

Iraq and the European Council - Prime Minister's Statement

Monday, 24 March 2003

Ms Oona King (Bethnal Green and Bow) : Although I am very clear on the need for this action, may I put on record my strong opposition to the use of cluster bombs, as experience suggests that they are contrary to our stated aim of causing the minimum possible civilian casualties? If the Prime Minister raises that inconsistency with the President, could he also diplomatically point out that if the Americans were not so flagrantly breaching the rights of prisoners of war captured in Afghanistan, their current justified outrage for our own POWs would be less inconsistent and more effective in securing their safe return?

The Prime Minister: On the latter point, the people at Guantanamo bay are not combat troops in the service of a country. However, I have said on many occasions

24 Mar 2003 : Column 32 before that there will have to come a point when the situation at Guantanamo bay comes to an end, although it is also true to say that information is still being provided by people there that is of importance.

In relation to cluster bombs, I will not comment on what munitions we may use, except to say that I am personally satisfied that whatever munitions we are using are in accordance with international law.