolerance, until societies cease to reconcile their differences and become defined by them. Kashmir, the Middle East, Chechnya, Indonesia, Africa — barely a continent or nation is unscathed", the Prime Minister said.

And one of the more troubling questions is that four months into the situation, the United States' search teams have come up with near-nothing on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. On Thursday, in a meeting with the presspersons, both leaders defended what had taken place, with Mr. Bush being emphatic that he will not be proved wrong. The President also made it clear

that he was right in getting rid of Saddam Hussein. "As long as I hold this office, I will never risk the lives of American citizens by assuming the goodwill of dangerous enemies", Mr. Bush remarked.

The President has been at the centre of a major controversy raging for the last few days on how a particular sentence on Iraq and its efforts to buy uranium from Africa was retained in his State of the Union Address this January even after several intelligence agencies had come to the conclusion that it was wrong and based on forgeries.

Asked if he would take responsibility for this, Mr. Bush said, "I take responsibility for making the decision, the tough decision, to put together a coalition to remove Saddam Hussein. He possessed chemical weapons and biological weapons. I strongly believe he was trying to reconstruct his nuclear weapons programme... He was a threat. I take responsibility for dealing with that threat".

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BLAIR'S MASS DECEPTION

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BRITAIN'S PRIME MINISTER, Tony Blair, whose aggressive global campaign in support of the American war on Iraq surprised a majority of his own countrymen as much as the rest of the world, has scored a victory of sorts in a parliamentary battle. An enquiry by a committee of the House of Commons has cleared him of the charge that his Government doctored the intelligence reports on the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq that were used to justify Britain's joining the U.S.-led war. But this is unlikely to be sufficient to restore his credibility and win back for him the type of overwhelming popular support that saw him create electoral history in Britain. With no trace yet of the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq a full two months after the U.S. declared its military campaign ended, Mr. Blair and his Government are under increasing pressure within the country to go transparent and erase the widespread impression that the campaign against Iraq was founded on half-truths and lies. The failure so far to find the weapons, and the American-British reluctance to let the U.N. inspectors resume their job, are fuelling suspicion that much of the "evidence" that both Governments claimed to have in their possession may, after all, be non-existent or faked.

Mr. Blair, whose massive re-election victory was a record-breaking one for the Labour Party, has seen his popularity plummet with the departure of two of his senior colleagues, Clare Short and Robin Cook, both of whom disagreed with his support for the American war of aggression and occupation. The conflict found Mr. Blair keep odd company at home and abroad. If the trans-Atlantic partnership saw the coming together of two strange ideological bedfellows, there was an equally bizarre spectacle on the domestic political scene. The crucial debates in

the Commons in the months before the war saw Labour backbenchers desert their Government in large numbers, obliging the Prime Minister to save himself with the support of Conservative opponents. The Tories, who gave Mr. Blair unquestioning support during the war, are now turning the guns on him, accusing the Government of misleading the nation by manipulating intelligence reports. The charismatic Mr. Blair is on the back foot these days. He had relied exclusively on the weapons reports, which were the focus of the Commons enquiry, for his pre-war campaign. Now he has tried to shift the rationale to arguments based on the discovery of mass graves in Iraq. The impatience for regime change in Baghdad does not apparently apply to the search for the missing weapons of mass destruction.

The British Prime Minister's credibility has been undermined by controversies from two intelligence reports, put forth at the time with great fanfare, that sought to swing public opinion behind the conviction that Saddam Hussein and his weapons were an immediate threat. The Commons probe must provide Mr. Blair some breathing space to start repairing the damage done by his spin doctors who have, over the years, been allowed to hijack the party and dilute its ideological content. "I am obviously very interested in the question whether or not there were weapons of mass destruction," the much-maligned chief U.N. weapons inspector, Hans Blix, said at the conclusion of his assignment with the world body late last month. He added in evident bitterness: "I am beginning to suspect there possibly were none." It was not of course the first time in history that such weapons of mass deception have been employed to provoke and wage wars. What was striking was that a Labour Prime Minister should be part of this dangerous deception.

ONE FINDS

10 JUL 2003

Panel raps PM's war excuse

Press Trust of India

LONDON, July 7. — A House of Commons Committee today issued a damning report over Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair's justification for going to war in Iraq but it cleared his communication chief Mr Alastair Campbell of exerting "improper influence" on the drafting of the first dossier, which is the centre of a stand-off between the government and the BBC.

Mr Campbell's exoneration came only on the casting vote of the 11-member committee's Labour chairman, Mr Donald Anderson. The Commons Foreign Affairs Committee was highly critical of the two dossiers on Mr Saddam Hussein's weapons

capabilities published in September 2002 and February 2003.

Mr Anderson told a Westminster news conference that the three Conservatives and the lone Liberal Democrat

they could not reach a decision either way on the basis of the evidence and were agnostic," he said.

The committee was scathing in its criticism of the February dossier



'Mr Blair had misrepresented the Iraq dossier's status... (and) the language used in it was more assertive than that traditionally used in intelligence documents'

with the MPs saying that Mr Blair had "misrepresented its status" to MPs.

The committee said that in the September dossier the claim that Iraq's mass destruction weapons were deployable within 45-minute

was given undue prominence and said the language used in that dossier was "more assertive than that traditionally used in intelligence documents".

'USA twisted intelligence': A former US ambassador who investigated reports that Niger sold uranium to Iraq has said that the US government exaggerated the threat to justify the war in Iraq, adds a report from Washington.

"Based on my experience with the (Bush) administration in the months leading up to the war, I have little choice but to conclude that some of the intelligence related to Iraq's nuclear weapons programme was twisted to exaggerate the Iraqi threat," Mr Joseph Wilson said yesterday.

BCC governors back reporting

LONDON, July 7. — The BBC's board of governors stands by the editorial decision to report that Downing Street had "sexed up" an intelligence dossier on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the public broadcaster has said.

"The board is satisfied that it was in the public interest to broadcast (Andrew) Gilligan's story, given the information which was available to BBC News at the time," the 12-member board said in a statement after a meeting yesterday. "We believe it would not have been in the public interest to have suppressed the stories on either the *Today* programme or *Newsnight*."

Mr Alastair Campbell, the government's director of communications, had demanded an apology from the broadcaster, accusing it of "unethical journalism" and lies. — AFP

The board rejected the claim: "The BBC's overall coverage of the war has been entirely impartial." — AFP

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2/7

Blair tells BBC to back down on dossier

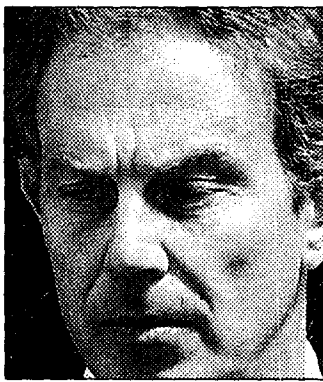
uk ①

COLIN BROWN AND
CHRIS HASTINGS

London, July 6: Tony Blair has demanded that the BBC retract its claim that Downing Street "sexed up" material provided by the intelligence services for a dossier presented to parliament on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction in an effort to persuade public opinion to support the war.

He said the charge was "as serious an attack on my integrity as there could possibly be". The Prime Minister dramatically entered the fray last night just as the battle between the corporation and the government was coming to a head, with the publication tomorrow of a Commons report into claims that Downing Street exaggerated the threat posed by Saddam Hussein.

In a sign that Number 10 is confident of being cleared, Blair appeared to stake his reputation on the issue in a newspaper interview. "The idea that I or anyone else in my position frankly would start altering intelligence evidence or saying to the intelligence services, 'I am going to in-



Tony Blair

sert this', is absurd," he told *The Observer*. "There couldn't be a more serious charge: that I ordered our troops into conflict on the basis of intelligence evidence that I falsified. You could not make a more serious charge against a Prime Minister. The charge happens to be wrong. I think they (the BBC) should accept it."

Greg Dyke, the director-general of the BBC, was prepared to take an equally defiant tone, telling the corporation's governors that they cannot afford to

back down in what has become a "do or die" battle.

Dyke told an emergency meeting of the governors, who are meant to be entirely independent, that they must stand behind the original news story, broadcast in May, even if the MPs now investigating the allegations judge it was incorrect.

Dyke is expected to give the 11 governors new information that he insists substantiates the original claims made by Andrew Gilligan, the defence correspondent on Radio 4's *Today* programme.

Dyke also provided them with copies of Gilligan's broadcast and the open letter sent to Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's communications director, in an effort to prove Campbell's complaints bear no relation to the original news item.

The director-general is expected to urge the governors to issue a statement unambiguously endorsing the BBC's story tomorrow — the day that the Commons foreign affairs select committee publishes its findings into the allegations.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

7 JUL 2003

THREAT TO BLAIR

Weapons of mass disbelief 29/6

REPORTS that Britain's opposition Conservative Party has, for the first time in recent memory, gone ahead of Labour in opinion polls should come as no surprise — least of all to Tony Blair. The chickens of the Iraq war are coming home to roost and the ultimate fallout may be a lot worse. The crystallisation of doubts, suspicions, anger at being deceived may end up giving the Opposition a big boost. The Conservatives went along with Blair to the extent that it made no difference and the beneficiaries may be the Social Democrats if they can get their act together. Blair passionately told scare stories about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, taking a deliberate decision to be not merely economical but positively miserly with the truth. Taking your country to war under false pretences is not a novel political crime but unlike the old days, there is positive and credible evidence that intelligence was doctored and/or invented to suit the predetermined decision to go to war. Blair may still end up paying the price.

Deserved as such a punishment will be, one cannot but look at the prospect with some regret. Unlike Bush, Blair is a talented politician, responsible for effecting remarkable transformations in modern politics. Labour is now considered a moderate and modernist party, a model for left of centre and even right of centre parties. Blair gets the most credit and he is young enough to be Prime Minister one more time. But history is harsh and unforgiving. Why Blair failed to use his intelligence and political savvy to stay away, if not oppose, Bush's war is a mystery. He adopted the questionable dossier as his own. What was he aiming for? Crumbs off the table? Too clever by half? Only Blair knows the answers. The British people, on the other hand, have a lot of questions.

Blair, Putin play down differences

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JUNE 26. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, today warned that terrorism, religious extremism and weapons of mass destruction posed a danger to the world and said it was important for all countries to 'confront' the threat jointly. "These are real concerns," he said pointing out that differences over Iraq should not come in the way of addressing these concerns. Mr. Blair was speaking at a joint press conference after his talks with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin.

Mr. Blair and Mr. Putin played down their quarrel over Iraq with the latter offering full cooperation in rebuilding Iraq. He said on "key issues" he concurred fully with Mr. Blair and was willing to put his "name under every word he (Mr. Blair) has uttered".

"We have come very very close on Iraq and we can and should work together," he said.

Mr. Putin, who opposed the British-U.S. invasion of Iraq, maintained that it was important

to find the weapons of mass destruction. He said Russia had also suspected that Iraq had such weapons, and "we need to know who has access to them". In recent weeks, Mr. Putin has insisted that Britain and the U.S. should honour Russia's pre-war oil contracts with the Saddam Hussein regime, and it is one of the issues he was assumed to have raised during his visit.

Both Mr. Blair and Mr. Putin sounded effusive about the new turn in British-Russian relations after the recent frostiness over Iraq. Mr. Blair said their relations were "stronger than (they had been) for many, many years".

Mr. Putin, who is the first Russian leader to be accorded the full status of a state-level visit in more than 130 years, said the talks were held in a "constructive and open atmosphere". Though Mr. Blair said that Chechnya was discussed, it was not known if he conveyed to Mr. Putin the widespread concern here over Moscow's crack-down on Chechens and the alleged human rights abuses by Russian security forces.

MI-6 26/ Occupation hazards

AFTER THE killing of half a dozen British soldiers in Shia-dominated southern Iraq on Tuesday, British Defence Secretary Geoffrey Hoon cautioned Parliament against viewing the incident, which recorded the highest casualty of British forces in a day in the Iraq war, as being part of organised Iraqi resistance. MPs wondered nevertheless if the Iraqi people saw the American and the British troops as "forces of liberation or forces of occupation". The question is not without basis. It is not just the British troops that are being attacked. The US forces are perhaps under greater assault in the Sunni-dominated central Iraq, and the death toll creeps up every day.

Whatever Mr Hoon's government may find convenient to put out, the British soldiers did not come under sniper fire, which the gullible may see as sign of a stray attack. Rifles, machine guns and grenades were used by the assailants. The incidence of attacks on the invading troops is noted to have

risen of late. Opinion polls in America suggest that unease over the deaths of its soldiers in Iraq is now beginning to take visible shape.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has lately acknowledged that no one has the foggiest idea how long the American and the British armies will have to stay in Iraq. But it is clear enough that it won't be just six months, as some had initially hoped. No wonder, Washington is pressing friendly countries to offer troops to carry out what is called "stabilisation" tasks, a euphemism for the pacification of the sullen and uncooperative people of Iraq. That may help it reduce its own force commitment to an extent. But it needs to be noted that since May 1, when the major combat part of the Iraq operation was officially declared to be over by the US, the post-combat level of force in use is being seen by analysts as "big and growing". Meanwhile, the occupiers seem no nearer than before in establishing even a modicum of administration.

British soldiers come under fire in Iraqi city

Baghdad: British forces came under fire in Iraq on Tuesday, as security around the country's vital oil pipelines was beefed up after several explosions blamed on sabotage.

Britain's ministry of defence said British troops suffered several casualties when they were attacked near the city of Amarah, around 200 km north of Iraq's British-controlled second city, Basra.

"Our troops came under fire and there were several casualties but we have no confirmation of numbers or further details," a spokesman said in London. Sky News television said eight soldiers were wounded, three seriously, in a machinegun attack on a helicopter on the ground.

In the latest of a string of hit-and-run attacks against US forces, gunmen fired assault rifles and grenades at US troops in the volatile town of Falluja, west of Baghdad, hitting a power supply facility, witnesses said.

One Iraqi man was killed when the soldiers returned fire, they said. It was not clear if he was one of the attackers. There were no reports of US casualties. Residents of Ramadi, 100 km west of Baghdad, reported another attack, but there was no word on ca-



US army officers attend a ceremony in which Iraqi police officers received new uniforms and used revolvers as part of an American plan to upgrade the local police force in Falluja town on Monday.

sualties.

Meanwhile, a number of Syrian border guards were wounded when American special forces in Iraq attacked a convoy of suspected high-profile members of Saddam Hussein's toppled government, US officials said on Monday. "It's not clear how they were injured, whether they were caught in a cross-fire or what. But we are, I believe, still treating three of them," said one official.

Syria, which has had often tense relations with Washington over US charges it supports terrorism, said it had no comment and Washington signalled there had been no

official government contact with Damascus over the incident.

The US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the attack occurred last Wednesday in a fairly remote area near Iraq's western city of Qaim, close to the Syrian border and that some Syrian guards were injured.

US officials did not say whether American forces, acting on intelligence and backed by aircraft, crossed into Syria and were vague on how Syrian guards were involved. The convoy was apparently attempting to escape into Syria, the officials said. Reuters

British public yet to accept euro

By Batuk Gathani

BRUSSELS, JUNE 10. European observers feel that the British Government's decision to postpone its entry into the euro regime has been prompted by hostile public opinion, though ostensibly, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, stated that structural economic differences between Britain and the euro zone region prevented his country from joining the single currency regime.

If the current British opinion polls are any criterion, the Blair Government may lose a euro vote in a referendum. Hence, the administration needs a "breathing space" to cultivate pro-euro opinion among the people for a smooth entry into the scheme.

Britain's entry into the euro regime is considered "inevitable" and a "historical necessity". The current geopolitical and economic situations would indicate that Britain has come closer to Europe, but is still a psychological step away. It is argued that Britain and Europe are not yet in the same boat but

are driven by the same tide.

The reality is that the euro zone is Britain's nearest neighbour, separated by a 38-km-wide channel, as also its largest trading partner and a member of the same customs union. The European Union last year accounted for 52 per cent of trade in British goods and services — 10 per cent higher than in 1973 when Britain joined the E.U. or the European Common Market, as it was known then.

In the coming years, according to prominent analysts, Britain's trade with the E.U. will continue to rise and the two economies may become more inter-dependent. Britain is currently the third largest economy in the E.U. after Germany and France. In the banking, insurance and financial services sector, that country still rules the waves and London remains the hub of international finance after New York and Tokyo.

The 12 founder members of the European Monetary Union have had an ambivalent attitude to the three non-euro states in the 15-member E.U. The British are thought of as

still living in the nostalgia of the "Empire days" and a self-promoted "special trans-Atlantic relationship with the United States." No one has any idea how long this could last, amid the growing realisation on both sides of the English Channel that Britain may lose its influence in the European decision-making process. The political and economic momentum in the E.U. is increasingly dominated by Germany and France.

Mr. Gordon Brown has revealed that Britain's entry into the euro regime would boost the country's income by a quarter per cent, worth euro 4.2 billions. He also acknowledged progress on the five "economic tests" for membership of the euro, but concluded that so far, only the test related to "financial services sector" was positive.

Mr Brown argued that tests on economic convergence, flexibility, investment and employment had not so far registered the desired progress. Hence, the decision to join the euro has been postponed but not abandoned.

Blair 'no' to independent judicial probe

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JUNE 4. There would be two separate inquiries into accusations that the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair's office doctored vital intelligence to bolster his case for a war on Iraq — one by the influential cross-party foreign affairs select committee of the Commons, and another by the intelligence and security committee.

But Mr. Blair stonewalled calls from MPs in the Commons today for an independent judicial probe. He said he would cooperate fully with the intelligence and security committee's investigations, and all the necessary information would be made available to it. He also promised to publish its findings but the MPs were not satisfied pointing out that the committee lacked transparency because of its composition and the fact that its hearing were not open.

Significantly, Mr Blair made no reference to the decision of the foreign affairs committee, chaired by a senior Labour MP, Donald Anderson, to launch its own investigations. It is this inquiry that is considered more important because it holds open hearings and can summon Ministers and reports directly to Parliament. Among those likely to be summoned are the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, and senior intelligence figures who played a role in advising the Government in the run-up to

the Prime Minister and report to the Prime Minister. There would be a credibility problem with them which would not be with our committee," he said.

Despite the announcement of the two inquiries, there was no sign of the row dying down as Mr. Blair was warned that he could be headed for a "Watergate-like" scandal if the Government failed to clear the air.

Even the Tories, who had fully supported his controversial Iraq policy, joined calls for a judicial inquiry, and there were signs of unease building up in Mr Blair's own party after more than 70 Labour MPs were reported to have signed a Commons motion demanding publication of full evidence behind his claims about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction.

Many said they were misled into supporting the war by Mr Blair when he claimed that the Saddam regime had the capability to activate its deadly weapons in "45 minutes" — a claim which is now alleged to have been invented by his office. But Mr. Blair dismissed the allegation as "completely and totally" untrue.

He said the Government's dossier on the threat posed by Iraqi weapons was based on unadulterated intelligence inputs. There was no attempt to rewrite or 'override' the assessment of intelligence chiefs. He challenged his critics to produce evidence to support their allegations.



Tony Blair

the war. The decision of the foreign affairs committee was seen as a setback to the Government's bid to ride out the storm and Mr. Anderson made clear that no mercy would be shown. "We (the committee) are a different animal to the intelligence and security committee...they are appointed by

Blair promises evidence on Iraqi weapons

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JUNE 1 — The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, today promised to publish new evidence of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction amid fresh accusations that his office doctored intelligence to bolster the case for a military attack on Iraq.

Mr. Blair, who is under pressure from MPs to agree to a parliamentary probe into the allegations, said scientists who worked on Mr. Hussein's weapons programme were being interviewed and "over the coming weeks and months we will assemble this evidence and then we will give it to the people." He had "no doubt whatever" that the findings would corroborate his Government's claims over the threat posed by the Mr. Hussein regime.

As the controversy continued to dog him on his foreign tour, Mr. Blair mocked his critics who now include many of those who

supported the war after he quoted intelligence claims in Parliament saying that Iraq was capable of deploying its weapons of mass destruction in 45 minutes — a bit which, it is now alleged, was a Downing Street invention.

"Those people who are sitting there and saying, 'it's all going to be proved to be a big fib got out by the security services, there will be no weapons of mass destruction', just wait and have a little patience. I have no doubt whatever that the evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction will be there. Absolutely," he told Sky TV.

Mr. Blair did not indicate when the new evidence would be published but appeared to suggest that it would not be any time soon. "The work is only just beginning," he said pointing out that the job involved not only interviewing the scientists and experts who worked on the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programme but investigating

"literally hundreds, possibly even thousands, of different sites".

Critics dismissed his remarks as "another Tony talk" and his former Cabinet colleague, Clare Short, accused him of 'duping' the country over the issue. Ms. Short said Mr. Blair had made up his mind to go to war as far back as August last year and subsequently intelligence was manipulated. "There was political spin put on the intelligence information to create a sense of urgency. It was a political decision that came from the Prime Minister. We were misled: I think we were deceived in the way it was done," she told *The Sunday Telegraph* as, in a twist, it was alleged that Downing Street was forced to drop the concluding chapter from an intelligence dossier it published last September after the chief of Britain's key intelligence body, the Joint Intelligence Committee, said it was too alarming.

Row over weapons clouds Blair's Iraq visit

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MAY 29. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair's high-profile visit to Iraq today — the first by a Western leader after the invasion — was clouded by a political storm here over the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld's suggestion that Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction may never be found as they may have been destroyed before the war.

Even as Mr. Blair insisted that he had "absolutely no doubt" about the existence of Iraqi weapons, MPs seized on Mr. Rumsfeld's remarks to call for an inquiry into the veracity of intelligence claims cited by the British Government to justify the invasion of Iraq.

The intelligence claims were quoted in a dossier published by Downing Street last October, and then repeatedly mentioned by Mr. Blair in Parliament saying Iraq had chemical and biological weapons which could be activated at 45 minutes notice.

Downing Street today denied allegations that intelligence reports were deliberately exaggerated to make a case for a war. But MPs were not satisfied and insisted that the Government disclose the evidence of the existence of the Iraqi arsenal. They said if it turned out that Mr. Blair had misled Parliament, it could be politically explosive for him.

"This is absolutely dangerous for Tony Blair. The potential charge is that the House of Commons has been misled," said the Left-wing Labour MP and a former minister, Peter Kilfoyle, who plans to table a motion seeking evidence.

The former Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, who resigned



The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is greeted by school children in Basra, southern Iraq, on Thursday. — Reuters

over his opposition to the war, said Mr. Rumsfeld's remarks blew a "gaping hole" in Mr. Blair's claims. "Saying that they can't find the weapons, and they may never find the weapons, blows an enormous gaping hole through the case for war that was made on both sides of the Atlantic...We were told Saddam had weapons ready for use within 45 minutes.

It's now 45 days since the war has finished and we have still not found anything. It's plain he did not have that capacity to threaten us, possibly did not have the capacity to threaten even his neighbours..." he said calling for an investigation by a parliamentary committee.

Mr. Cook's sharp reaction was echoed across the anti-war spectrum cutting across party lines, and there was reported to be embarrassment in government circles over Mr. Rumsfeld's statement in which he reportedly said: "It...is possible that they (Iraq) decided that

they would destroy them (weapons) prior to a conflict and I don't know the answer." Commentators said the issue would raise doubts about the American and British claims over Iran's nuclear intentions and allegations that it is harbouring Al-Qaeda supporters.

Mr. Blair, talking to journalists accompanying him on his Iraq visit, sought to shift the focus from the weapons' controversy saying: "Our priorities in Iraq are less to do with finding weapons of mass destruction ...and more to do with humanitarian and political reconstruction."

He made no mention of the weapons when he addressed British troops in Basra this morning, stressing instead the global benefits from the ouster of Saddam Hussein. He described the 'liberation' of Iraq as a "defining moment of the century", and praised the troops for their 'extraordinary' achievement.

Short quits Blair Cabinet over Iraq

Press Trust of India

LONDON, May 12. — The British international development secretary, Ms Clare Short, today resigned from the Tony Blair Cabinet, accusing the Prime Minister of breaking promises over the UN's role in post-conflict Iraq.

"I am afraid that the assurances you gave me about the need for a UN mandate to establish a legitimate Iraqi government have been breached," she said in her resignation letter to Mr Blair.

Ms Short also accused Mr Blair and foreign secretary, Mr Jack Straw, of "secretly" negotiating a UN Security Council resolution which contradicted promises she had given in Parliament to MPs.

Ms Short, who will be replaced in the Cabinet by one of her deputies Baroness Amos, telephoned Mr Blair to tell him she could no longer stay in the government.

New US boss arrives in Basra: The new US civilian administrator of Iraq, Mr Paul Bremer, arrived in the country today after a major shake-up in the US team in Baghdad, AFP adds from Basra. Nearly a week after being

tapped by President George W Bush to take over the troubled reconstruction of post-war Iraq, Mr Bremer landed in Basra. He arrived with General Richard Myers, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, and retired US Army General Jay Garner, the man Mr Bremer is replacing.



Ms Clare Short

Powell warning on Iraq: In Cairo, Gen. Colin Powell warned today after meeting President Hosni Mubarak, that the emergence of an Islamist government in Iraq would "not be in the best interest of the Iraqi people or its neighbours." "I think it would be unfortunate if a government rose there that is so fundamentalist that it didn't respect the basic things for democracy," he said.

Coalition releases Zubaidi: Coalition forces have released Md Moshen al-Zubaidi, two weeks after detaining the man who sought to govern Baghdad in the aftermath of the fall of Mr Saddam Hussein, US Central Command announced today, AFP adds from Baghdad. "Prior to his release yesterday, Al-Zubaidi admitted that he had over-stepped his authority and that his actions were contrary to Coalition efforts to secure and stabilise Baghdad," Centcom said in a statement.

13 MAY 2003

THE STATESMAN

U.K. warned of unrest over asylum policy

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MAY 8. In a report, which is likely to play into the hands of anti-immigrant groups, a high-level cross-party parliamentary committee has warned that the continuing flow of asylum-seekers into Britain could provoke a "political backlash" with people turning to extremist parties as has already happened in the U.K. and several European countries.

The report, published barely a week after the rabidly racist British National Party (BNP) won an unprecedented 16 seats in local elections, also warned of "social unrest" if the current flow of asylum-seekers was not checked. Pointing out that the number of people seeking asylum in Britain had nearly trebled in the past 20 years, the report said: "Clearly this is unacceptable. If allowed to continue unchecked, it could overwhelm the capacity of the receiving countries to cope, leading inevitably to so-

cial unrest. It could also, and there are signs this may already be happening, lead to a growing political backlash which will, in turn, lead to the election of extremist parties with extremist solutions."

Asylum has become a major political issue in Britain and right-wing parties, including the Tories, have used it to whip up an anti-immigrant hysteria which has got worse after '9/11' with intelligence agencies suggesting that terrorists are exploiting Britain's relaxed asylum regime to seek a safe haven here. The Government has responded with a series of tough measures, including forced detention of asylum-seekers till their cases are decided, but the problem remains. The shadow home secretary Oliver Letwin, called the report a "damning indictment" of the Government's handling of the issue and said the entire asylum system was in "in chaos". The report, which was backed by Labour MPs on the committee, criticised the Government for not being

able to give "even a rough estimate" of how many asylum-seekers who continued to stay in Britain after their applications were rejected. Critics alleged that a large number of failed asylum-seekers simply 'melted' into the crowd, and there was no way to track them down. There have been suggestions that identity cards, on the lines of those in European countries, should be introduced to check illegal immigration.

The report coincided with the release of the latest census figures revealing a wide gap between the social and economic status of immigrants and white Britons. Even second and third-generation immigrants, particularly Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, lag far behind the white population in terms of employment, education, health and other social indicators. This belies the widespread impression that the non-whites, born and brought up in Britain, are on a faster track than their parents and grandparents who came here as aliens.

17 APR 2003

THE HINDU

Blair faces 'friendly fire' over Iraq

By Hasan Suroor 20.15

Robin Cook, who resigned from the Cabinet over Mr. Blair's Iraq policy, attacked the Prime Minister for cosying up to a "neo-conservative management" in White House.

But it was Ms. Short's defiant remarks, notably her criticism of U.S. troops for their handling of the post-invasion situation, that grabbed the headlines much to the irritation of Blair loyalists and there was speculation that she might be sacked in the next ministerial reshuffle.

A persistent critic of Mr. Blair's pro-U.S. stance, Ms. Short had threatened to resign in the run-up to the war but was persuaded to fall in line after being promised a vital role in post-war reconstruction of Iraq.

Apparently, she is unhappy over the turn of events and, to a question from foreign journalists, said the removal of Mr. Hussein did not justify so many civilian casualties.

"I do not think that the death of any human being is a price worth paying," she

said. She also said that the coalition forces did not appear to have been fully prepared to deal with the situation after Saddam's downfall.

"The rapid collapse of the regime was not prepared for. We should have done better," she said and criticised the U.S. forces for failing to control the looting and chaos that followed the collapse of the Iraqi regime.

Scepticism

Critics said her remarks reflected the continuing scepticism in the Government over Iraq while the Tories demanded her resignation for failing to accept collective responsibility for Government's actions.

The row over the U.N.'s precise role in the reconstruction of Iraq continued to simmer as Mr. Straw warned that Britain and U.S. could make 'alternative' arrangements if the Security Council did not put its act together. This was seen as an attempt to pressure Germany, France and Russia.

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In an embarrassing development, one of Mr. Blair's most high-profile Cabinet Ministers, Clare Short, questioned whether the fall of the Saddam Hussein's regime was worth it considering that it cost so many innocent civilian lives.

She also suggested that a military victory in Iraq did not mean that Mr. Blair's political future was necessarily secure.

"It is too early, as the Chinese say, to decide what the long-term effect on the reputation of the Prime Minister is," she said even as the former Foreign Secretary,

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Cook wants British troops pulled out

LONDON, MARCH 30. The former British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, who quit his senior government post in protest against military action in Iraq, has called for British troops to be pulled out of the war in the Gulf.

Mr. Cook, the most senior in a series of resignations from the Prime Minister, Tony Blair's Government over the war, told the *Sunday Mirror* that the U.S.-led war risked stoking hatred of the West.

"I have already had my fill of this bloody and unnecessary war. I want our troops home and I want them home before more of them are killed," he told the newspaper.

"There will be a long term legacy of hatred for the West if the Iraqi people continue to suffer from the effects of the war we started."

Mr. Cook, who quit his Cabinet post as Leader of the Commons two weeks ago, is the most high-profile government member to call for troops to be brought home 10 days into the conflict.

Mr. Cook criticised the U.S. President, George W. Bush, for starting a war in Iraq on the assumption that the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein's army would quickly capitulate and

victory would be swift.

"Nobody should start a war on the assumption that the enemy's army will co-operate. But that is exactly what President Bush has done," he said.

He warned of the dangers of besieging the Iraqi capital Baghdad and urged the U.S. army to consider other tactics.

"There is no more brutal form of warfare than a siege. People go hungry.

The water and power to provide the sinews of a city snap. Children die." But Mr. Cook's call for a troop withdrawal appeared to be at odds with British public opinion according to a new poll.

The ICM poll for the *News of the World* tabloid found 84 per cent of those surveyed believed Britain and the United States must see the war through to a successful conclusion with only 11 per cent wanting troops to be pulled out now.

At the time of his resignation, Mr. Cook said he was going because it was "wrong to embark on military action without broad international support."

A spokesman for Mr. Blair's office told Reuters that Mr. Cook's comments would not affect the Government's position.

— Reuters

THE HINDS

3 1 MAR 2003

Blair wins Parliament support for war

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 19. Thanks to a steamroller majority and full-throated support from the Tories, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has won Parliament's backing for a pre-emptive military attack on Iraq even without an explicit United Nations mandate, but with as many as 139 of his own MPs voting against the Government his political authority was seen to have been greatly diminished.

Even as the outcome, announced late on Tuesday night after a 10-hour debate, was hailed by the Government as a victory for Mr Blair's uncompromising stance, privately, there were fears that if the war did not go well his leadership could be on the line.

The size of the Labour MPs' revolt was the biggest since Mr Blair became Prime Minister six years ago, and its impact was heightened by the fact that it was preceded by three

ministerial resignations, including that of the high-profile Leader of the Commons and former Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook.

Rebel MPs said the Government might have won a technical victory, but it had lost the moral argument after failing to convince so many of its MPs that it was a just and legitimate war.

"It is a very strong message to the Prime Minister and I hope we can now all reflect carefully on how we arrived at this situation..." said Graham Allen, a leading Labour rebel.

There was palpable relief in Government circles after a nail-biting day which saw Mr Blair hint, during a passionate speech in the Commons, that he might resign if the vote went against him. He said he would "not be a party" to a course which, as he saw it, amounted to leaving the Iraqi people "at the mercy of events" and letting down the allies.

"This is not the time to falter. This is the time for this House, not just this Government or indeed this Prime Minister, to give the lead... to show at the moment of decision that we have the courage to do the right thing," he told the House amid repeated interruptions from sceptical MPs.

On a day of high drama, party managers used every trick in the book to win over the potential rebels and Mr Blair himself spent the day in Parliament "chatting up" his backbenchers — something unprecedented for a Prime Minister who, generally, has little time for Parliament.

Loyalists acknowledged that the result could have been much worse but praised Mr Blair for agreeing to face a vote despite the risks. The Labour Party chairman, John Reid, said now that Parliament had voted "clearly" to support the Government, it was time for the country and Parliament to "unite" behind the Prime Minister. Anti-war MPs, however, maintained that they had been able to make the point that it was a deeply divided nation and party that Mr Blair was leading to war.



Students gather to protest against the war on Iraq, in Edinburgh, Scotland, on Tuesday. — Reuters

20 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Blair faces crucial vote in House

WAD
19-15

19/3

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 18. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was sitting on a razor's edge on Tuesday ahead of a crucial vote in Parliament over Iraq as more Labour MPs threatened to join the simmering revolt against him after three ministerial resignations in less than 24 hours.

Despite attempts to put on a brave face, there was clearly a sense of crisis in the Government and in a sign of panic, the Prime Minister's wife, Cherie Blair, was drafted in to talk to the anti-war women MPs. Diane Abbot, a left-wing Labour MP, went on a BBC TV programme to disclose that Ms Blair had been phoning the undecided ones to dissuade them from joining the rebels whose numbers were reported to be rising steadily.

Mr. Blair himself took the unusual step of writing individually to party backbenchers, and senior Ministers were engaged in some heavy pressure tactics to defuse a potentially explosive situation. Prominent anti-war MPs were quoted as saying that they were being "intimidated" to fall in line, and some claimed they had been offered a berth in the Government in return for their support.

"A number of offers have been made that Government jobs could be forthcoming or those with Government jobs could lose them (if they rebelled)," said the dissident Labour MP, Graham Allan.

The dissidents got a huge boost after the Leader of the Commons, Robin Cook, and

two junior Ministers resigned, protesting Mr Blair's decision to go to war without a fresh U.N. mandate.

In a gesture, not seen in the Commons for at least two decades, Mr Cook was given a standing ovation as he clinically tore into the Government's case for a war.

In what was widely hailed as a "forensic" expose of Mr Blair's policy, he warned, "history will be astonished at the diplomatic miscalculations" which threatened to plunge the country into a war which had "neither international nor domestic support". His announcement that he would vote against the Government was greeted with applause by backbenchers, while the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, was occasionally heckled as he defended the case for military action.

The anti-Blair camp attacked the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, for doing a "U-turn" after she reneged on her threat to resign. In a statement, she said: "I know I will be heavily criticised for my decision and many people will feel I have let them down. But I am doing what I think is right in the circumstances which we are now in."

There was much number-crunching in the run-up to the vote, expected late at night (local time) and it was feared that if the size of the revolt exceeded 160 votes (Labour has a little over 400 MPs) Mr. Blair's political authority would be seriously compromised, though there was no threat to his leadership or the Government.

19 MAR 2003

THE HINDO

Blair survives crisis, wins parliament's nod for war

London: Britain's parliament gave Prime Minister Tony Blair a green light on Tuesday to wage war on Iraq, despite a massive revolt within his own party, rejecting a motion which said the case for action had not been made.

Members of parliament voted by 396 to 217 against the anti-war motion, backing instead the government's rival measure demanding "all means necessary" be used to force Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to disarm.

Mr Blair had begged lawmakers to back him on the brink of battle as he faced the biggest crisis of his career, flying in the face of public and party opposition to war.

"We must hold firm," he urged parliament, "because the outcome of this issue will now determine more than the fate of the Iraqi regime and more than the future of the Iraqi people.

"It will determine the pattern of international politics for the next generation."

Mr Blair even hinted he would resign rather than back down, saying that if

- MPs vote by 396 to 217 against anti-war motion
- 140 Labour MPs defy Blair in major revolt
- Blair faced biggest crisis of his career

parliament voted against military action, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein would be left immeasurably stronger and other "tyrants" would take courage.

"I would not be a party to such a course," he said.

The support of opposition Conservatives ensured he did not have to back up that threat but Blair sustained real damage. Some 140 Labour Party members defied him—the biggest rebellion in living memory—and three ministers, including the high profile former foreign secretary Robin Cook, have quit the government in protest at a unilateral war.

Party sources said if that figure had reached more than half of Labour's 411 legislators, it could have proved fatal for him.

The vote was the toughest of tests as Mr Blair prepares to authorise British participation in a war without a UN mandate and with a majority of the public opposing the conflict.

He spent most of the day in parliament with key ministers, drumming up support, charming and twisting arms. His wife Cherie was even rumoured to have worked the telephones.

Government aides hailed the result as backing his aim to confront Saddam. "It is now time for all of us in parliament and in the country to come together and show the support our armed forces deserve," Mr Blair's official spokesman told reporters.

International development secretary Clare Short—conspicuously seated alongside Mr Blair as he made his last pre-war pitch to parliament—brought some respite for the premier. She had called him reckless over his Iraq policy and had vowed to resign if Britain went to war without UN backing. But on Tuesday she decided to stay in her job. Reuters

War will be a US affair

Washington: US defence officials have said that the "coalition of the willing" arrayed against Iraq may bolster the US war effort diplomatically, but the impending strike is largely an American affair.

US forces are the most advanced on earth technologically and even European forces cannot match them, officials were quoted as saying by *The Washington Post*.

Among the 250,000 personnel amassed in the Gulf, only Britain, with its 40,000 to 45,000 troops, planes and warships, and Australia, with its 2,000-strong special forces, fighter planes and naval vessels, have a strike capability.

Other partners in the coalition of about 30 countries have offered troops but they will

mainly play non-combat roles, mostly decontaminating battlefields and troops that could be exposed to chemical, biological or radioactive agents.

Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine have offered small numbers of troops for such activities. France said on Wednesday that they will be willing to help if Iraq uses chemical or biological weapons.

Assembling the coalition was much more a diplomatic exercise than a military one, the Pentagon has said. The military component of the coalition that confronted Iraq during the 1991 Gulf war was significantly more substantial but Iraqi forces were thought then to be stronger than they are now. PTI

20 MAR 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Blair's Iraq war

10 MAR 2003

MIKE PEACOCK

London, March 17 (Reuters): British Prime Minister Tony Blair suffered his biggest political hit of the Iraq crisis today when a senior Cabinet minister resigned in protest at his hawkish stance.

"It is with regret I have today resigned from Cabinet," the government's parliamentary leader and former foreign secretary Robin Cook said in a statement.

"I can't accept collective responsibility for the decision to commit Britain now to military action in Iraq without international agreement or domestic support."

Blair's pro-American Iraq policy has set the centrist Labour leader against a large part of his party in the biggest crisis of his Premiership since taking power in 1997.

Cook, who had previously said he would not support a war without UN backing, resigned ahead of an emergency Cabinet meeting and as the US told Iraqi President Saddam Hussein he must leave the country or face war.

Another minister who has threatened to resign, international development secretary Clare Short, said she would make a statement later. Apart from those two, Blair is thought to have relatively solid Cabinet support.

Weighed down by Blair's political problems, Britain's sterling currency fell by late afternoon to a three-month low versus the US dollar at below \$1.57.

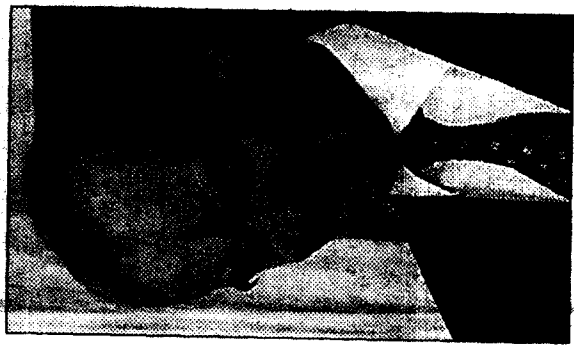
On a more welcome note for Blair, his government's top lawyer countered claims from

some quarters that war on Iraq would be illegal under international law by saying he believed it could be justified under a raft of existing UN resolutions.

"Authority to use force against Iraq exists from the combined effect of resolutions 678, 687 and 1441," attorney-general Lord Goldsmith said.

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Labour parliamentary leader, Robin Cook, in London on Monday. (Reuters)

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The US has advised the UN to pull its weapons inspectors out of Iraq, the clearest signal to date that war is imminent.

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Last month, 122 Labour members of parliament more than one in four, defied Blair's hawkish Iraq stance. Rebels in Blair's ruling party say that number could rise by another 40 this time.

But the support of opposition Conservatives will deliver Blair parliamentary support almost whatever the size of the Labour rebellion.

Outlaw US flouting laws: Iraq

Baghdad, March 17 (Reuters): Iraq responded fiercely today to US President George W. Bush's talks in the Azores, branding it a "summit of outlaws" and accusing the US and its British and Spanish allies of flouting international law.

"The statements that were issued yesterday came from the summit, which I will call the summit of outlaws who deviated from international law," information minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf said in Baghdad. "The officials of these three countries have plunged the world into a string of lies. They are in a hurry to carry out a foolish aggression on Iraq but they will fail."

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MIKE PEACOCK

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"It is with regret I have today resigned from Cabinet," the government's parliamentary leader and former foreign secretary Robin Cook said in a statement.

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18 MAR 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

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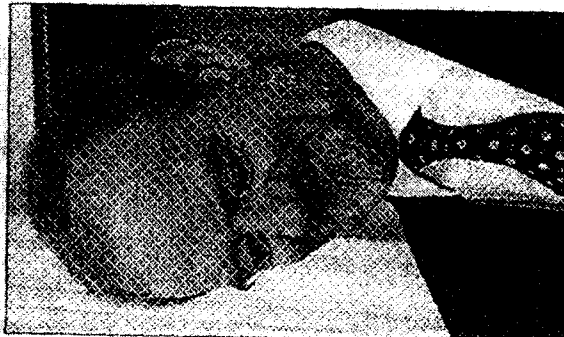
On a more welcome note for Blair, his government's top lawyer countered claims from

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Robin Cook quits

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LONDON, MARCH 17. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, faces a major revolt within his Labour Party over his decision to back the U.S. President, George W. Bush, in using force to disarm the Iraq leader, Saddam Hussein. Robin Cook, a senior Minister in the Blair Cabinet, resigned shortly after the U.K. and the U.S. abandoned their efforts at the United Nations to get a approval for military action.

Mr. Cook resigned as the Government's leader in the House of Commons after a private meeting with Mr. Blair, shortly before a meeting of the Cabinet, the Prime Minister's office said. It was not clear if the International Aid Minister, Clare Short, who had criticised Mr. Blair's policy as "reckless," would also



leave the Cabinet.

Mr. Cook is expected to lead opposition in Government during a debate in the next day or two over Mr. Blair's handling of the crisis. Although Mr. Blair faces considerable discontent among his lawmakers, he is expected to survive any vote.

Mr. Cook was Foreign Secretary in Mr. Blair's Government in 1997, but was replaced by Jack Straw in 2001. — AP

SEE HINDI

18 MAR 2003

U.K. Minister threatens to quit

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 10. The political crisis facing the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, over Iraq deepened today after one of his most high-profile Cabinet Ministers — the International Development Secretary, Claire Short, — threatened to resign if he went to war with Baghdad without a second U.N. resolution.

Ms. Short stunned Downing Street with an extraordinary attack on Mr. Blair's Iraqi stance calling it "reckless" and in "breach" of international law. Even by her own standards of outspokenness, the attack was unprecedented and the Prime Minister's Office was reported to be furious. This morning, there was even speculation that she might be sacked but Mr. Blair held back, apparently fearing a backlash from the party where Ms. Short is highly regarded.

The Prime Minister's official spokesman told journalists that Mr. Blair had been "surprised" by Ms. Short's remarks. The issue was discussed at a meeting Mr. Blair had with the Deputy Prime

Minister, John Prescott, and the Labour Party chairman, John Reid, but details were not known. The official line was that the Government would not be "diverted" from its efforts to get enough support for a second resolution. It was even willing to water down the resolution.

The timing of Ms. Short's defiant remarks — "ten minutes to midnight", as she put it — was considered significant, particularly as they came shortly after the resignation of a ministerial aide amid threats of more resignations from the junior rungs of the Government.

Blair-ites denounced her remarks as "outrageous" and a "diversion" at a time when the Prime Minister was engaged in diplomatic efforts to get the second resolution passed. But for the swelling ranks of anti-war Labour MPs, her intervention was a shot in the arm and likely to put more pressure on the Government to seek a vote in Parliament before plunging the country into a war. Up to 200 Labour MPs were reported to be inclined to revolt if Mr. Blair backed a war which did not have a U.N. mandate.

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THE HINDU

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Blair faces revolt from MPs

103

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 9. In the first sign of an impending political revolt against the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, over his Iraq policy, a member of his Government resigned today even as four others threatened to follow suit if he supported a United States-led attack on Iraq without a second U.N. resolution.

Andy Reed, MP and ministerial aide to the Secretary of State for Environment, Margaret Beckett, announced his resignation through a statement on his website and said he would give his full reasons on Monday. Earlier, he had told newspapers that he would quit "if we don't have a second resolution".

Similar threats came from four other junior members of the Government even as speculation continued to swirl around two Cabinet Ministers — Robin Cook and Clare Short — who were also believed to be similarly inclined. The anti-war sentiment in the Labour Party hardened after the latest

British-U.S. ultimatum to Iraq with the dissidents claiming that up to 200 MPs may join an anti-Blair revolt if there was no U.N. authorisation for military action.

Embarrassed Blair loyalists were today doing the rounds of TV studios to assure critics that every effort was being made to secure a second resolution. Mr. Blair, spending the weekend at Chequers, was reportedly engaged in intensive "phone diplomacy" to persuade the Security Council fence sitters such as Pakistan, Angola, Cameroon, Guinea, Mexico and Chile to come on board.

The Trade and Industry Secretary, Patricia Hewitt, one of whose own junior Ministers had threatened to resign on the issue, told Sky TV that the Government was going "flat out" to secure a second resolution. Her remarks came amid reports of fresh behind-the-scenes attempts to force the Iraq President, Saddam Hussein, to go into exile to avert a war.

The *Sunday Telegraph* quoted a diplomat as saying that the idea behind the March 17

deadline was to "raise the pressure to the highest degree on Saddam and concentrate the minds of others who may want to make a final attempt to persuade him into exile".

The Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, sought to play down the reports of threatened ministerial resignations saying: "You have got to put it into its context". He insisted the party was solidly behind Mr. Blair — a claim contested by other Labour figures who said the Prime Minister was facing "enormous" difficulties. Douglas Henderson, a former Armed Forces Minister in the Blair Government, warned that the party was going through "one of the most critical periods".

Anti-war protests

Anti-war protests were held across Britain on Saturday while a new opinion poll today showed only 15 per cent of the people supported unilateral military action.

Seventy-seven per cent said they would oppose a war which did not have a U.N. mandate.

1 0 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Blair may risk political career to support U.S.

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 7. As it begins to look increasingly unlikely for Britain and United States to get the U.N. security council's backing for a second resolution on Iraq, the big question being asked here is: would the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, still support any unilateral U.S. military intervention?

The opinion in Mr. Blair's own party is overwhelmingly against any action without a fresh U.N. mandate and there is talk of Ministerial resignations in case he plunges Britain into a war which is not seen to have the support of the international community. But even as his supporters warned today that he would be risking his political career if he ignored the voices around him, Mr. Blair appeared to have made up mind to go down the "U.S. route" regardless of the political consequences for him at home.

While continuing to maintain that he was confident of getting the Security Council's support for a second resolution, Mr. Blair made clear that he would not be deterred by a veto. "If there was a veto applied by one of the countries with a veto, or by countries that I thought were applying the veto unreasonably, in those circumstances we would (go ahead)", he told a deeply sceptical young British and European au-

dience on an MTV debate on Thursday.

Mr. Blair's remarks were sharply questioned by a group of prominent legal figures who said there was no such thing as an "unreasonable" veto under the international law. "The Prime Minister's assertion that in certain circumstances a veto becomes 'unreasonable' and may be disregarded has no basis in international law," they said in a joint letter to the Prime Minister's office.

They reminded Mr. Blair that the U.K. had used its security council veto on 32 occasions since 1945 and if there had been any attempt to disregard these vetoes on the ground that they were 'unreasonable' they would have been 'deplored' as an unacceptable infringement of the U.K.'s right to exercise a veto under the U.N. charter article 27."

The letter was signed by 16 scholars of international law drawn from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the London School of Economics, the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University College London, and the University of Paris.

Meanwhile, a group of pro-Labour Muslim leaders met Mr. Blair and urged him to avert a war. They said they feared that in the event of a war, the Muslim community would come under pressure.

THE HINDU

8 MAR 2003

Blair suffers a major revolt in party over stand on Iraq

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

London: Tony Blair's bruised and battered government remained bullish on Thursday about supporting a US-led war on Iraq just hours after what is being described as the biggest revolt within a governing party in parliamentary history.

The rebel vote, clocking in at 199 MPs or one-third of the House of Commons overall, acutely embarrassed Blair's



Tony Blair

government but did not actually defeat it in statistical terms.

On the morning after 122 MPs or a quarter of his Labour Party joined with opposition MPs to denounce Mr Blair's preparations for war, the British prime minister's senior cabinet colleagues went on the offensive.

Sticking to the script, foreign office minister Mike O'Brien insisted that two-thirds of the British parliament still supported Blair.

Mr Blair has a brute parliamentary majority of 410, while most of the main opposition Conservative Party has propped up his government's hawkish and unpopular decision to send one-third of the British army on war duty. Cabinet minister Margaret Beckett said the rebel

vote might send the wrong message to Saddam Hussein, even as the press, public and dissident politicians within and outside Mr Blair's Labour Party said the only message was: No to war.

The House of Commons vote late on Wednesday night came after a remarkably polite, orderly but passionate six-hour debate, largely against the war.

It is being seen as a perilously low-point in Mr Blair's seven-year premiership. Medical similies, such as bloodied nose, kick in the groin and carnage are being used by commentators to describe Mr Blair's condition after being publicly shown up as leading the most divided government, party and country since the 1956 Suez crisis, which forced Anthony Eden's resignation.

The Times, London, illustrated Blair's predicament with a cartoon of the prime minister lying on the Commons' blood-spattered famous green benches.

But even as the paper said "the mass mutiny" left Blair "out on a limb", his fiercest critics insisted there was no immediate challenge to his leadership.

Britain moves new resolution in U.N.

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 25. The Bush administration and its "allies" are getting ready for some heady times at the United Nations Security Council.

On Monday, Britain introduced a one-page resolution signed by the United States and Spain, calling on the Council to say that Iraq "has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it" by resolution 1441 and one that was adopted unanimously on November 8, 2002. While the formal draft language does not formally call on the Council to authorise the use of force, adopting the new resolution would invariably mean that.

The counter-proposal or memorandum has been put forth by France, Russia and Germany, which have opposed military action, and are calling for a peaceful disarmament of Iraq through the strengthening of the weapons inspections. The new process, if approved, will see the inspections regime running past July 1.

"The time has not come to discuss a military option," the top envoy of France

said. China is not an official sponsor of this plan but is supporting this idea. But diplomats believe that if push comes to shove at the Council on the U.S.-backed resolution, Beijing will abstain instead of casting its veto. Iraq as a foreign policy issue is not something that China would want Sino-American relations to be defined with. Further, Beijing will want other veto-wielding members such as France and Russia to stick their necks out as they have been more vociferous in their stance against military action.

The U.S. has four votes in the 15-member Council that would include Britain, Spain and Bulgaria. For a resolution to pass, it requires nine votes and no permanent member casting a veto. Five members — Russia, France, Germany, China and Syria — are against any use of force; and there are six non-permanent members who are said to be "fence sitters". These countries are Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea, Mexico and Pakistan. And the focus of Washington is on these six and the strategy of winning support is through a variety of means including high profile lob-

bying and economic incentives.

The members of the Security Council are looking to their respective capitals for guidance on how to go about with a second closed door session set for Thursday.

In pressing for a second resolution, the administration here has hinted that the President, George W. Bush, may be inclined to wait until after the March 7 report of the top weapons inspector, Hans Blix, and then push for a vote.

According to present indications, the week of March 7 to March 15 will be a crucial determining period following which Mr. Bush could go the military route, alone if necessary. "It's time to deal with this problem," argued the National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, at the White House going on to brush aside the French proposal that gives inspections another four months to run its course.

Senior officials such as Dr. Rice remain sceptical that the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, will comply with the latest set of demands of Dr. Blix on the dismantling and destruction of the Al Samoud-2 missiles.

26 FEB 2003

26 APR 2003

THE HINDU

British protesters storm U.S. facilities

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, FEB. 24. In a sign of growing public frustration over the British Government's support for the American military moves against Iraq, a group of angry protesters broke into the U.S. Air Force facilities at an RAF base in Gloucestershire on Sunday in what they described as a "spontaneous" action.

More such protests at other British-U.S. facilities are not ruled out in coming weeks.

In Sunday's incident, which climaxed a series of peace protests across Britain, about 450 people stormed the main gate of the heavily-guarded RAF Fairford complex and pulled it open, taking the police by surprise. The perimeter fence was torn down and some of the protesters even managed to enter the base but were quickly captured after a scuffle with securitymen. Ten persons were arrested.

Organisers said they believed the base would be used by the U.S. B2 stealth bombers in the event of a war with Iraq. Television pictures of the protesters climbing over the fence and breaking into the air base must have embarrassed the Government, which is desperately trying to make a "moral" case for a war.

The protest came as Labour MPs prepared to challenge the Prime Minister, Tony Blair's Iraq policy in the Commons and a senior Cabinet Minister, Clare Short, said she was having "sleepless nights" over the prospects of a war. Mr. Blair,

who is under pressure not to plunge the country into a military conflict without Parliament's approval, is expected to face some tough questions from his own MPs when the Commons votes on a motion on Iraq on Wednesday.

The anti-war MPs warned against a backbench "revolt" and said up to 150 MPs could vote against Mr. Blair's policy. "I think we will get quite a good vote and that will show that the House is completely divided. It is unprecedented to send our servicemen and women into military action when we're not being invaded or threatened," a senior Labour MP, Alice Mahon, said.

Another Labour MP and former Defence Minister, Peter Kilfoyle, described the coming vote as "make-up-your-mind time" and accused Mr. Blair of being engaged in a "drive for war".

He said he would demand an amendment to the Government motion to say that the case for war was not proven.

The Government motion will not mention military action and simply talk about disarming Iraq through the U.N.

Meanwhile, the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, told British troops in the Gulf to be ready for war, which he blamed squarely on Iraq. "What is now abundantly clear is that the choice of what happens next rests in Baghdad. We must... send a clear message to Saddam Hussein: You cannot win, you can only comply and disarm or be defeated — the choice is yours," he said.

2 : FEB 2003

THE HIND

Britain's rift with allies widens

110-14

By Hasan Suroor

12/2

LONDON, FEB. 11. Britain was today caught in a diplomatic crossfire between its European allies and Washington over Iraq amid signs of its increasing isolation in Europe at the same time as the Prime Minister, Tony Blair's ratings at home plummeted to its lowest level because of his unconditional support for U.S.-led military action against Iraq.

A new opinion poll in *The Times* indicated a disturbing shift in voting intentions which, the newspaper said, underlined Mr Blair's "vulnerability" over Iraq. But there was no let-up in the Government's aggressive stance as the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, publicly rejected the French and German proposals to defuse the Iraqi crisis by allowing the U.N. weapons inspectors more time and increasing their strength to make the inspection regime more effective.

In what was seen as a "calculated rebuff" to Paris and Berlin, Mr. Straw questioned the logic of their proposals saying "even a thousand-fold increase" in the inspection regime would not help in the absence of Iraqi cooperation.

"If he (Saddam Hussein) maintains his refusal to cooperate, how will higher numbers help?" he said in a speech at the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London.

His remarks were seen as underlining the extent to which Britain had broken ranks with the "mainstream" Europe, putting a question mark over Mr Blair's vision of acting as a "bridge" between Europe and America. Officials, however, defended the British position and pointed to the fact that eight European countries recently signed a joint letter backing Mr Blair's pro-U.S. stand.

They also recalled Mr Blair's relaxed meeting with the French President, Jacques Chirac, last week leading to agreement on closer defence cooperation.

U.S. firm on new resolution

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 11. In spite of tough opposition in Europe and from Russia, the Bush administration is getting ready to introduce a resolution in the United Nations Security Council as early as this weekend.

The new resolution, which is likely to be co-sponsored by Britain, will find Iraq to be in "material breach" of the demands and obligations and will seek authorisation of the use military force to bring about peace and security.

Diplomats and officials here and in New York are basically making the point that while Washington and London can go about the new resolution in the manner they wished, ultimately, it depends on whether the other permanent members such as Russia, China and France — all opposed to military action against Iraq — will exercise their veto or choose to abstain. In that event, the United States will be looking for nine votes in the 15-member Council.

The other scenario is the extent of the determination of the U.S. That is, despite the maximum diplomatic pressure if France, Russia or China veto the new resolution, is the Bush administration planning to go about on its own with its so-called coalition of the willing to disarm Iraq as it has been saying all along? If what senior officials of the administration have been saying in the last one week is anything to go by, Washington is determined for a showdown with or without the backing of traditional allies and friends in

the Council. That Washington is fast losing patience with the evolving scheme of things is evident from the manner in which it responded to the latest Iraqi "offer" of allowing surveillance flights of the American U-2s. "Iraq needs to disarm and the reason why we even need to fly U-2 flights is because they're not disarming. This is a man who is trying to stall for time. He's trying to play a diplomatic game", the President, George W. Bush, said. Against the backdrop of what is taking place in Washington, New York and European capitals, it is clear that what the top weapons inspectors tell the Security Council this Friday will make the difference between further diplomacy and a military showdown. Hans Blix of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission will have to come out and specifically make the point that Iraq has started cooperating on the "substance" of disarmament, not merely scoring points on the process part of its obligations under resolution 1441.

That a country like the U.S. might not be still impressed is a different matter and a different ballgame. Mr. Bush took note of the widening rift between America and its allies in Europe and commented on France, Germany and Belgium blocking NATO from planning for the defence of Turkey in the event of a war with Iraq. "France has been a long time friend of the United States. We've got a lot in common. But I think their decision at NATO is short-sighted, in my judgement. I hope they'll reconsider", Mr. Bush.

England set to skip Zimbabwe tie

Pradeep Magazine and
Jaideep Ghosh
Cape Town/Johannesburg,
February 10

ENGLAND ARE likely to boycott their February 13 World Cup game against Zimbabwe in Harare.

Though there was no formal announcement, a copy of a letter from ICC president Malcolm Gray to the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) was released to reporters in Cape Town on Monday afternoon. It said: "(We note) that you (the

ECB) are giving us formal notice that you are unable to fulfil the scheduled fixture in Harare on Thursday."

The ECB, however, denied that it had reached a decision, saying the matter was still being discussed. But it made it clear that its appeal for a transfer of the match against Zimbabwe out of Harare still stands. Since the process of arbitration is over, the ECB's stand means that England will not be playing. A boycott will cost England four vital points and probably result in a huge

compensation claim, which the ECB can ill afford to pay. Zimbabwe's tour of England this summer might be a direct casualty. In a show of pan-African solidarity, South Africa's planned post-World Cup Test tour might also fall through.

United Cricket Board spokesperson Bronwyn Wilkinson told *Hindustan Times*: "(UCB president) Percy Sonn spoke to (ECB chief) Tim Lamb on Sunday and told him that in case England withdraw from Zimbabwe, our trip to Eng-

land would be in jeopardy."

The boycott could also be a problem for India. Zimbabwe, not frontline contenders from the group to make the Super Six till now, may be within shouting distance of a spot in the second stage with these extra four points. Australia were expected to sail through, bearing the other teams. India would have needed to beat one of England and Pakistan, presuming they beat the rest. But now India may have to beat both England and Pakistan to qualify.

1 1 FEB 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Putin on mission to avert war

By Vladimir Radyuhin

WSJ 2/9/03

MOSCOW, FEB. 9. The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, left for a tour of Germany and France on Sunday in a last-minute effort to avert a U.S. war against Iraq. Mr. Putin's talks with the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, and the French President, Jacques Chirac, are expected to focus on hammering out a joint position of the three outspoken critics of war against Iraq ahead of a crucial U.N. debate next week.

As Washington called for a new Security Council resolution to present Iraq with an ultimatum to disarm or face war, a senior Russian diplomat made it clear Moscow would not support such a resolution.

"There is no legal basis for use of force against Baghdad, because Iraq continues to cooperate with the international in-

spectors," the Russian Itar-Tass news agency quoted the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Yuri Fedotov, as saying on Sunday.

The Russian diplomat said there was no need for a new resolution on Iraq at present, but should such a need arise, a new resolution or resolutions they must "be aimed at political settlement of the Iraqi problem in line with the decisions that have so far been approved by the Security Council members."

On Friday, the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, said Russia saw the sole purpose of any new resolution in strengthening the inspectors' mandate. At the same time Russian diplomats urged Iraq to "take additional steps toward improvement of cooperation with the international community and clearing up remaining unresolved questions."

10 FEB 2003

Protests in Indonesia, Malaysia against U.S. war plan

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, FEB. 9. Anti-war rallies were held by thousands of citizens and political activists in Indonesia today to protest against a possible U.S.-led war against Iraq at any time now.

In Malaysia, a signature campaign against the possible war move by the U.S. and its "coalition of the willing (nations)," gained pace, even as the organisers of this protest action pledged to keep their "peace movement" above party politics.

A demonstration of several thousands of protesters was organised by the Justice Party in Jakarta, and the president of the party, Hidayat Nurawahid, led the rally in a bid to harness public opinion in the world's largest Muslim-majority state.

Indonesia's prominent Muslim organisation, Muhammadiyah, today urged the people to remain calm even if a U.S.-led war against Iraq were to begin.

The Muhammadiyah Chairman, Syafii Maarif, called upon his followers not to take retaliatory measures against foreigners in Indonesia, in the event of a war against Iraq at

this time. Indonesians were advised to remain calm in the circumstances and not put themselves in harm's way by trying to travel to Iraq to resist any U.S. move there.

A multi-religious 'mission', consisting of the leaders of various faiths in

Indonesia, was also constituted under the banner of the "National Moral Movement." Their objective was to launch a campaign against any possible U.S. attack on Iraq.

In Malaysia, another member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, "Peace Malaysia" intensified its campaign to secure over a million signatures against any war on Iraq.

Said to be no proxy of any political party, the group will present the signatures to the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, on the occasion of the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit, scheduled to be held in Kuala Lumpur later this month.

The idea was to internationalise the anti-war outcry in Malaysia.

According to the Malaysian Foreign Minister, Syed Hamid Albar, the NAM would have a

greater justification to meet even if Iraq were to be attacked by the U.S. ahead of the scheduled conference.

The NAM could then send a "message of peace" through a "cohesive voice," he said today.

Elsewhere in the Asia Pacific region, the Japanese Government was understood to have begun considering the diplomatic options before it in the run-up to a possible political showdown among the major powers on the question of a war to disarm Iraq of its suspected weapons of mass destruction and to deprive Baghdad of its capabilities in this sphere.

For Tokyo, an additional source of concern was North Korea's profile as a 'proliferator' of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in Japan's immediate neighbourhood.

China, as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, has told the U.S. that the Iraq issue could still be looked at through the prism of the international weapons inspectors and that the North Korean question could be sorted out by the 'joint efforts' of 'all parties' concerned.

10 FEB 2003

INSPECTIONS / NOT THE LAST CHANCE: ELBARADEI

U.N. team to meet Saddam

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), FEB. 8. The top United Nations weapons inspectors, Hans Blix and Mo-hammad ElBaradei, arrived in Baghdad on Saturday, seeking Iraq's "active" cooperation in finding and eliminating its mass destruction weapons.

The two officials, soon after arrival, met the Iraqi Presidential Adviser, Amer al-Saadi, and the head of the Iraq's arms monitoring body, Hussam Mo-hammad Amin. Expressing cautious optimism, Mr. Blix said he was "hopeful" about the out-come of the talks, while Mr. El-Baradei said the visit of the two inspectors was not the "last chance" to avert a possible war. "This is an important chance but not the last. There will be other chances", he said.

In an apparent show of support for the Iraqi President, thousands of demonstrators gathered in the Iraqi city of Tikrit, a well-known stronghold of Saddam Hussein. Mr. ElBaradei said the two lead inspectors could meet Mr. Hussein during their two-day visit. Mr. Blix, prior to his arrival in Baghdad, had said that Iraq must cooperate not in procedure but in substance. He pointed out that Iraq must take "drastic measures" if it wants to avert war.

Mr. Blix, however, welcomed Iraq's decision to allow its scientists to be privately interviewed by the inspections team. Four scientists have already been interviewed since Thursday and it is possible that similar interaction takes place in the coming days. Baghdad's reluctance to allow private interviews of its scientists had become a source of friction with the inspection team as well as the United Nations Security Council.

Britain's permanent representative at the U.N., Jeremy Greenstock, has indicated that Iraq is likely to allow U.N. flights of the U2 spy planes, which the inspectors have demanded. An Iraqi legislation to outlaw development of banned weapons in-



ON THE WARPATH: Women members of Iraq's Jalsh al-Quds (Army of Jerusalem) march in Tikrit, home town of the President, Saddam Hussein, on Saturday. — AFP

side Iraq is also on the cards.

Meanwhile, U.S. preparations for a war with Iraq continued unabated. The U.S. State Department has ordered non-essential diplomats and families to leave Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Israel. The U.S. consular office at the Polish embassy in Baghdad has also been closed down. Five U.S. aircraft carriers are likely to be soon within Iraq's striking distance. The carrier Abraham Lincoln is on its way to join the Constellation in the Persian Gulf. The deployment of the Kitty Hawk in this area has also been ordered. The Theodore Roosevelt is linking up with the warship Harry S. Truman, which is already in the Mediterranean Sea.

The British aircraft carrier Ark Royal is reportedly close to the Suez Canal. Nearly 150,000 U.S. troops are expected to be deployed in Iraq's proximity by

February 14, the day when the U.N. inspectors submit their crucial report to the Security Council. The U.S., however, is yet to tie up the loose ends that would allow it to open up a northern front against Iraq.

The U.S. President, George W. Bush's special adviser, Zalmay Khalilzad, is in Ankara to reconcile differences between its two allies — the Turkish Government and the ethnic Kurds residing in northern Iraq over the status of the oil cities of Mosul and Kirkuk. The Kurds fear that Turkey, which has already indicated its intent to enter northern Iraq, can occupy these cities.

Mr. Khalilzad has sought to assuage Kurdish concerns by declaring on Friday that all armed forces in northern Iraq would fall under the overall command of the coalition forces.

U.S. finds the going tough ✓

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 8. Even as the United States is stepping up intense diplomatic pressure on nations represented in the United Nations Security Council, the Bush administration is finding that the going is really tough whether it is in world capitals or New York.

Arguing that resolution 1441 must be upheld "in the fullest", the U.S. President, George W. Bush, said that the Security Council has to make its decision soon.

"The Security Council has to make up its mind soon, as to whether or not its words mean anything", Mr. Bush told reporters on Friday.

"This is a defining moment for the U.N. Security Council. If a Security Council were to allow a dictator to lie and deceive, the Security Council will be weakened", he added.

Mr. Bush spoke to the President of China, Jiang Zemin, and the President of France, Jacques Chirac. Both leaders are said to have reiterated of the need for the U.N. inspections process in Iraq to continue.

France and China, along with Russia, are pushing this route with only Britain among the permanent membership of the Council siding with the U.S. on another resolution authorising use of force.

French officials have been quoted in the media here as saying that Mr. Bush and Mr. Chirac did indeed have an "excellent" conversation; and that Mr. Chirac took the opportunity to fully explain where Paris was coming from in this crisis.

The bottom line to France is that it is not opposed to the use of force, but this should come only after unmistakable signs that the inspections process is not going to work.

France, along with Russia and China, are for giving the political process some more time. China is pointing out that weapons inspectors in Iraq had made "some progress".

Meanwhile, at the United Nations, while no formal draft resolution is doing the rounds, Britain and the U.S. are said to

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be working on a document. At the White House, the spokesman, Ari Fleischer, said the process of reaching an agreement on a specific language is "just beginning".

Diplomats here and at the world body are making the point that the kind of impression the top weapons inspectors, Hans Blix and Mohammad ElBaradei, come away with from Baghdad this weekend will be critical in setting the stage.

If Dr. Blix comes back on February 14 and reports of a positive change in the attitude of Baghdad, then the position of France, China and Russia will get strengthened.

But if the top U.N. weapons inspector tells the Security Council that he still cannot find substantive change in the attitude of the Government in Iraq, it will be a clear victory for the U.S. as it presses for the second resolution.

Resolution 1441 was passed by the Security Council last November with all 15 members voting in favour of it.

But the White House is saying that this is not the standard that has been set.

When push comes to shove, Washington will be happy to get only the required nine votes with Russia, China and France abstaining and not casting their veto.



TAKING UP PEACE CUDGELS: Several thousands took to the streets to show their disapproval of war on Iraq, in Munich on Saturday. — AFP

9 FEB 2003

U.S. 'evidence' fails to persuade dissenters

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 6. In the aftermath of the presentation of additional information and intelligence material by the United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, the word from Washington and New York is that the next two weeks is indeed a crucial period for Iraq and the world body.

While Gen Powell and the Bush administration believe that the U.S. on Wednesday put up a solid performance to further nail down Iraq and its weapons of mass destruction programmes, there appeared to be no new converts at the Security Council chambers.

France appears to be leading the pack of dissenters among the permanent and non-permanent members and is insisting that the inspections process must run the full course, if necessary, through a major expansion in the current scheme of things, to include three times as many inspectors from the present 100. Certainly, no one in the Bush administration is jumping at the suggestion, which also appears to have the backing of Russia. But the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, did have some plain words for the regime of Saddam Hussein as well — that if there continues to be an "impasse, we will not rule out any option including the use of force".

France has been joined by Russia and China in the demand on Saddam Hussein to

respond quickly to the allegations of Gen Powell. Gen Powell has maintained in an interview that France is open to another resolution on the use of force but that there was disagreement between Washington and Paris "as to how much time should be given and what full cooperation means".

A formal or informal draft resolution is still not apparently doing the rounds in the Security Council in New York. The U.S. has not decided in which way it is going to move in the game of diplomatic squeeze. One perception is that the Bush administration, in the absence of a change of mind of France, will not be pressing the Council for a second resolution. Rather, Washington will seek to pin down members on a resolution that merely "lists" all the Iraqi violations that the weapons inspectors and Gen Powell have talked about in the last two weeks.

On Tuesday, Gen Powell clearly reminded Council members that Iraq has been in "more" material breach of U.N. resolutions.

According to one media report, the White House has not decided which way the U.S. will be going about in New York; and that diplomacy over the next two or three days is going to be crucial. At the end of this period, if it became clear that France will insist on casting its veto, then the President, George W. Bush, will not be seeking a second resolution authorising use of force.

U.S., N. Korea exchange threats

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, FEB. 6. The North Korean theatre of a threatening "nuclear crisis" today showed signs of heating up, as Washington fired a political salvo and Pyongyang resorted to sabre-rattling.

The round of warnings and counter-warnings began with the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, asserting Washington's military preparedness to keep a watchful eye over Pyongyang even while being engaged in disarming Iraq of its WMD stockpiles and capabilities.

Mr. Rumsfeld served notice on Pyongyang in the context of its announcement that "the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is now putting the operation of its nuclear facilities for the production of electricity on normal footing after their re-start".

Given Washington's sense of alarm that these North Korean nuclear facilities could yield sizable quantities of weapons-grade plutonium, Pyongyang maintained that its nuclear activity "at the present stage" would be entirely 'peaceful'.

However, this time-specific assurance was laced with two counter-warnings. Pyongyang underlined that International Atomic Energy Agency could claim no locus as regards its nuclear activities in context of its recent exit from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It said it "does not care about whether the U.N. Security Council discusses the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula or not". The second was that it was now endowed with "invincible might, enough to defeat any formidable enemy who encroaches upon (the DPRK's) sovereignty and security".

Blair in US to talk tough on Iraq

STEVE HOLLAND
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 31

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, will discuss strategy on Friday on forcing Baghdad to disarm. The two leaders are to hold an afternoon of talks at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland, followed by a news conference.

Bush and Blair, who met Spanish PM Jose Maria Aznar on Thursday in Madrid, are expected to discuss whether to set a deadline for Iraq to give up its suspected weapons of mass destruction. But the White House cautioned that the two would not actually set such a deadline at this meeting.



Bush may fabricate evidence to start war, says Iraqi paper

■ BAGHDAD: An Iraqi newspaper on Friday slammed President Bush as a "super idiot", saying he may fabricate evidence to convince the world of the need for a war against Baghdad. "US foreign policy has sunk in a quagmire of abnormal practices, repeated and exposed lies supported by the arrogant logic of force, the build-up of war fleets, and threats to launch war," *Al-Thawra* newspaper said. "It is indeed a reckless and destructive policy run by a super idiot President," it added. — Reuters

A date that might be important in any decision on a deadline could be February 14, when UN weapons inspectors are due to give another update on Iraq's compliance, US officials said.

How to proceed in the UN Security Council is another topic for the two leaders. Vital to the US strategy is Secretary of State Colin Powell's presentation to the Security Council next Wednesday of what the Bush team said will be evidence proving Iraq is concealing weapons and has links with Al Qaeda.

While Bush believes the UN disarmament resolution 1441 approved in November provides sufficient authority for military force, Blair said on Thursday the world should stick to the UN route and implied he would press Bush to wait for a second UN resolution. — Reuters

Palestinians at a pro-Iraq rally in Gaza Strip on Thursday. Reuters

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IRAQ / BLIX TO SUBMIT REPORT TO U.N. TOMORROW

U.S. stress on 'productive' inspections

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JAN. 25. In what seems to be an effort to win over key nations in the Security Council, the Bush administration is now giving the impression that it is weighing options of allowing the weapons inspections process of Iraq run its full course, unnamed officials have been quoted in the media.

The bottomline consideration will however be if the inspections are 'productive', it is being stressed. The 'change' in the U.S. policy comes on the eve of a report which is to be delivered by the chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix, to the Security Council on Monday which will be followed by a discussion next Wednesday.

Mr. Blix is expected to outline in the form of a speech his 'findings' of the last two months. The impression is that while the top United Nations official will be critical of the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein's cooperation, he will not be condemning the whole process as a waste of time. There are several areas that Mr. Blix will be focussing on — lack of sufficient data, Baghdad's conditions on U-2 spy flights and allowing inspectors to question Iraqi scientists and officials without much hindrance.

The top U.N. official has said before that while the Iraqis had come away clean on the 'volume' of the data sent over, substance was lacking. "There are things that have gone well, like the access and prompt access. But there are other areas where we are not satisfied," Mr. Blix

told the media. The Bush administration is in a quandary on how much material and information it could release on Iraq fearing that this could jeopardise intelligence gathering methods.

At the same time, it has been helping the weapons inspectors looking for weapons of mass destruction inside Iraq. But if there is one thing that Washington is quite miffed about it is Baghdad's refusal to fully cooperate on the interview of its scientists. The administration has charged the regime in Baghdad of either threatening scientists and their families with death in the event of cooperation with the U.N. or is substituting intelligence officials for scientists.

If the administration is now having second thoughts on an early deadline for the start of military action against Iraq, it is not only on account of objections from key allies in Europe, not to mention the dissent of Russia and China.

A lot of pressure is coming from Capitol Hill, from senior Republicans especially, which the White House cannot so easily brush off. The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Richard Lugar, has said that he thought inspections would be continued. Another Republican on the Committee, Chuck Hagel, has warned against a "rush to war" in the absence of a multilateral coalition. In fact an argument has been made that if the Bush administration is now contemplating giving the U.N. more time it might not just be confined to domestic and interna-



An Iraqi man (right), walks with U.N. inspectors in Baghdad on Saturday. The man met the inspectors for an apparent interview after Iraqi officials asked three scientists to submit to private questioning at the U.N. request. — AP

tional pressure.

Rather logistics has a big role to play — that in spite of all the talk of the U.S. forces being 'ready' to carry out the task, the ground reality in and around Iraq is quite different.

One assessment is that the ground, naval and air forces will not be in place for a full strike until about the third week of March. By giving the U.N. "more time", the administration may be trying to have it both ways — giving the impression of listening to allies' apprehensions and at the same time giving military planners more

time.

Meanwhile, there is also a lot of interest in what the U.S. President, George W Bush, will be saying in his State of the Union Address next Tuesday.

He will be focussing on Iraq once again impressing upon the American people the dangers posed by the regime in Baghdad. But Mr. Bush is not expected to come up with any deadline. "The President will talk about and provide context to the American people about those events that are upcoming," according to the White House

26 JAN 2003

Britain ready for clash with U.N. on Iraq

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By Hasan Suroor 15/1

LONDON, JAN. 14. Britain has warned that it is prepared to risk a confrontation with the U.N. Security Council if there is an attempt to block military action against Iraq to 'disarm' Saddam Hussein if he refuses to do so on his own.

In his most defiant remarks yet on Iraq, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has made clear that if Iraq is found to be in material breach of the existing U.N. resolution "action will follow" even if others on the Security Council try to block it. The opponents of military action would not be allowed to put an "unreasonable or unilateral block", he said at his monthly press conference in Downing Street.

"In those circumstances we have said we can't be in a position where we are confined in that way. Don't be under any doubts whatever. If there is a breach of the U.N. resolution that we have passed then action will follow," he said prompting parallels with the NATO military intervention in Kosovo in 1999 despite Russian veto at the U.N.

Mr. Blair's statement came even as Chris Patten, the European Union Commissioner for External Relations, insisted on a specific U.N. mandate for a military action saying that otherwise E.U. might not be willing to pay for the reconstruction of a post-war Iraq. "I would find it much

more difficult to get the approval of member-states and the European Parliament (for development aid) if the military intervention...did not have a U.N. mandate," he said drawing comparison with the conflict in Afghanistan which "everybody supported".

Although Mr. Blair has talked, even before, of disarming Mr. Hussein at any cost, his latest remarks were seen as the most unequivocal and prompted speculation that a war now looked inevitable and the question was no longer of 'if' but 'when'. Senior Labour MPs reacted with fury and demanded an 'emergency' debate in the Commons. They warned that if he backed unilateral U.S. military action, he could be risking his political career. "If you choose to operate outside international law and you act in defiance of any democratic mandate, sooner rather than later the mandate the Prime Minister has will be withdrawn by the British people," Alan Simpson, a Labour MP said.

The Liberal Democratic leader Charles Kennedy said it was "disingenuous to argue that we want to work through the U.N. but only if the U.N. does what we want". The country's most moderate Muslim body, the Muslim Council of Britain, urged the Prime Minister to avert a war with Iraq, saying that Muslims were not convinced of American motives.

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Playing the peace tune, U.K. mobilises troops

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JAN. 4. Britain is to step up its preparations for a war with Iraq by deploying upto 20,000 troops in the Gulf and mobilisation of hundreds of reservists, but the Government played down the idea that a conflict was inevitable and insisted that search for a diplomatic solution was still on.

A formal announcement about deployment of British troops is expected to be made by the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in Parliament early next week giving a new momentum to the British-U.S. show of force ahead of a possible attack on Iraq.

However, the Government was anxious to make the point that, as of now, the military build-up was intended simply to put pressure on Iraq to comply with the U.N. Security Council resolution which requires it to declare its weapons of mass destruction. According to *The Times*, in fact, Mr. Blair and his Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, planned a "fresh initiative to keep open the prospect of a diplomatic solution to the crisis."

Downing Street maintained that a war was not inevitable. "We want a peaceful solution but Iraq will not comply without a credible threat of military action. Ultimately the choice is Saddam's," a spokesman said echoing the U.S. President, George W. Bush's remarks to American soldiers in Texas on Friday that it was for Mr. Hussein to decide whether he wanted to "seal his fate by refusing to disarm (and) ignoring the opinion of the world".

There were attempts to scotch speculation that the countdown for a war could begin on January 27, when the weapons inspectors are due to give their first full report to the U.N. Security Council. The speculation is based on the premise that the report would not satisfy Britain and American who would then seek a mandate to 'disarm' Mr. Hussein by force.

But unnamed Cabinet Ministers were quoted as saying that January 27 would not provide the trigger for a war and that Britain and America were ready to allow the U.N. process to continue for "several months". "You should not be holding your breath for January 27. You should not run away with the idea that war has to start in February," one Minister told *The Times* amid reports that Arab leaders were trying to persuade Mr. Hussein to go into exile and avert a war which could prove catastrophic for his country. The idea appeared to have American backing, commentators said citing a U.S. State Department spokesman's statement that the Iraqi leader must "change his ways or change his venue".

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5 JAN 2003

U.K. hardens stance on Iraq

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JAN. 29. Taking a cue from the U.S. President George W. Bush's Union of the State speech, the British Government today hardened its stance on Iraq and for the first time accused the Saddam Hussein regime of sheltering Al-Qaeda 'operatives' in what was seen as an attempt to portray the looming military confrontation as part of the 'war' on terrorism.

So far, Britain had consistently refrained from explicitly linking the Iraqi government with Al-Qaeda and only last week the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, told a committee of senior MPs that there was no evidence of Mr. Hussein's terrorist connection though there were people in Iraq who had links with Al-Qaeda.

Mr. Blair was under pressure in Parliament today to explain the nature of threat from Iraq after his spokesman told journalists that Al-Qaeda activists were being sheltered by the Iraqi government.

The spokesman argued that Al-Qaeda operatives could not be in Iraq unless the Government there was willing to have them, but observers dismissed this as a 'fudge'.

Mr. Blair, answering questions in the Commons, denied that there had been any shift in his Government's stand on the issue and claimed that what he had said earlier was that there



An anti-war protester wearing a mask of the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, holds a mock bomb in Fairford, England, on Sunday. — AP

was no evidence to link Iraq with the September 11 attacks. The Government, he said, was aware of Iraq's links with Al-Qaeda but not the 'extent' to which they existed.

The Prime Minister repeatedly advised the MPs to read the U.N. weapons inspectors' report which, he said, had detailed the threat posed by Iraq. Echoing Mr. Bush's tough language, he maintained that if Iraq was allowed to "carry on" developing weapons of mass destruction he would be a threat not only to its own region but the entire world. He urged the international community to 'unite' to make sure that Iraq was forced to disarm if it was found to be in material breach of the U.N. Security Council resolution.

N. Korea next

Mr. Blair warned that any sign of weakness at this stage

would only help Iraq and make a peaceful resolution of the crisis more difficult. In a significant comment, he said that after the Iraqi issue was resolved, North Korea would be the next to be tackled but he insisted that it would be through the U.N. route.

Meanwhile, he launched into a flurry of diplomatic activity ahead of his meeting with Mr. Bush in Washington on Friday. He had a meeting with the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, today and is expected to meet the Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar, tomorrow as part of what was seen as a bid to forge a British-Italian-Spanish coalition as a 'counterweight' to the Franco-German opposition to a war.

Besides Britain, Italy and Spain are the only European countries which are enthusiastically backing American moves against Iraq.

HINDU

2002 MAR 2008

U.K. summons envoys for brainstorming

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JAN. 3. Britain is summoning its Ambassadors and High Commissioners from around the world for a meeting here in what is seen as a move to sensitise them ahead of an expected military intervention in Iraq.

About 200 envoys are expected to attend the meeting aimed at preparing senior diplomats to respond more effectively to sensitive events. Many of them will be from the Muslim world which has been the focus of the Prime Minister, Tony Blair's diplomatic efforts in the wake of the September 11 attacks, and the moves against Iraq.

Though the conference has not been called specifically to discuss Iraq, observers said its timing was significant because many British diplomats were known to be concerned about the implications of a likely war with Iraq.

"The diplomats believe the Bush admin-

istration is further radicalising Arab and Muslim opinion with its emphasis on military might against the long-term interests of the West. Many also share the view that the Al-Qaeda terrorist network represents a more serious threat than Iraq and that there is no evidence of a link between the two," *The Guardian* said.

Significantly, they would be addressed by the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, who is in the thick of making military preparations for a war.

Meanwhile, Mr. Blair has come under attack for "talking up" the prospects of a conflict with Iraq despite growing opposition to it both at home and among his European allies. The veteran Labour leader, Lord Denis Healey, joined critics to warn him against starting a war in West Asia saying he should not repeat the 'disastrous' mistake made by the Conservative Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, in 1956 when he went to war over the Suez crisis.

Lord Healey's criticism came as the Opposition seized on Mr. Blair's gloomy New Year's message in which he told Britons to brace themselves for a possible military conflict and continuing threat from terrorists.

Even the Tories, who supporting his headline stance on Iraq, accused him of using the issue to divert attention from domestic problems.

"I do get a faint feeling that he is trying to divert attention away on to the international side in order to divert it from all the problems there are going to be domestically for him," the shadow foreign secretary, Michael Ancram, said.

The Liberal Democrats leader, Charles Kennedy, said there were issues of greater concern to the people than going to war with Iraq.

He wanted Mr. Blair to clarify under what circumstances would Britain agree to join a U.S.-led attack.

THE HINDU

4 JAN 2003