

If he lets the weapons inspectors back in unconditionally, any time, anywhere, any place, then of course that makes a difference to the situation, but there is absolutely no sign that he is prepared to do so. The weapons inspectors have got to go back in and be allowed to get on and do their job, but don't let's be under any illusions about this, for 10 years he has been in breach of United Nations security resolutions. You know for 10 years the weapons inspectors should have been in there, done their work, the weapons should have been destroyed.¹⁴

US plans for action against Iraq seem to be based on a more fundamental desire to end Saddam Hussein's rule with several senior administration figures suggesting that, even if the Iraqi WMD programmes did not exist, there would still be a clear need for enforced 'regime change.' As John Bolton put it "our policy at the same time insists on regime change in Baghdad... That policy will not be altered whether the inspectors go in or not".¹⁵ Nonetheless, the need to combat potential Iraqi WMD use remains the Bush administrations most potent argument in favour of invasion. In one of his strongest hints about pre-emptive military action, President Bush stressed "one thing I will not allow is a nation such as Iraq to threaten our very future by developing weapons of mass destruction".¹⁶

The Iraqi possession of biological weapons is a major source of strategic instability, especially if one recalls the apparent ease with which the Iraqi regime managed to develop its BW arsenal during the 1980s. Although Iraq was 'forced' to join the BTWC in 1991, the lack of a strict verification regime supported by the full weight of the international community, meant that Iraq could experiment and extend its BW without the faintest of international opprobrium or action. Having said that, however, the full extent of Iraqi BW activities was unknown until UNSCOM found it in 1995. During the UNSCOM inspections Baghdad came to admit that it had produced 30,000 litres of biological agents – this included 19,000 litres of botulinum toxin and 8,400 litres of anthrax spores. Inspectors found traces of anthrax in several warheads from long-range al-Hussein ballistic missiles. They also uncovered around 200 air-launched biological bombs.¹⁷

The extent to which an EU BW regime might impact on the current impasse on inspections in Iraq is likely to be marginal at best. If the EU had a standing BW inspections team, for example, it might have been in a position to offer it as a core component to UNMOVIC. In turn, this might reduce the time needed to assemble a team of inspectors and analysts.¹⁸ But while an EU inspection team from countries less hostile to Iraq, such as France, might have been more acceptable to the Iraqi authorities, the use of an inspection team that might be seen as sympathetic to Iraq is unlikely to find favour with the United States, and might be seen as undermining the authority of the UN to set the terms of specific inspection mandates. In any case the capability is not there.

¹⁴ Interview with Tony Blair, *BBC Newsnight*, 15 May 2002.

¹⁵ 'Bush dismisses Iraq Inspection offer', BBC News Website, 3 August 2002. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2170275.stm

¹⁶ 'Size of force on the ground key in plan for Iraq war', by Rowan Scarborough, *The Washington Times*, 26 April 2002. See <http://www.washtimes.com/national/20020426-41274916.htm>

¹⁷ United Nations, document 214-S/1995/864, 11 October 1995, 771 as cited by Graham Pearson, 'The Threat of Deliberate Disease in the 21st Century', in 'Biological Weapons Proliferation: Reasons for Concern, Courses of Action', Henry L. Stimson Center Report No.24, January 1998.

¹⁸ The chief UN weapons inspector, Hans Blix, is reported to have told the UN Security Council in September 2002 that it would take as long as two months to assemble and move a team of inspectors into Iraq. Betsy Pisik, 'Arms Inspector Says Organizing Team for Iraq Takes Two Months', *Washington Times*, 11 September 2002.