

Abstract

What Went Wrong? Why British Intelligence Failed to Analyse Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Before the War on Iraq?

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This article examines why British intelligence produced the wrong analysis that Iraqi chemical and biological weapons 'are deployable within 45 minutes of an order to use them' at September 2002 before the War on Iraq, and draws some lessons.

Specifically, it ascribes the failure to three reasons: firstly, the JIC (Joint Intelligence Committee) adopted the worst case thinking under the circumstances that the War was approaching and British troops would enter it: secondly, Iraq won 'intelligence contest' against the UK by keeping secrets about its weapons of mass destruction: thirdly, the risk of analysing wrongly was enhanced by Chief of JIC Scarlett's belief that intelligence should secure a more central place at the top decision making by tackling major issues of decision makers and also answering them unambiguously.

Then, it draws three lessons: the first one is that intelligence cannot become perfect, and therefore, analysts should not forget 'a duty to warn' for fear of failing to produce accurate analyses: the second one is that both intelligence analysts and policy makers should realise the risk of intelligence failure: the third one is that dividing a line between intelligence and policy does not prevent close contact between intelligence and policy.

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