

JIC Assessment, 19 April 2000

IRAQ: CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMMES

This paper was discussed and approved by the JIC at their meeting on 19 April 2000.

Key Judgements

- I. Our picture is limited. But it is likely that **Iraq is continuing to develop its offensive chemical warfare (CW) and biological warfare (BW) capabilities.**
- II. There is **clear evidence of continuing Iraqi biological warfare activity**, including BW related **research** and the **production of BW agent**. Iraq seems to be exploring the **use of mobile facilities to give its BW activities greater security**. But we have **no evidence for Iraq filling weapons with biological agent since the Gulf War**.
- III. There is **less evidence of continuing Iraqi chemical warfare activity**, including **advances in binary weapons development and the reconstruction of suspect civil chemical production facilities**. There is **no evidence of Iraq filling weapons with chemical agent since the Gulf War**.
- IV. **The chances of detecting any production of biological warfare agent, or small scale production of chemical agent, with or without UN inspections, would be slim**. But we would expect to detect evidence of the production of large quantities of chemical agent, with or without UN inspectors.

1. Since the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq has tried to maintain its chemical and biological warfare programmes. Its doctrine for offensive chemical and biological warfare remains unclear. We know that Iraq has used chemical weapons for internal repression and against Iran, during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War. We judge that Iraq would be prepared to use such weapons again in similar circumstances and, in extremis, in defence of its regime. **Since the departure of United Nations Special Commission for Iraq (UNSCOM), in December 1998, our limited picture of Iraqi chemical and biological warfare activities has been further reduced.** Iraqi officials are well practiced in concealing such programmes. [...] increased procurement of dual use equipment and materials. But we cannot clearly link this with chemical or biological warfare programmes. [Reference to indications of continuing process.] We do not know whether this is accelerating. But UNSCOM's departure removes a constraint.

Iraq's chemical warfare (CW) programme before the Gulf War

2. Before the Gulf War, Iraq had a substantial CW capability including mustard agent and nerve agent. It had weaponised agents in bombs, artillery and ballistic missiles. After the Gulf War, we

know that a large proportion of Iraq's CW capability was destroyed under UNSCOM supervision. But we assess that some was not destroyed.

Retention of Iraqi CW capabilities

3. Iraq could have hidden dual use precursor chemicals, and production equipment, since the Gulf War. Using these we continue to assess that, even with UNMOVIC and other UN controls, Iraq could produce mustard agent within weeks of a decision to do so. Iraq could produce limited quantities of nerve agent within months of such a decision.

Subsequent Iraqi CW activity

4. Since our last 1999 assessment, Iraqi **procurement activities which could be associated with a chemical weapons programme have continued.** [...] some Iraqi efforts to procure dual use chemicals. Iraq has also made attempts to procure crop spraying aircraft, which could be used to disseminate chemical and biological agent, and protective suits against nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

5. [...] **facilities formerly associated with Iraq's chemical warfare programme at its Habbaniyah I and II sites are being reconstructed.** At Habbaniyah I, buildings have been repaired, equipment dispersed during Desert Fox has been returned and other equipment has been restored. At Habbaniyah II, there has been renewed activity and new deliveries, including storage tanks. There is no firm evidence that this activity is chemical weapons related, or of the precursor plant which would be needed to produce CW agent. But **Iraq is restoring its civil chemical production capability, including pesticides, at one of its former chemical warfare related facilities. We assess that this would help any revival of its CW programme.**

6. [...] Iraq [...] **could be modifying [...] aerial bombs, procured in the 1980s, for delivery of chemical warfare agents [...]. [...] a significant advance in Iraqi development of a binary type munition.** [...] We judge that Iraq has a **well-established chemical weapons knowledge base** and is likely to be continuing to develop this and other aspects of its CW capabilities. We have no evidence of Iraq filling weapons with chemical agent since the Gulf War.

Iraq's biological warfare (BW) programme before the Gulf War

7. The Iraq offensive BW programme began in earnest in the mid-1980s. But Iraq denied this until 1995. It never revealed the programme's full extent to UNSCOM. Iraq told UNSCOM that it conducted laboratory work on a range of BW agents and that three – anthrax spores, botulinum toxin and aflatoxin – were produced in bulk. Iraq also told UNSCOM that bombs and missile warheads were filled with these agents immediately prior to the Gulf War. Some aspects of the activity which Iraq admitted to UNSCOM are reflected in the intelligence. But Iraq has yet to make a credible 'Full Final and Complete Declaration' of BW activity required by the UN. Iraq claims to have terminated its programme at the end of the Gulf War. But it has failed to convince the UN of this.

Retention of BW capabilities

8. We assess that, even under UNSCOM and other UN controls, Iraq is likely to have concealed BW production equipment, agent stocks and weapons. We continue to assess that, even without procurement from abroad, Iraq has retained sufficient expertise, equipment and materials to produce BW agent within weeks using its legitimate biotechnology facilities.

Subsequent Iraqi BW activity

9. [...] that Iraq has been trying to **procure dual use materials and equipment** which could be used for a BW programme. But the absence of information on the genuine end users makes it impossible to determine whether the procurement is for a BW programme.

10. [...] **despite Iraqi denials, and even while UNSCOM was active in the country, some biological warfare related research has continued:**

[Reference to indications that, contrary to its claim to have terminated the BW programme at the end of the Gulf War, during the last decade, Iraq has continued to conduct research on a range of biological agents, using personnel known to have been connected with the pre-war BW programme.]

11. A recent piece of liaison intelligence reported that Iraq had started to **produce biological agent in 'mobile production centres'**. According to an Iraqi defector, planning for this project began in 1995, under the responsibility of Dr Rihab Taha. Taha is known to have played a central role in Iraq's BW programme. There are reportedly 6 mobile production centres, with one under construction. As of March 1999, three of these were fully functional and work was under way to enable the production of 5 unspecified BW agents. At one of these sites, some 20-30 tonnes of BW primary product were reportedly manufactured over four months. We assess that such quantities, if weaponised, could cause significant casualties.

12. **Iraq seems to be exploring the use of mobile facilities to give its biological warfare activities greater security.** The Iraqis had mobile filling facilities for filling chemical weapons at the time of the Gulf War. We know senior Iraqis have told UNSCOM that the use of mobile facilities was considered during the planning of their one dedicated BW facility. But we have no other evidence for BW mobile production centres. We judge that it would be technically feasible for Iraq to produce 20-30 tonnes of primary product BW agent in four months as specified in the recent report. We have no evidence for Iraq filling weapons with biological agent since the Gulf War. But, for practical reasons, advance stockpiling of some BW agents is less likely than for CW agents.

13. In the light of this and other evidence of Iraqi illicit procurement of dual use equipment and materials, we judge that Iraq is likely to be continuing to develop its BW capabilities.

Future inspection and detection

14. There is clear evidence of continuing Iraqi BW activity. **The chances of detecting any production of biological agent, with or without UN inspections, would be slim.**

15. There is less evidence of Iraqi CW activity. **The chances of detecting the production of small quantities of chemical agent, even were Iraq to allow in UN inspectors, would be slim. But we would expect to detect evidence of the production of large quantities of chemical agent, with or without UN inspectors. It would be important that UNMOVIC, when established on the ground, should look for evidence of binary munitions (see paragraph 6 above).**

