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Britain Issues File on Iraq's 'Unique Horror'

By WARREN HOGE

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LONDON, Dec. 2 — Britain released a dossier of evidence today arguing that systematic rape, torture, gassing, public beheadings and mass executions of Iraqis by Saddam Hussein were the deliberate policy of his "regime of unique horror."

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said the document, which the government said was based on intelligence material, victims' first-hand accounts and reports by nongovernmental organizations, set out a powerful human rights case in addition to the international security argument for disarming Mr. Hussein.

"We not only help those countries in the region which are subject to Iraqi threats and intimidations," Mr. Straw said. "We also deprive Saddam of his most powerful tools for keeping the Iraqi people living in fear and subjugation."

Some rights groups and antiwar politicians expressed fears that the government had other motives than protesting human rights abuses for releasing the file.

"I think that this highly unusual, indeed unprecedented, publication is cranking up for war," said Tam Dalyell of Labor, the longest-serving member of Parliament and a persistent critic of current policy toward Iraq.

Amnesty International accused Mr. Straw of a "cold and calculated manipulation" of the human rights situation in Iraq to back up the American and British governments' case for military moves against Baghdad.

"Let us not forget that these same governments turned a blind eye to Amnesty International's reports of widespread human rights violations in Iraq before the gulf war," said the secretary general of the group, Irene Khan.

A senior official, speaking under the Foreign Office practice of anonymity, said the bulk of the report was from reports by academic and human rights groups about incidents in the 1980's and 90's.

The release is the third time since the Sept. 11 attacks that Britain has come forth with compilations of published reports and intelligence findings to bolster tough joint American and British positions against terror and Iraq.

Mr. Straw made the dossier public at a breakfast meeting of the Atlantic Partnership, a group that aims to improve relations between Europe and North America.

Mr. Straw told the breakfast gathering that the aim of the disclosures was "to remind the world that the abuses of the Iraqi regime extend far beyond its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction in violation of its international obligations."

The document listed what it said were Mr. Hussein's favored methods of torture. They included eye gouging; piercing hands with an electric drill, stubbing out cigarettes on skin, mock execution, suspension from ceilings, electric shocks to the genitals, rape, finger- and toenail extraction, beating the soles of the feet and acid baths.

The report said that since mid-2000 the punishment for slandering or making abusive comments about the president or his family has been amputating the tongue. "Iraqi television has broadcast pictures of these punishments as a warning for others," the file said.

A copy of a government personnel card in the report, credited to the Iraq Research and Documentation Project at Harvard, described a state employee, Aziz Salih Ahmed, as a "fighter in the popular army." The report said his assigned "activity" was "violation of women's honor."

A graphic video that supplemented the 23-page document was played at a Foreign Office briefing and made available to television stations. It showed government opponents being kicked and beaten after an uprising in 1991 and the bodies of women and children after a chemical weapons attack in 1998 on Halabja, a Kurdish town in northern Iraq.

The senior official denied that the purpose of the presentation was to rally support for possible military moves against Iraq.

"This dossier itself is not attempting to provide a justification for military action," he said.

The former head of the Iraqi nuclear energy agency, Dr. Hussain al-Shahristani was at the briefing to relate his experiences of being imprisoned and tortured in Iraq. Like Amnesty International, Dr. Hussain noted that the British and American governments had not been so concerned about human rights in Iraq in the past. "However," he said, "later is better than never."

Dr. Hussain escaped Iraq in 1991 after 12 years in jail, 11 of them in solitary confinement, for his refusal to be involved in the nuclear program after it was diverted in 1979 to weapons development. He said he doubted that the current inspections would succeed in turning up weapons of mass destruction.

"Saddam is the master at hiding, concealing and moving around weapons," he said.

Dr. Hussain also questioned whether any scientists working in the weapons program would be able to take up the United Nations offer to leave Iraq with their families to testify to what they knew.

"They were all forced against their will to take part," he said. "But they will fear cooperating because they know Saddam will attack their relatives, their homes, their tribes and their towns."

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