

**Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Written Evidence****Correspondence between the Chairman of the Committee and the Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE FOREIGN SECRETARY,
4 JUNE 2003

As you know, the Committee agreed yesterday evening to conduct an inquiry into The Decision to go to War in Iraq. The Committee intends to hear oral evidence in the week commencing 16th June and to report to the House in July.

In order to conduct this inquiry, the Committee will require access to relevant persons and papers.

As well as hearing oral evidence from yourself, the Committee will wish to hear evidence from the heads of the SIS and GCHQ. It is the Committee's wish to hear as much evidence as possible in public session. I would be grateful for your agreement in principle to this, so that we may proceed to make arrangements for the hearings.

The Committee also requires access to all relevant papers and records. We are particularly interested in papers and records relating to the preparation of dossiers and other information which was presented to Parliament by FCO Ministers. We cannot, of course, identify all the specific papers and records in which we are interested. I therefore ask for your cooperation in ensuring that nothing is omitted which might inform our judgment when making our Report to the House.

I hope you will agree that the Committee's track record as responsible Parliamentarians is well proven. The quality of our Report will depend largely on the degree of assistance from you and your colleagues. It would be most unfortunate in my judgment if we had to report to the House that we had not received appropriate co-operation.

I am writing separately to the Prime Minister and to officials in MoD and in the Cabinet Office.

Chairman

Foreign Affairs Committee

FAC/3/0243

4 June 2003

LETTER FROM THE FOREIGN SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

Thank you for your letter of 4 June. I am replying on behalf of the Prime Minister and the officials to whom you also wrote on 4 June.

As I said when we met on 10 June, I shall gladly appear before your Committee to give evidence. As I suggested then, I might make two appearances—at a 90-minute public session already scheduled for noon on Tuesday 24 June and at an extended private session now arranged for 9:00am on Friday 27 June. On both occasions I would be accompanied by Peter Ricketts, the FCO's Political Director; and on the second occasion also by William Ehrman, the FCO's Director General (Defence and Intelligence).

Peter is well known to your Committee. He has been the senior official covering Iraq in the Office. (He is shortly to become our Ambassador to NATO. His previous post was as Chairman of the JIC.) William, as his title suggests, is the senior official who coordinates both the Ministry of Defence and the intelligence agencies. He is a member of the JIC. As I told the Committee, I would also be happy for Stephen Pattison to give evidence. He was Head of the United Nations Department, responsible at this end for coordinating the drafting of UNSCRs on Iraq.

I look forward to making a full personal contribution to your inquiry focusing on the FCO's involvement in Iraq policy. I intend to submit written responses to your specific questions, drawing on FCO material and starting with the questions in the letter of 5 June. As requested in that letter, my reply will reach you no later than noon on Monday 16 June. As I write, I can make no promise about a reply on Friday. But we will do our very best on at score. I also intend to provide you with a written memorandum outlining the development of the FCO case against Iraq in the run up to the conflict. No doubt you will have supplementary questions which I can cover at our sessions on 24 and 27 June.

I regret however that, as has been the case with past inquiries of this sort by Select Committees, it will not be possible to submit original documents, not least because of the need to protect sensitive exchanges on a highly controversial subject with other sovereign governments.

As you know, the Intelligence and Security Committee is also holding an inquiry into the background to the conflict in Iraq. Since the ISC was established under the Intelligence Services Act 1994 specifically to deal with intelligence matters, the Prime Minister and I feel it is appropriate that they should lead on intelligence aspects of this subject. The Prime Minister met the ISC on 10 June. In the House on

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11 June (col 672) he made clear that the government would—of course—co-operate with the ISC. In relation to the FAC, he said that, in accordance with convention, neither he nor his officials would attend the Committee but FCO officials and I would. The Prime Minister will shortly be making one of his now regular appearances before the Liaison Committee of which you are a member and where (as on the last occasion) members may decide to major on Iraq.

At our meeting on 10 June, I made suggestions as to the way in which you might work more closely with the ISC. Two or three senior members of each Committee might meet; and you would then have the opportunity to feed in the intelligence-related questions you would like them to pursue.

I hope this is helpful.

Secretary of State

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

12 June 2003

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