

~~PRIME MINISTER~~

*Refs. 1*  
From: ~~Alastair Campbell~~

Date: 22 June 2003

cc: ~~Jack Straw~~  
~~David Manning~~  
~~Jonathan Powell~~  
Clare Sumner  
David Hanson  
Tom Kelly  
Godric Smith  
John Scarlett

RE: FAC

I understand from Jack that you and he have spoken and agreed that I should give evidence to the FAC. Jack intends to speak to Donald this evening. He will then write to him explaining this decision and will attach to his letter a supplementary memorandum from me to the Committee, which is attached. We should then make it public at 1100 tomorrow that this is the plan. We should brief then, provided Donald is happy with this, that I have asked to do this for the reasons set out in my note to you of earlier - in particular the fact that it is unfair to expect Jack to have to deal with a lot of process questions about this, but also to explain the huge difference between the two dossiers, rebut the most serious allegations concerning the first, and deal with some of the continuing myths (which is what was meant by "miffs"! in earlier notes) that arise from the second. Tom and Godric should work up a script for the morning.

Memorandum to FAC

I am grateful to the FAC for the opportunity to be able to explain how the Government has sought to handle communications issues concerning Iraq.

It is the convention that No. 10 officials do not appear to discuss their work in No. 10, and that is a convention both the Prime Minister and senior officials are keen to maintain. However, given the nature of this particular inquiry and its focus upon issues of communication, and my own role across Government, I believe there is a case for breaking that convention in relation to the Committee's invitations to me to appear. I believe there are legitimate questions to ask and that I am well placed to answer them, having chaired the Iraqi Communications Group in the run up to conflict. I am confident that I can answer all the questions satisfactorily. I also think it unfair that the Foreign Secretary be expected to answer for every detail of every aspect of communications planning.

There have been three arguments against my appearing:

- (1) Precedence. But there is no reason not to break it provided it is clear that this is because of the unique circumstances as they relate to what the Committee believes to be my own personal role in the events concerning their Inquiry.
- (2) The fact that as it is the FAC, it should be FCO officials who give evidence. But the reality is that I chaired the Iraqi Communications Group.
- (3) We are also cooperating with the ISC. But there is no reason why we should not cooperate with both.

Overall strategy on Iraq was laid down by the Prime Minister and other Cabinet Members responsible for policy on Iraq. My role as the Prime Minister's

Director of Communications and Strategy was to help take this strategy forward. I chaired a weekly strategy group on Iraq comprised of senior officials from No. 10, FCO, MOD, DIFD, JIC, SIS, DIS, CIC. This would discuss and review forward strategy. As you know, we continue to meet, though not every week. I also chaired the regular morning meeting of key departments to help take the strategy forward on a day to day basis.

Much of the debate on the issues under investigation by the Committee concerns the two so-called dossiers.

It is important to separate out the two dossiers. They are not comparable in terms of their scale, breadth or intended impact.

The first was a serious, thorough piece of work which involved detailed planning and preparation over months, not least because it was to be presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister. Indeed the foreword was in his name. But the JIC was in the lead on this and its Chairman took the lead responsibility for drawing up the contents which were regularly reviewed by the group that I chaired as the document evolved. The Prime Minister's officials, including me, and senior FCO officials were involved with the Chairman of the JIC in discussions upon the context, the planning of the document, and its presentation. That has never been an issue. I had many discussions with the Chairman of the JIC on presentational issues arising from the dossier and, in common with other officials, made drafting suggestions as the document evolved through various drafts. I was conscious of the fact that this was a major break with precedence for the intelligence community to allow so much of their information to be put into the public domain in this way and for them to cooperate so closely with us

on a document for public consumption. This was not something that we took lightly, as I believe the Chairman of the JIC and the other Agencies involved would acknowledge. I emphasised at all times both in our discussions and in any written outcomes of our various meetings that nothing should be published with which the JIC and the Agencies upon it were not 100 per cent happy. Also, as the document was being presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister, the utmost care was taken by all involved in its preparation.

I should therefore emphasise that the intelligence judgements were entirely those of the JIC and there was no question of interference with them. The allegation that I "sexed up" the document and in so doing abused intelligence is one that I reject entirely, and I have the support of the Chairman of the JIC, and the head of the SIS, (John, are you happy with this (and can you check that Richard is)) in so doing. The claim that the "45 minute" command and control point was put in at my or No. 10's insistence is false. It is a serious allegation and one I am keen to rebut to the FAC. It is a serious allegation not just against me but against the JIC, in that it suggests they would have allowed something to be said in their name which was not a true representation of what they believed.

The second document under investigation was intended as a background briefing paper to highlight the fact that the Iraqi state was configured to produce and conceal WMD. The idea arose when new intelligence came to light revealing the numbers of people involved in this programme of deception and concealment. It was my idea, as I recall, to prepare a background briefing paper. It is the kind of paper that No. 10 and Government Departments produce fairly regularly as a means of informing debate on domestic or international issues. But compared to

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the main dossier presented to Parliament by the PM, this was no where near as significant, nor ever intended to be.

Indeed, though the first dossier received considerable attention around the world, as indeed we have planned for, the second dossier, when given to the press, got relatively limited media attention, and the now controversial section based on the work of a PhD student next to none. We issued the paper to Sunday newspaper journalists covering the Prime Minister's visit to the US in (date). The intelligence based material contained within it generated some coverage and the broadcast media covered it a little, but impact was minuscule compared to the huge focus in many parts of the world on the first dossier, though it is true that Secretary of State Powell referred to it in the US. However, it was only when the plagiarism issue was revealed that media and public attention grew.

What has been acknowledged, however, by the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, me, and those who authored the report in the CIC, is that the procedures it went through were not adequate for such a paper. Where material was taken from an outside source, the authors should have said so. The document would have lost nothing had they done so; indeed, the accuracy of the document has not been seriously challenged. However, strict quality controls were particularly important in view of the fact that there was intelligence-based material elsewhere in the document. That is why, once the provenance of all the material became known, we immediately acknowledged the error, discussed it widely in Government, made clear to those who drafted the report that it should not have happened in this way and put in place new procedures for the future handling of any document with an intelligence input. In addition, the PM's Official Spokesman issued a public apology on behalf of the PM, acknowledging

the mistake and saying sorry to the author of that part of the report which had been plagiarised.

Many briefing papers and other pieces of communication are prepared as part of the Government's communications effort, which is continuing to adapt to the realities of the 24-hour media age. This is one piece of communication where mistakes were made.

We are satisfied that the new arrangements will minimise the risks of such mistakes being made in the future. And we're satisfied too, on the point of the serious allegations that have been made about this, that nobody in No. 10, FCO, or elsewhere, sought to override any of the intelligence judgements made by the JIC, or to make more of those judgements than the JIC felt was reasonable. That applies equally to both dossiers.

There are two further points I would like to draw to the FAC's attention.

The first relates to the claim, first reported in the media on (insert date) then repeated many times since, that the second paper was written by four people, three of whom (including my PA) worked for me at No. 10. This story first emerged as a result of a media organisation (Channel 4?) being given an e-mail with the four names upon it, attached to the briefing paper which had already become the subject of controversy. This e-mail is a complete mystery to us. No record of any such e-mail exists and three of the four people named, including my PA, had nothing to do with this project at all. The exception among the four was one official working in the CIC. We have repeatedly told the media this but to little effect. It continues to be stated as fact that the report was authored by

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these four people. It was not. It was commissioned by my group, and prepared in the CIC with help from FCO, Cabinet Office, SIS, and DIS, and signed off for use as a background paper for the Sunday papers on (insert date) by me.

Second, I should say that nobody in a senior position on the Iraqi Communications Group was aware that part of this report was taken from an already published thesis until this fact was exposed by the media. The newsworthy parts of the paper came from up to date UK intelligence in Sections 1 and 3. Section 2, subsequently shown to be based upon the work of Dr Al-Marashi, was assumed to be part of generally available Government briefing. We had no reason to know or suspect that it had been taken from a different and already published source. However, had the authors asked for and received permission to use this published material, and acknowledged the source, there was no reason why it should not have been used. The mistake was in not seeking permission, and in not telling me and others where all the material in our document came from.

I set this out not to evade responsibility both for having the idea for the document and for using it as we did through the Sunday press, but to make the point, again contrary to much that had appeared in the media, that neither I or my senior colleagues were aware this was Dr Al-Marashi's work, and there was never any reason to believe it was anything other than Government information.

This was an error, one that has been admitted and one that has led to new procedures. There was nothing sinister or malign attached to it as far as one can tell, and I believe the media frenzy that has arose at times has been out of all proportion to the size of the error made. The people responsible for the error are

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aware they have made a mistake, but continue to do good work for the Government.

I understand Dr Al-Marashi feels his life was put at risk. I should point out that in the document that was published, he was not named. Indeed, that was his initial complaint and it was in part his complaints about lack of acknowledgement that led to it being more widely known that this was his work. And given that his paper had already been published with this name attached to it, I do not accept that we put his life at further risk.

I hope this is helpful and look forward to being questioned upon it.

*Signed : Alastair Campbell*

22/06/2003

**ALASTAIR CAMPBELL**