

Rufford, Nick

From: Thomas, Zoe
Sent: 19 July 2003 15:31
To: Hymas, Charles; Rufford, Nick; Grimston, Jack
Subject: Geoff Hoon BBC News 24 interview

Peter Sissons: The death was a great tragedy. Our thoughts of course are with his wife, with his family and with all his friends and colleagues at the MoD, and obviously in the wider scientific community, this is a very great personal tragedy. He killed himself after your department, indeed you personally outed him as the probable mole.

Geoff Hoon: I'm afraid that's simply not right, and as the evidence that the department will give to the inquiry will show, we followed very carefully established MoD procedures, and at all stages, certainly as far as I personally was concerned, we protected his anonymity.

Sissons: You're not saying you didn't name him in a letter to the Chairman of the BBC.

Hoon: I wrote a confidential letter to the Chairman of the BBC inviting the Chairman of the BBC to indicate whether Dr Kelly was or was not the primary source of Mr Andrew Gilligan's story. I think it's quite important to say at this stage that there will be, as the Prime Minister has indicated, a full inquiry. There will be an opportunity for everyone involved in this tragedy to set out the facts. I think it is important that we await the outcome of that enquiry before rushing to judgement

Sissons: Whose idea was it to name him in the letter to the BBC which was subsequently leaked?

Hoon: As I say there was a careful procedure within the MoD, the procedures of the MoD were scrupulously followed. And it was, at an appropriate stage, judged that given the prospect of the name of Dr Kelly being revealed in any event, that it was better to invite the BBC to comment, rather than to allow there to be the kind of chase by the media that we've seen all too often in these kinds of circumstances. Again, these are matters for the inquiry.

Sissons: Why was his name then leaked?

Hoon: I'm not aware that his name was leaked. It was certainly not leaked by me, and I assure that we made great efforts to ensure Dr Kelly's anonymity.

Sissons: Were the finger prints of anyone in government on the leaking of his name?

Hoon: Not as far as I am aware. But again, these are obviously matters for Lord Hutton's inquiry.

Sissons: You also warned the Select Committee, did you not, in effect to be gentle with him?

Hoon: I was well aware that two committees had invited Dr Kelly to give evidence actually on the same day, although as I understand it subsequently he did not give evidence to both committees. But nevertheless at the time I was expecting that he would be required to give two sets of evidence to two different committees, and I certainly suggested by letter to the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee that, as someone unused to the procedures of committees, that they should recognise that in the way in which they went about their questioning.