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WITNESS STATEMENT OF SUSAN WATTS,  
SCIENCE EDITOR, BBC NEWSNIGHT  
TO HUTTON INQUIRY REGARDING THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF  
DR DAVID KELLY;

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**Attachment G**

NEWSNIGHT TRANSCRIPT  
2<sup>nd</sup> June 2003

WEAPONS OF MASS DESRUCTION  
Susan Watts

INTRO:

Good evening. Tony Blair is flying back from the Evian summit into heavy turbulence. His angry denial Clare Short's allegation that the public was duped over the question of WMD has not reduced the temperature. Robin Cook has called for an independent inquiry. 73 MPs including 50 Labour backbenchers have signed a motion deploring the failure of the coalition to find any weapons of mass destruction, and the Opposition is threatening to drop its support for the Government. Now we've spoken to a senior figure, intimately involved in the drawing up of the Blair weapons dossier, who says the intelligence community was uneasy at the way some of its information was handled. Here's Susan Watts.

"could"  
(see  
on Blair  
speech)

CLAIRE SHORT:

They weren't saying there was a link to Al-Qaeda and they weren't saying it was weaponised and threatening us in 45 minutes. That's where the spin came in.

UNNAMED MAN:

It is beginning to look as if the Government's committed a monumental blunder.

ROBIN COOK!

SUSAN WATTS:

Over the weekend, the storm over the missing weapons of mass destruction focused down on one key point. Was the British public duped over the urgency of dealing with Iraq's banned weapons? The Government's claim that Saddam could mobilise these within 45 minutes is already look shaky. But Jack Straw has suggested

it had never been a key part of the argument.

JACK STRAW:

If you look at, for example, the key speech that the Prime Minister made on the 18 March before the House of Commons, from my quick rereading of it this morning, I can for example, find no reference to this now famous 45 minutes.

WATTS:

But the reference to 45 minutes was there in the Prime Minister's speech to the Commons on the day he published his famous weapons dossier.

TONY BLAIR:

It concludes that Iraq has chemical and biological weapons, that Saddam has continued to produce them, that he has existing and active military plans for the use of chemical and biological weapons, which being be activated within 45 minutes, including against his own Shia population.

WATTS:

And it features in the dossier itself four times. Notably in the Prime Minister's foreword and the executive summary. Today at the G8 summit in Evian, Tony Blair found himself in rebuttal mode.

BLAIR:

The idea that we doctored such intelligence is completely is totally false. Every piece of intelligence we presented was cleared properly by the Joint Intelligence Committee.

WATTS:

It's a surprising claim to make, given that it encompasses the other dossier which was plagiarised. In any case, today Tony Blair appeared irritated that the weapons issue won't go away.

BLAIR:

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I think it's important that if people dully have evidence, they produce it. But it is wrong, frankly for people to make allegations on the basis of so-called anonymous sources when the facts are precisely the facts we've stated.

WATTS:

But in some cases, anonymous sources are the only way to gain insight into the intelligence world. We've spoken to a senior official involved with the process of pulling together the original September 2002 Blair weapons dossier. We cannot name this person because their livelihood depends on anonymity. Our source made clear that, that in the run-up to publishing the dossier, the Government was obsessed with finding intelligence on immediate Iraqi threats. The Government's insistence the Iraqi threat was imminent was a Downing Street interpretation of intelligence conclusions. His point is that while the intelligence community was agreed on the potential Iraqi threat in the future, there was less agreement about at the Iraqis posed at that moment. Our source said:

UNNAMED SOURCE:

That was the real concern - not so much what they had now, but what they would have in the future. But that unfortunately was not expressed strongly in the dossier, because that takes the case away for war - to a certain extent. But in the end I was just a flurry of activity and was very difficult to get comments in because people at the top of the ladder didn't want to hear some of the things.

WATTS:

Our source talks of a febrile atmosphere in the days of diplomacy leading to the big Commons debate of September last year. He also talks of the Government seizing on anything useful to the case, including the possible existence of weapons that being be ready within 45 minutes.

UNNAMED SOURCE:

It was a statement that was made and it just got out of all proportion. They were desperate for information, they were pushing hard for information which could be released. That was one that popped up and it was seized on and it's unfortunate that it was. That's why there is the argument between the intelligence services and the Cabinet Office / Number Ten - because they picked up on it and once they've picked up on it, you can't pull it back from them.

WATTS:

And again specifically on the 45-minute point:

UNNAMED SOURCE:

It was an interesting week before the dossier was put out because there were so many people saying "well I'm no so sure about that", or in fact that they were happy with it being in, but not expresses the way that it was, because the word-smithing is actually quite important. The intelligence community are a pretty cautious lot on the whole, but once you get people presenting it for public consumption then of course they use different words.

WATTS:

The problem is that the 45 minutes point was not corroborated. For sceptics it highlights the dangers of relying too heavily on information from defectors. Journalists in America are accused of running propaganda from the Iraqi National Congress.

RAY MCGOVERN:

All these folks have their own personal agendas, all have axes to grind. The most unreliable source are sources that come out of the immigrant or defector circles. More so when you're talking about a fellow like Chalabi, he's been out of Iraq since the

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Brooklyn dodgers have been out the New York City and that's a long time indeed.

WATTS:

Back in February, Colin Powell talked of the existence of mobile weapons labs, material from defectors is behind the confident insistence by politician on both sides of the Atlantic that they've now found them. But our source who is in an excellent position to know and spoke of being 95% confident on the day the Pentagon showed the trucks to the world, now puts that confidence level at just 40%. A CIA report last week says the Iraqis claim the trucks were used to produce hydrogen for military weather balloons. But with the war over does all this really matter? Perhaps intelligence service concern about a future threat from weapons of mass destruction was enough to justify military action. But the Government's critics say that wasn't the basis that the British public or MPs were sold the case for war.

MALCOLM SAVIDGE:

This is extremely grave. Politicians who we have to take seriously have made allegations that Parliament and the people were led to war on false grounds. That is a more serious allegation than anything we've faced in recent times. Effectively if it were true it could be the Prime Minister's Watergate.

WATTS:

Of course, overwhelmingly convincing evidence of weapons may turn up tomorrow and former inspectors say that documents still being read may be key. But until something compelling is produced the pressure looks unlikely to let up. As for the promised new dossier on new weapons evidence, the question will be "Is there sufficient trust in our government remaining for the public and MPs to believe what ever it might say?"

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GFX 1

STARTS ON CLOCKS AND MUSIC - MIXES IN AND OUT OF SHORT CLIP - COOK VOICEOVER OVER THE CLOCKS, THEN SUSAN'S VOICE OVER CLOCKS (NEED TO SHORTEN TRACK)

(Short: duping came from TB - because he had agreed with bush, there will be try at un, but if failed there will be war by spring come what may...)

(Cook: momentous mistake)

Over the weekend the storm over the missing weapons of mass destruction focussed down on one key point. Was the British public "duped" over the URGENCY of dealing with Iraq's banned weapons? ...The Government's claim that Saddam could mobilise these within 45 minutes is already looking shaky...but on the Today programme this morning, the foreign secretary, Jack Straw, suggested it had never been a key part of the argument

STRAW VOICE OVER SAME GFX

COMMONS WIDE

But the reference to 45 minutes WAS there in the prime minister's speech to the Commons on the day he published his famous weapons dossier...

SYNCH BLAIR 24th SEPT 2002

The history of Saddam and WMD is not American or British propaganda. The history and the present threat are real....He has existing and active military plans for the use of chemical and biological weapons, which could be activated within 45 minutes...

BBC  
synch

DOSSIER PIX

And it features in the dossier itself 4 times, notably in the prime minister's foreword and the executive summary.

EVIAN PRESSER WIDE/ EVIAN SET-UP SHOT

(WT) Today at the G8 summit in Evian, Tony Blair once again found himself in rebuttal mode...

SYNCH BLAIR EVIAN

idea doctored ludicrous...all went past JIC

(WT) It's a surprising claim to make given that it encompasses the OTHER - so-called "dodgy dossier" - part of which was plagiarised. And in any case, today, Tony Blair appeared irritated that the weapons issue won't go away...

(Blair sync 2) ...if pple have got evidence they shd produce it..wrong to make claims on basis of anon sources...

## STUDIO PTC

But in some cases anonymous sources can be the only way to gain an insight into the intelligence world. We've spoken to a senior official intimately involved with the process of pulling together the original - Sept 2002 Blair weapons dossier. We cannot name this person because their livelihood **DEPENDS** on anonymity. Our source made clear that in the run-up to publishing the dossier the government was obsessed with finding intelligence on immediate Iraqi threats - and the Government's insistence the Iraqi threat was **IMMINENT** was a Downing Street **INTERPRETATION** of intelligence conclusions. His point is that while the intelligence community was agreed on the potential Iraqi threat in the **FUTURE**, there was less agreement about the threat the Iraqis posed at that moment...

## GFX 2

Our source said:

"That was the real concern - not so much what they had now, but what they would have in the future. But that unfortunately was not expressed strongly in the dossier, because that takes away the case for war - to a certain extent"

"But in the end it was just a flurry of activity and was very difficult to get comments in because people at the top of the ladder didn't want to hear some of the things."

(3.31)

## PIX BLIX AT THE UN

Our source talks of a febrile atmosphere in the days of diplomacy leading to the big commons debate of Sept last year.....of the Government seizing on anything useful to the case...including the possible existence of weapons that could be ready within 45 minutes.

## GFX 3

SJW / 1 / 0054 2

P2  
"It was a statement that was made and it just got out of all proportion. They were desperate for information, they were pushing hard for information which could be released. That was one that popped up and it was seized on, and it's unfortunate that it was. That's why there is the argument between the intelligence services and cabinet office/ Number Ten - because they picked up on it, and once they've picked up on it you can't pull it back from them."

(WT) and again - specifically on the 45 minute point...

P2  
"It was an interesting week before the dossier was put out because there were so many people saying, 'Well I'm not so sure about that', or in fact that they were happy with it being in, but not expressed the way that it was - because the word-smithing is actually quite important. The intelligence community are a pretty cautious lot on the whole - but once you get people presenting it for public consumption then of course they use different words." (4.36)

PIX IRAQI NATIONAL CONGRESS? WEAPONS INSPECTORS  
The problem is that the 45 minutes point was not corroborated. For sceptics it highlights the dangers of relying too heavily on information from defectors. Journalists in America are being accused of running propaganda from the Iraqi National Congress...

SYNCH McGOVERN (ans 2)  
Exiles notoriously unreliable

PIX MOBILE LABS/ POWELL AT THE UN  
Back in February Colin Powell talked of the existence of mobile weapons labs. Material from defectors is behind the confident insistence by politicians on both sides of the Atlantic that they've now found them.

MORE MOBILE LABS  
But our source - who is in an excellent position to know and spoke of being 90% confident these claims were correct on the day the Pentagon showed the trucks to the world NOW puts that confidence level at just 40%. A CIA report last week says the Iraqis claim the trucks were used to produce hydrogen for military weather balloons...

WAR PIX  
(WT) But with the war OVER - does all this really matter ? Perhaps intelligence service concern about a FUTURE threat from WMD was enough to justify military action..? But the Government's critics say that

SJW/1/0055 3

wasn't the basis on which the British public or MPs were sold the case for War...

SYNCH SAVIDGE

ans 5 or 9 - Blair's Watergate

LOOPING CLOCKS GFX

Of course overwhelmingly convincing evidence of weapons may turn up tomorrow, and former inspectors say documents still being read may be key. But until something compelling IS produced, the pressure looks unlikely to let up. As for the promised NEW dossier on weapons evidence - the question will be is there sufficient Trust in our Government remaining for the public and MPs to believe whatever it might say...?

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