

TRANSCRIPT

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Victoria Derbyshire: *A senior official involved in preparing the Government's dossier on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction has said the document was re-written just before it was published to apparently make it more exciting. The official said the intelligence services were unhappy with the changes. Let's talk to Andrew Gilligan our Defence Correspondent, hello Andrew.*

Andrew Gilligan: Hello

VD: *This was the dossier published what last September by the Government?*

AG: That's right this is not the famous dodgy dossier that was copied off the internet, that came later, this was a much more substantial effort. Parliament was recalled to discuss it, Tony Blair made the opening speech in Parliament and, and it dominated the news that day. It was, it's the most substantial statement of the Government's case against Iraq.

VD: *And what according to the intelligence services were the problems with it?*

AG: Well the draft they originally produced they tell me was actually not terribly exciting. It didn't add very much to what we already knew publicly, what any, kind of any one who'd followed the story would know publicly and it didn't satisfy Downing Street. And they said look you know is there anything more than this, can, can we make this a bit more exciting please? And they mentioned a few things which they weren't very happy with and at Downing Street's insistence those were written into the document. And one of the main things that, that they weren't very happy with was this claim that Iraq could deploy its biological and chemical weapons within forty five minutes. Now we now, we can be pretty sure now that that claim was actually wrong because if they could deploy within that short a time we'd have found the weapons by now. You know if they were that handy then they would have been more or less laying around and, and, and easily, easy for the troops to find in, in six weeks. Now you know what I thought to be honest was that that, that claim was wrong in good faith but what my intelligence service source says is that essentially they

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were always suspicious about this claim. They did not want it to appear in the document, they did not put it in their original draft because most of the assertions in the dossier were double sourced, this was only one source and they didn't believe the source they thought he'd got mixed up, they thought he'd got mixed up between the time it took to assemble a conventional missile assembly and, and, and the idea that Saddam had a, a weapons of mass destruction missile assembly.

VD: So I mean the implication that the, that Downing Street asked for it to be hyped up to help convince the doubters?

AG: Yeah and, and they are not very happy. I mean the actual quote from my source was most people in the intelligence weren't happy with the dossier because it didn't reflect the considered view they were putting forward and it was a matter of language in the (indistinct) as much as, as actual detail. But the forty five minutes was very important because it went to the heart of the Government's case that Saddam was an imminent threat.

VD: Absolutely but fundamentally the intelligence services did believe, did have intelligence that Iraq did have weapons of mass destruction?

AG: Yeah, they, they do believe that Iraq had a programme and what my source said was that he believed it's about thirty per cent likely there was a chemical weapons programme even in the six months before the war and more likely, considerably more likely that there was a biological weapons programme. But he said the programmes they thought were small and not necessarily an imminent threat and sanctions did limit the programmes. And, and you know that, the, the issue is about tone and, and the (indistinct) it really is as much as anything else. And, and really had they said all that in, in, in the way they wanted to it wouldn't have been nearly as compelling a case.

VD: And, and in a word the intelligence services do they still believe weapons of mass destruction will be found in Iraq at some point?

AG: They believe there were some and they're not sure what to believe now to be honest because what they're saying is you know they were, they've been interrogating all these, all these people that they've captured and, and they're not telling them very much

VD: Thank you very much Andrew.

Nicky Campbell: It will be interesting to see what, or hear what the Prime Minister has to say about the whole issue of weapons of mass destruction, their existence or otherwise.

End

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