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Emergency services train in secret for reprisal attack by al-Qa'ida

■ MoD report says backing Bush involves risk to UK ■ Labour MPs plot leadership challenge over Blair's war policy

By Colin Brown Political Editor

Police and the emergency services have been secretly trained by the Army for a reprisal attack in the UK by al-Qa'ida terrorists using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

A Ministry of Defence report to MPs reveals that senior planners have privately accepted that Britain faces a "significant risk" of attack for supporting President Bush.

The report's disclosure will reinforce doubts among a growing number of Labour MPs about Tony Blair's leadership and his apparent unequivocal support for Mr Bush's "war on terrorism".

Yesterday Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn confirmed that plotting for a possible leadership challenge is being discussed, as reported in *The Independent on Sunday*. Asked if there was a "stalking horse" plot afoot, Mr Corbyn said: "It

is a discussion that is going on. I am not aware of any name that has emerged yet but discussions have taken place."

The report, drawn up in recent weeks by the Government to answer warnings about gaps in Britain's home defence by a Commons select committee, says: "There remains a significant short-term risk of further terrorist attacks and we are conscious that our involvement alongside the US could raise the

profile of the UK as a potential target."

Last October, *The Independent on Sunday* revealed that emergency services had been warned by ministers that thousands of people could be contaminated and mortuaries overwhelmed by an attack.

However, ministers will argue the risk of reprisals against Britain is no excuse for refusing to confront the "evil of terrorism". Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, will warn

tomorrow in a speech to the Foreign Policy Centre that Britain must play its part with its allies to "push back the boundaries of chaos" in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

MPs united in supporting the deployment of 1,700 troops in Afghanistan, but the emergency debate on Wednesday exposed anxieties on all sides that Britain could get dragged into an open-ended ground war.

The report to the Commons defence committee makes it

clear the MoD and the Home Office are preparing for the possible use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist cells in Britain.

It says that measures to tighten security in Britain have included additional training "with the assistance of the MoD in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) protection and mitigation techniques. These include the police and other emergency service personnel

who would be in the front line of any response to an attack."

The authorities' acceptance that Britain is vulnerable to terrorist reprisals is bound to add weight to the calls to stop the war.

One Labour MP said: "Tony Blair should spend more time talking to Labour supporters rather than defending right-wing psychopaths like Bush."

Reports, page 8; Focus, pages 20-21; Alan Watkins, page 27



Blair: could face a leadership challenge

Labour admits to blunders on foot and mouth

By Geoffrey Lean Environment Editor

Closing Britain's countryside over foot and mouth was wrong, and should not happen again, the Government now admits.

Its official evidence to the inquest into the epidemic acknowledges that its approach

epidemic over a wide range of issues, from access to the countryside to the unsuitability of pyres to burn carcasses, from the value of vaccination to the way farmers helped spread the disease by failing to take proper safety precautions.

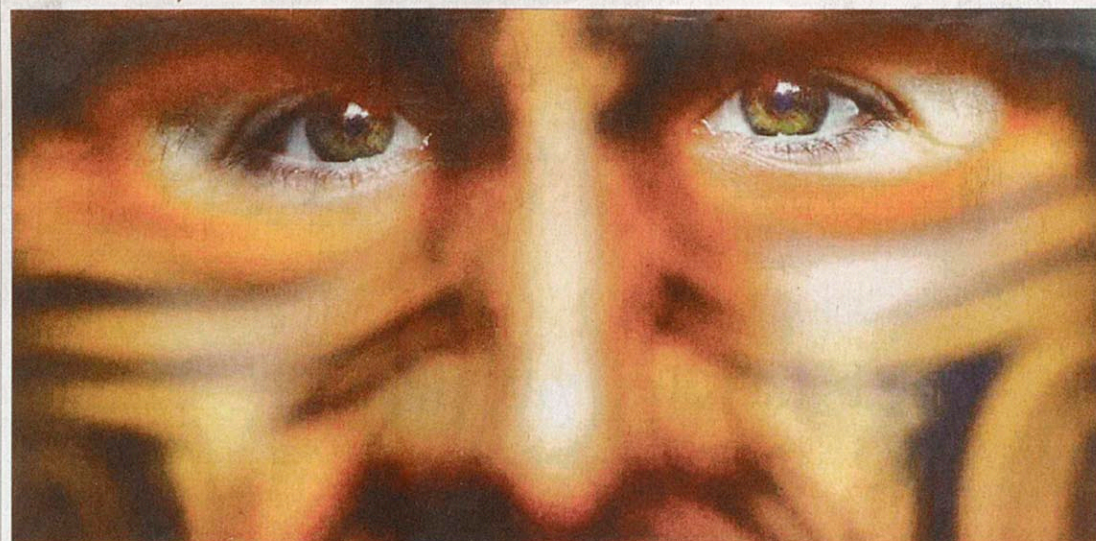
On Tuesday the Government's performance will come under unprecedented scrutiny when the Prime Minister holds a seminar in Downing Street on the future of the countryside, and former Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown, gives evidence to an inquiry by the European Parliament.

The evidence, "supported by all department and agencies of the Government", accepts that there is little danger of walkers spreading the disease and makes it clear that,



Tim
TURNS OUT THE ONLY THING THEY SHOULD'VE CLOSED IS THEIR MOUTHS.
GOV'T WRONG ON FOOT & MOUTH

Second skin » Exhibition visitors see themselves through Maori eyes



The National Maritime Museum in London invites visitors to adopt the Polynesian look at 'Skin Deep - a History of Tattooing'. A mask recreating a traditional Maori full-face tattoo worn by 19th century chief Te Pehi Kupe has been made by the museum

TIMOTHY ALLEN

BRIEFING



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