

Advertisement

www.timesonline.co.uk
TIMES ONLINE
 The best of The Times and The Sunday Times, in real time

Jobs for the girls?
 The top 50 firms where women want to work

The Game Podcast
 Listen to the latest episode of our chart topping series

SEARCH UK & US Company Search

October 7 2006

The Sunday Times - Britain

MAKE **TIMES ONLINE**
 YOUR HOMEPAGE / BOOKMARK

SUNDAY TIMES

TIMES ONLINE

NEWS & COMMENT

Home UK

Home Global

Britain

Politics

World

Business

Sport

Comment & Weblogs

Debate

Tech & Net

Sunday Times

Times Online TV

CAREER & MONEY

Money

Jobs

Law

Education

Student

LIFE & STYLE

Travel

Women

Driving

Property & Gardens

Food & Drink

Men's Style

Health

ARTS & CULTURE

Entertainment

Books

Listings

Crosswords

Games

TLS

Funday Times

SPECIAL REPORTS

Carbon champions

Living the dream

Family days out

Business travel

Healthy living

La vie Francaise

Work revolution

The Sunday Times

June 12, 2005

Ministers were told of need for Gulf war 'excuse'

MICHAEL SMITH

MINISTERS were warned in July 2002 that Britain was committed to taking part in an American-led invasion of Iraq and they had no choice but to find a way of making it legal.

The warning, in a leaked Cabinet Office briefing paper, said Tony Blair had already agreed to back military action to get rid of Saddam Hussein at a summit at the Texas ranch of President George W Bush three months earlier.

The briefing paper, for participants at a meeting of Blair's inner circle on July 23, 2002, said that since regime change was illegal it was "necessary to create the conditions" which would make it legal.

This was required because, even if ministers decided Britain should not take part in an invasion, the American military would be using British bases. This would automatically make Britain complicit in any illegal US action.

"US plans assume, as a minimum, the use of British bases in Cyprus and Diego Garcia," the briefing paper warned. This meant that issues of legality "would arise virtually whatever option ministers choose with regard to UK participation".

The paper was circulated to those present at the meeting, among whom were Blair, Geoff Hoon, then defence secretary, Jack Straw, the foreign secretary, and Sir Richard Dearlove, then chief of MI6. The full minutes of the meeting were published last month in The Sunday Times.

The document said the only way the allies could justify military action was to place Saddam Hussein in a position where he ignored or rejected a United Nations ultimatum ordering him to co-operate with the weapons inspectors. But it warned this would be difficult.

"It is just possible that an ultimatum could be cast in terms which Saddam would reject," the document says. But if he accepted it and did not attack the allies, they would be "most unlikely" to obtain the legal justification they needed.

The suggestions that the allies use the UN to justify war contradicts claims by Blair and Bush, repeated during their Washington summit last week, that they turned to the UN in order to avoid having to go to war. The attack on Iraq finally began

RELATED STORIES

June 12 2005
 Cabinet Office paper: Conditions for military action

BREAKING NEWS

Britain from PA

Blair vows to boost Afghan mission

Man charged with Angelika murder

80,000 'attending weak schools'

UKIP bids to woo Tory voters

Video appeal by murder hunt police

SPECIAL



La Vie Francaise
 Share your favourite French dining experience and win a French meal for four - with Carte Noire

ADVERTISEMENT



LATEST

Events listings
 Search for films, theatre and comedy events near you

Screen
 For free seats at exclusive film previews

Departure board
 Your one-stop travel shop

Car route planner
 Find the quickest way from A to B

Research your new car
 Browse our new and used car reviews

Jobs
 Search hundreds of jobs and get our weekly alert

Business analysis
 Check the latest share prices and forecasts for every listed company

Encounters
 Search for like-minded people on our dating site

Property search
 Cottage or castle? We have thousands of homes for sale

THE SUNDAY TIMES

The newspaper that speaks.



Listen to The Times every morning

SOUND & VISION

TV and Video

Picture galleries

Podcasts

SERVICES & TOOLS

Archive

News by e-mail

Newspaper edition

E-paper

My Times

Mobile

News feeds



Weather

Currency converter

Route planner

Site map

THE MARKETPLACE

Cars

Classifieds

Dating

Jobs

Offers & Promotions

Property

Shopping

Travel

Place an advert

Audio

THE TIMES DIGEST
LISTEN TO A FREE SAMPLE

in March 2003.

The briefing paper is certain to add to the pressure, particularly on the American president, because of the damaging revelation that Bush and Blair agreed on regime change in April 2002 and then looked for a way to justify it.

There has been a growing storm of protest in America, created by last month's publication of the minutes in The Sunday Times. A host of citizens, including many internet bloggers, have demanded to know why the Downing Street memo (often shortened to "the DSM" on websites) has been largely ignored by the US mainstream media.

The White House has declined to respond to a letter from 89 Democratic congressmen asking if it was true — as Dearlove told the July meeting — that "the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy" in Washington.

The Downing Street memo burst into the mainstream American media only last week after it was raised at a joint Bush-Blair press conference, forcing the prime minister to insist that "the facts were not fixed in any shape or form at all".

John Conyers, the Democratic congressman who drafted the letter to Bush, has now written to Dearlove asking him to say whether or not it was accurate that he believed the intelligence was being "fixed" around the policy. He also asked the former MI6 chief precisely when Bush and Blair had agreed to invade Iraq and whether it is true they agreed to "manufacture" the UN ultimatum in order to justify the war.

He and other Democratic congressmen plan to hold their own inquiry this Thursday with witnesses including Joe Wilson, the American former ambassador who went to Niger to investigate claims that Iraq was seeking to buy uranium ore for its nuclear weapons programme.

CLASSIFIEDS

TRAVEL



CARS



JOBS



ENCOUNTERS



PROPERTY



Choice of the week



SERVICES

ARCHIVE



E-MAIL BULLETINS



FAST TIMES



CROSSWORD CLUB



FANTASY GAMES



COMPETITIONS



SHOPPING



WEATHER



Ads by Google

A New World Order: Coming
USA & Rome Behind it. Are you Ready for it? Learn Bible prophecy
www.worldslastchance.com

Is Cindy Sheehan Right?
Is the Iraq War slowing terrorism or encouraging it? Vote Now!
www.PollingPoint.com

Operation Iraqi Freedom
Official Website of Multi-National Force - Iraq
www.mnf-iraq.com/

Contact our advertising team for advertising and sponsorship in Times Online, The Times and The Sunday Times.

Copyright 2006 Times Newspapers Ltd.

This service is provided on Times Newspapers' standard Terms and Conditions. Please read our Privacy Policy .

To inquire about a licence to reproduce material from The Times, visit the Syndication website.