



IRAK (9) - DE *CASUS BELLI*

De onderzoeken naar de WMD

INHOUDSOPGAVE

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COMMENTAAR EN VRAGEN

Stand van zaken

De documenten en artikelen die in de nrs. 33,34 en 34A van F&R zijn opgenomen geven afdoende redenen om tot de volgende conclusies te komen:

1. De inlichtingen die de basis vormden voor de casus belli tegen Irak waren misleidend, om de volgende redenen:
 - a. Ze waren gebrekkig omdat ze deels op technische (en dus onvolledige) data waren gebaseerd. Er was onvoldoende human intelligence, behalve die gebaseerd op 'single sources', in ieder geval deels afkomstig uit Iraakse ballingen kringen. Deze bron was niet betrouwbaar.
 - b. De formulering van zowel de Britse als de Amerikaanse conclusies was onderhavig aan een politiek proces waarbij de politieke wensen van de twee regeringen zware invloed hadden op de conclusies van de analyse.
 - c. De methode van verwerking van de inlichtingen, inclusief het analyse proces, was onderhavig aan politieke invloed. In het geval van de VS werd deze door vice president Cheney uitgeoefend, tijdens zijn bezoeken aan de inlichtingendiensten. In het VK werd door Downing Street directe invloed uitgeoefend via deelname van een van de strategische planners van de premier, Campbell.
2. Een deel van het politieke besluitvormingsproces waarin de inlichtingen rapporten moesten worden gebruikt, was juist gericht op het beïnvloeden van het analyseproces van de inlichtingen. De Office of Special Plans (in het Pentagon) had tot doel het ombouwen van bruikbare rauwe inlichtingen in een analyse die een oorlog zou ondersteunen.
3. Een deel van de inlichtingen die bedoeld waren als analyse van het werkelijk gevaar dat SH vormde werd gelekt dan wel gepubliceerd (voorbeeld: de tubes die zogenaamd bedoeld waren voor ultracentrifuges). Voorbeeld: de import van uranium erts uit Niger door Irak. Deze 'feiten' werden gepubliceerd en verspreid, hoewel men wist dat ze vals waren.
4. De beperkte harde inlichtingen werden deels gebruikt in openbare publicaties (zoals het sept. 2002 dossier) door ze te verdraaien, suggestief te rangschikken dan wel door het verwijderen van alle terminologie die twijfel opwierp. Een deel van de leiding van de inlichtingendiensten ging hier mee akkoord en liet zich dus gebruiken.
5. In Nederland speelde het sept. 2002 dossier van Blair een rol. Welke is onduidelijk, omdat de regering weigert de informatie waarop ze haar besluit om de oorlog te steunen, aan de Kamer door te geven, ook niet in gesloten sessie (zie het verslag van de AO van 27 november hierover, p3/F&R 33). Ook een eis van de oppositie voor een onderzoek naar de relevante ontwikkelingen, na de verklaring van Kay in het Amerikaanse congres eind januari, werd afgewezen. De regeringspartijen steunden de regering hierin.
6. In de VS zijn twee onderzoeken gaande in het Congres naar de inlichtingen, plus een onafhankelijk onderzoek. In het VK zal een onafhankelijke commissie onderzoek doen naar de Britse inlichtingen. In Australië loopt een parlementair onderzoek. In Nederland zijn er vragen gesteld (zie deze F&R) in de Kamer. Er gebeurt verder niets. Kamerlid Bakker van regeringspartij D66 verdedigde het ontbreken van steun aan het door de oppositie voorgestelde onderzoek met de bewering dat er op de uitslag van de Britse en Amerikaanse onderzoeken moet worden gewacht.
7. Er zijn nog steeds gegronde twijfels over de doodsoorzaak van wapendeskundige Kelly (zie bijlage F&R34A).

Opmerkingen

De crux van de kwestie is de rationale voor het voeren van een oorlog. Het officiële Amerikaanse beleid veronderstelt dat een staat die zich met MVW bewapend een dreiging is voor de VS en dus 'preventief' mag worden aangevallen. De capaciteit is voldoende, voor bedoelingen is geen bewijs nodig. De Britse regering heeft de Amerikaanse in deze gesteund in het geval Irak. Zelfs binnen dit beleid, dat bestaande internationale verdragen en afspraken negeert, is echter afdoende bewijs van deze MVW noodzakelijk, al was het maar om vergissingen te voorkomen. Maar ook de binnenlandse publieke opinie moet worden overtuigd, gezien de gebruikelijke onwil van de meeste volkeren, dus ook de Amerikaanse, om in een oorlog te worden gestort.

Gezien deze oppositie wordt het ideologische gevecht voor de rechtvaardiging van de oorlog van groot belang, dus is de rol van de media cruciaal. Dat impliceert weer dat de MVW inlichtingen op twee manieren worden gebruikt: deels intern voor de besluitvormers, en deels extern, als onderdeel van de propaganda.

In het geval Irak zijn er bijzonder veel aanwijzingen dat de beschikbare inlichtingen niet toereikend waren als bewijs, maar desalniettemin zijn gebruikt in de openbare sfeer om het besluit om een oorlog te initiëren, te ondersteunen. Dat is de kern van het gebruik van het Britse september 2002 dossier. Het openbare dossier werd bewerkt door regeringsvertegenwoordigers, zoals bewezen in het Hutton onderzoek. Ze deden dit met medewerking van de top van de inlichtingendiensten. In de VS gebeurde iets dergelijks door de druk die door vice-president Cheney en minister Rumsfeld op de CIA werd uitgeoefend.

Het Britse dossier is ook van belang in Nederland, omdat het aan premier Balkenende werd doorgespeeld. Bovendien stelde Scott Ritter nog een andere kwestie aan de orde. Dit betrof het gebruik dat er werd gemaakt door de inlichtingen van de UNSCOM inspecteurs. Deze werden via een inlichtingen operatie onder de naam 'Rockingham' doorgespeeld aan de Britse wapenexpert Kelly (zie de berichten hierover achterin deze F&R).

Vragen

1. Welke rol speelde het Britse sept. 2002 inlichtingendossier in de besluitvorming van de Nederlandse regering om de oorlog te ondersteunen?
2. Beschikte de Nederlandse regering over eigen inlichtingen over de Iraakse massavernietigingswapens?
3. Welke rol speelde de informatie afkomstig van de VN wapeninspecteurs in de Nederlandse besluitvorming?
4. Wat waren de conclusies die de regering trok uit de inlichtingen waarover ze beschikte?

Conclusie

De antwoorden op deze vragen en die gesteld door kamerlid Karimi (zie elders in dit nummer) zijn van onmiddellijk belang en niet afhankelijk van de betrouwbaarheid van de Britse of Amerikaanse inlichtingen. Het gaat immers om de politieke conclusies gemaakt op basis van de informatie die de regering had. Het doet niet ter zake of deze goed of vals was: het is immers duidelijk dat er conclusies getrokken zijn. Daar kan de regering nu op antwoorden, en indien ze dat weigert, daar ook toe worden gedwongen door een parlementair onderzoek. De stelling van kamerlid Bakker dat er gewacht moet worden op de resultaten van de Britse en Amerikaanse onderzoeken voordat er een Nederlands onderzoek kan worden gedaan, is dus onjuist.

DE ONDERZOEKEN

DOCUMENTEN

White House

White House Defends Iraq War, Responds to Kay Statements on WMD

White House Report, Jan 26: David Kay and WMD in Iraq
26 January 2004

The White House January 26 said the removal from power of Iraq's Saddam Hussein justified the Iraq war regardless of whether Hussein's regime possessed banned weapons.

"[T]he President made the right decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power. The world is a safer and better place, and America is more secure because of the actions that we took," White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan told reporters.

He said the Iraq Survey Group, a U.S.-led group of intelligence and military experts looking for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, should continue the search despite comments from its former leader, David Kay, that no stockpiles probably exist.

Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet announced Kay's resignation on January 23 and announced the appointment of Charles A. Duelfer as Kay's replacement.

Since his resignation, Kay has given numerous interviews and outlined a variety of possible explanations for the failure to find WMD in Iraq, including the possibility that they Iraqis may have delivered some WMD to Syria; that they destroyed stockpiles following the first Iraq war; and that they may not have possessed WMD but had a program to develop them.

"It is important to compare the intelligence before the war with what we learn on the ground through the Iraq Survey Group", McClellan said January 26, when questioned about Kay's comments.

"The first step is to let the Iraqi Survey Group finish their work so the intelligence community can have as complete a picture as possible", McClellan said.

"Saddam Hussein's regime had weapons of mass destruction, they used weapons of mass destruction on its neighbors and on his own people, and they failed to account for the weapons and weapons programs, and refused to comply [with the United Nations] for 12 years and some 17 Security Council resolutions," McClellan said.

US State Department

Former U.S. Weapons Inspector Testifies on Iraq Weapons Program

Congressional Report, January 28: David Kay Testifies
By Merle D. Kellerhals, Jr. – 28 January 2004

Washington -- Former U.S. weapons inspector David Kay testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee January 28 that he was unable to find substantive evidence that the regime of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction or had an active weapons development program.

Kay said during questioning, "we simply have no evidence" Iraq had large or small stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons as late as 2002. "We've got evidence that they certainly could have produced small amounts, but we've not discovered evidence of the stockpiles."

Kay, who served as a special weapons advisor to CIA Director George Tenet, was brought in by Tenet to assist the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) -- a CIA and Pentagon team -- in its search for traces of WMD left from the now-defunct regime. Kay, who served in that capacity from June 2003 to January of this year, resigned the post January 23.

Senate Armed Services Chairman John Warner, a Republican of Virginia, ordered the hearing to determine the status of Iraqi WMD and related weapons development programs.

"Let me begin by saying, we were almost all wrong, and I certainly include myself here," Kay said of intelligence estimates indicating Iraq had an active weapons of mass destruction program. "I believe that the effort that has been directed to this point has been sufficiently intense that it is highly unlikely that there were large stockpiles of deployed militarized chemical and biological weapons there."

He said that it is theoretically possible in a country the size of Iraq that some weapons of mass destruction may be hidden, but given the ambiguity of the weapons search, that question may never be answered fully. "It's possible that they could be there and we could never find them," he said.

Kay added that the search should continue although based on his estimate, approximately 85 percent of the major elements of the Iraqi program are probably known.

Kay also said Iraq was clearly in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions calling for an end to and full disclosure of WMD programs. "They maintained programs and activities, and they certainly had the intentions at a point to resume their program. So there was a lot they wanted to hide because it showed what they were doing that was illegal," he said.

"In my judgment, based on the work that has been done to this point ... Iraq was in clear violation of the terms of [U.N. Security Council] Resolution 1441," Kay said during opening remarks. "Resolution 1441 required that Iraq report all of its activities: one last chance to come clean about what it had."

Kay said hundreds of cases of information, both from physical evidence and from testimony, showed that over the years Iraq had conducted activities that were prohibited by several U.N. resolutions, and failed to tell the U.N. about its activities. In addition, many Iraqi officials were instructed to hide material and keep the activities secret from the U.N.

Kay also said he did not think the former Clinton administration or the current Bush administration pressured intelligence analysts to reach conclusions that would fit a political agenda. "I deeply think that is a wrong explanation," he said.

Kay said two special vans found by coalition forces in Iraq that were first thought to have been used in biological weapons production were actually used to produce hydrogen for weather balloons or possibly rocket fuel. He said aluminum tubes found in Iraq that were thought to have been used for enriching uranium for nuclear weapons were actually used in a conventional missile program.

"I think the world is far safer with the disappearance and the removal of Saddam Hussein," Kay said during questioning. "I have said I actually think this may be one of those cases where it was even more dangerous than we thought. I think when we have the complete record you're going to discover that after 1998, it became a regime that was totally corrupt. Individuals were out for their own protection, and in a world where we know others are seeking WMD, the likelihood at some point in the future of a seller and a buyer meeting up would have made that a far more dangerous country than even we anticipated with what may turn out not to be a fully accurate estimate."

On January 27, President Bush said the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq earlier in 2003 and the toppling of Hussein's government had made the world safer.

"We know he was a dangerous man in a dangerous part of the world. We know that he defied the United Nations year after year. And given the offense of September 11, we know we could not trust the good intentions of Saddam Hussein because he didn't have any," Bush said. "There was no doubt in my mind that Saddam Hussein was a grave and gathering threat to America and the world."

Hutton Inquiry

Report of the Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Dr David Kelly C.M.G.

by Lord Hutton – 28 January 2004

[...] CHAPTER 12 -Summary of conclusions

466. In this chapter I set out the conclusions which I have reached on the question how Dr Kelly came to his death and on the five groups of issues which arise from the evidence which I have heard.

467. I am satisfied that Dr Kelly took his own life and that the principal cause of death was bleeding from incised wounds to his left wrist which Dr Kelly had inflicted on himself with the knife found beside his body. It is probable that the ingestion of an excess amount of Coproxamol tablets coupled with apparently clinically silent coronary artery disease would have played a part in bringing about death more certainly and more rapidly than it would have otherwise been the case. I am further satisfied that no other person was involved in the death of Dr Kelly and that Dr Kelly was not suffering from any significant mental illness at the time he took his own life.

(1) On the issues relating to the preparation of the Government's dossier of 24 September 2002 entitled IRAQ'S WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION, my conclusions are as follows:

(i) The dossier was prepared and drafted by a small team of the assessment staff of the JIC. Mr John Scarlett, the Chairman of the JIC, had the overall responsibility for the drafting of the dossier. The dossier, which

included the 45 minutes claim, was issued by the Government on 24 September 2002 with the full approval of the JIC.

(ii) The 45 minutes claim was based on a report which was received by the SIS from a source which that Service regarded as reliable. Therefore, whether or not at some time in the future the report on which the 45 minutes claim was based is shown to be unreliable, the allegation reported by Mr Gilligan on 29 May 2003 that the Government probably knew that the 45 minutes claim was wrong before the Government decided to put it in the dossier, was an allegation which was unfounded.

(iii) The allegation was also unfounded that the reason why the 45 minutes claim was not in the original draft of the dossier was because it only came from one source and the intelligence agencies did not really believe it was necessarily true. The reason why the 45 minutes claim did not appear in draft assessments or draft dossiers until 5 September 2002 was because the intelligence report on which it was based was not received by the SIS until 29 August 2002 and the JIC assessment staff did not have time to insert it in a draft until the draft of the assessment of 5 September 2002.

(iv) The true position in relation to the attitude of "the Intelligence Services" to the 45 minutes claim being inserted in the dossier was that the concerns expressed by Dr Jones were considered by higher echelons in the Intelligence Services and were not acted upon, and the JIC, the most senior body in the Intelligence Services charged with the assessment of intelligence, approved the wording in the dossier. Moreover, the nuclear, chemical and biological weapons section of the Defence Intelligence Staff, headed by Dr Brian Jones, did not argue that the intelligence relating to the 45 minutes claim should not have been included in the dossier but they did suggest that the wording in which the claim was stated in the dossier was too strong and that instead of the dossier stating "we judge" that "Iraq has:- military plans for the use of chemical and biological weapons, including against its own Shia population. Some of these weapons are deployable within 45 minutes of an order to use them", the wording should state "intelligence suggests".

(v) Mr Alastair Campbell made it clear to Mr Scarlett on behalf of the Prime Minister that 10 Downing Street wanted the dossier to be worded to make as strong a case as possible in relation to the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's WMD, and 10 Downing Street made written suggestions to Mr Scarlett as to changes in the wording of the draft dossier which would strengthen it. But Mr Campbell recognised, and told Mr Scarlett that 10 Downing Street recognised, that nothing should be stated in the dossier with which the intelligence community were not entirely happy.

(vi) Mr Scarlett accepted some of the drafting suggestions made to him by 10 Downing Street but he only accepted those suggestions which were consistent with the intelligence known to the JIC and he rejected those suggestions which were not consistent with such intelligence and the dossier issued by the Government was approved by the JIC.

(vii) As the dossier was one to be presented to, and read by, Parliament and the public, and was not an intelligence assessment to be considered only by the Government, I do not consider that it was improper for Mr Scarlett and the JIC to take into account suggestions as to drafting made by 10 Downing Street and to adopt those suggestions if they were consistent with the intelligence available to the JIC. However I consider that the possibility cannot be completely ruled out that the desire of the Prime Minister to have a dossier which, whilst consistent with the available intelligence, was as strong as possible in relation to the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's WMD, may have subconsciously influenced Mr Scarlett and the other members of the JIC to make the wording of the dossier somewhat stronger than it would have been if it had been contained in a normal JIC assessment. Although this possibility cannot be completely ruled out, I am satisfied that Mr Scarlett, the other members of the JIC, and the members of the assessment staff engaged in the drafting of the dossier were concerned to ensure that the contents of the dossier were consistent with the intelligence available to the JIC.

(viii) The term "sexed-up" is a slang expression, the meaning of which lacks clarity in the context of the discussion of the dossier. It is capable of two different meanings. It could mean that the dossier was embellished with items of intelligence known or believed to be false or unreliable to make the case against Saddam Hussein stronger, or it could mean that whilst the intelligence contained in the dossier was believed to be reliable, the dossier was drafted in such a way as to make the case against Saddam Hussein as strong as the intelligence contained in it permitted. If the term is used in this latter sense, then because of the drafting suggestions made by 10 Downing Street for the purpose of making a strong case against Saddam Hussein, it could be said that the Government "sexed-up" the dossier. However in the context of the broadcasts in which the "sexing-up" allegation was reported and having regard to the other allegations reported in those broadcasts, I consider that the allegation was unfounded as it would have been understood by those who heard the broadcasts to mean that the dossier had been embellished with intelligence known or believed to be false or unreliable, which was not the case.

(2) On the issues relating to Dr Kelly's meeting with Mr Andrew Gilligan in the Charing Cross Hotel on 22 May 2003 my conclusions are as follows:

(i) In the light of the uncertainties arising from Mr Gilligan's evidence and the existence of two versions of his notes made on his personal organiser of his discussion with Dr Kelly on 22 May it is not possible to reach a definite conclusion as to what Dr Kelly said to Mr Gilligan. It may be that Dr Kelly said to Mr Gilligan that Mr Campbell was responsible for transforming the dossier, and it may be that when Mr Gilligan suggested to Dr Kelly that the dossier was transformed to make it "sexier", Dr Kelly agreed with this suggestion. However I am satisfied that Dr Kelly did not say to Mr Gilligan that the Government probably knew or suspected that the 45 minutes claim was wrong before that claim was inserted in the dossier. I am further satisfied that Dr Kelly did not say to Mr Gilligan that the reason why the 45 minutes claim was not included in the original draft of the dossier was because it only came from one source and the intelligence agencies did not really believe it was necessarily true. In the course of his evidence, which I have set out in paragraphs 244, 245 and 246, Mr Gilligan accepted that he had made errors in his broadcasts in the Today programme on 29 May 2003. The reality was that the 45 minutes claim was based on an intelligence report which the SIS believed to be reliable and the 45 minutes claim was inserted in the dossier with the approval of the JIC, the most senior body in the United Kingdom responsible for the assessment of intelligence. In addition the reason why the 45 minutes claim was not inserted in the first draft of the dossier was because the intelligence on which it was based was not received by the SIS in London until 29 August 2002. Therefore the allegations reported by Mr Gilligan that the Government probably knew that the 45 minutes claim was wrong or questionable and that it was not inserted in the first draft of the dossier because it only came from one source and the intelligence agencies did not really believe it was necessarily true, were unfounded.

(ii) Dr Kelly's meeting with Mr Gilligan was unauthorised and in meeting Mr Gilligan and discussing intelligence matters with him, Dr Kelly was acting in breach of the Civil Service code of procedure which applied to him.

(iii) It may be that when he met Mr Gilligan, Dr Kelly said more to him than he had intended to say and that at the time of the meeting he did not realise the gravity of the situation which he was helping to create by discussing intelligence matters with Mr Gilligan. But whatever Dr Kelly thought at the time of his meeting with Mr Gilligan, it is clear that after Mr Gilligan's broadcasts on 29 May Dr Kelly must have come to realise the gravity of the situation for which he was partly responsible by commenting on intelligence matters to him and he accepted that the meeting was unauthorised, as he acknowledged in a telephone conversation with his friend and colleague Ms Olivia Bosch after his meeting with Mr Gilligan.

(3) On the issues relating to the BBC arising from Mr Gilligan's broadcasts on the BBC Today programme on 29 May 2003 my conclusions are as follows:

(i) The allegations reported by Mr Gilligan on the BBC Today programme on 29 May 2003 that the Government probably knew that the 45 minutes claim was wrong or questionable before the dossier was published and that it was not inserted in the first draft of the dossier because it only came from one source and the intelligence agencies did not really believe it was necessarily true, were unfounded.

(ii) The communication by the media of information (including information obtained by investigative reporters) on matters of public interest and importance is a vital part of life in a democratic society. However the right to communicate such information is subject to the qualification (which itself exists for the benefit of a democratic society) that false accusations of fact impugning the integrity of others, including politicians, should not be made by the media. Where a reporter is intending to broadcast or publish information impugning the integrity of others the management of his broadcasting company or newspaper should ensure that a system is in place whereby his editor or editors give careful consideration to the wording of the report and to whether it is right in all the circumstances to broadcast or publish it. The allegations that Mr Gilligan was intending to broadcast in respect of the Government and the preparation of the dossier were very grave allegations in relation to a subject of great importance and I consider that the editorial system which the BBC permitted was defective in that Mr Gilligan was allowed to broadcast his report at 6.07am without editors having seen a script of what he was going to say and having considered whether it should be approved.

(iii) The BBC management was at fault in the following respects in failing to investigate properly the Government's complaints that the report in the 6.07am broadcast was false that the Government probably knew that the 45 minutes claim was wrong even before it decided to put it in the dossier. The BBC management failed, before Mr Sambrook wrote his letter of 27 June 2003 to Mr Campbell, to make an examination of Mr Gilligan's notes on his personal organiser of his meeting with Dr Kelly to see if they supported the allegations which he had made in his broadcast at 6.07am. When the BBC management did look at Mr Gilligan's notes after 27 June it failed to appreciate that the notes did not fully support the most

serious of the allegations which he had reported in the 6.07am broadcast, and it therefore failed to draw the attention of the Governors to the lack of support in the notes for the most serious of the allegations.

(iv) The e-mail sent by Mr Kevin Marsh, the editor of the Today programme on 27 June 2003 to Mr Stephen Mitchell, the Head of Radio News, which was critical of Mr Gilligan's method of reporting, and which referred to Mr Gilligan's "loose use of language and lack of judgment in some of his phraseology" and referred also to "the loose and in some ways distant relationship he's been allowed to have with Today," was clearly relevant to the complaints which the Government was making about his broadcasts on 29 May, and the lack of knowledge on the part of Mr Sambrook, the Director of News, and the Governors of this critical e-mail shows a defect in the operation of the BBC's management system for the consideration of complaints in respect of broadcasts.

(v) The Governors were right to take the view that it was their duty to protect the independence of the BBC against attacks by the Government and Mr Campbell's complaints were being expressed in exceptionally strong terms which raised very considerably the temperature of the dispute between the Government and the BBC. However Mr Campbell's allegation that the BBC had an anti-war agenda in his evidence to the FAC was only one part of his evidence. The Government's concern about Mr Gilligan's broadcasts on 29 May was a separate issue about which specific complaints had been made by the Government. Therefore the Governors should have recognised more fully than they did that their duty to protect the independence of the BBC was not incompatible with giving proper consideration to whether there was validity in the Government's complaints, no matter how strongly worded by Mr Campbell, that the allegations against its integrity reported in Mr Gilligan's broadcasts were unfounded and the Governors failed to give this issue proper consideration. The view taken by the Governors, as explained in evidence by Mr Gavyn Davies, the Chairman of the Board of Governors, that they had to rely on the BBC management to investigate and assess whether Mr Gilligan's source was reliable and credible and that it was not for them as Governors to investigate whether the allegations reported were themselves accurate, is a view which is understandable. However this was not the correct view for the Governors to take because the Government had stated to the BBC in clear terms, as had Mr Campbell to the FAC, that the report that the Government probably knew that the 45 minutes claim was wrong was untruthful, and this denial was made with the authority of the Prime Minister and the Chairman of the JIC. In those circumstances, rather than relying on the assurances of BBC management, I consider that the Governors themselves should have made more detailed investigations into the extent to which Mr Gilligan's notes supported his report. If they had done this they would probably have discovered that the notes did not support the allegation that the Government knew that the 45 minutes claim was probably wrong, and the Governors should then have questioned whether it was right for the BBC to maintain that it was in the public interest to broadcast that allegation in Mr Gilligan's report and to rely on Mr Gilligan's assurances that his report was accurate. Therefore in the very unusual and specific circumstances relating to Mr Gilligan's broadcasts, the Governors are to be criticised for themselves failing to make more detailed investigations into whether this allegation reported by Mr Gilligan was properly supported by his notes and for failing to give proper and adequate consideration to whether the BBC should publicly acknowledge that this very grave allegation should not have been broadcast.

(4)(A) On the issue whether the Government behaved in a way which was dishonourable or underhand or duplicitous in revealing Dr Kelly's name to the media my conclusions are as follows:

(i) There was no dishonourable or underhand or duplicitous strategy by the Government covertly to leak Dr Kelly's name to the media. If the bare details of the MoD statement dated 8 July 2003, the changing drafts of the Q and A material prepared in the MoD, and the lobby briefings by the Prime Minister's official spokesman on 9 July are looked at in isolation from the surrounding circumstances it would be possible to infer, as some commentators have done, that there was an underhand strategy by the Government to leak Dr Kelly's name in a covert way. However having heard a large volume of evidence on this issue I have concluded that there was no such strategy on the part of the Government. I consider that in the midst of a major controversy relating to Mr Gilligan's broadcasts which had contained very grave allegations against the integrity of the Government and fearing that Dr Kelly's name as the source for those broadcasts would be disclosed by the media at any time, the Government's main concern was that it would be charged with a serious cover up if it did not reveal that a civil servant had come forward. I consider that the evidence of Mr Donald Anderson MP and Mr Andrew Mackinlay MP, the Chairman and a member respectively of the FAC, together with the questions put by Sir John Stanley MP to Dr Kelly when he appeared before the FAC, clearly show that the Government's concern was well founded. Therefore I consider that the Government did not behave in a dishonourable or underhand or duplicitous way in issuing on 8 July 2003, after it had been read over to Dr Kelly and he had said that he was content with it, a statement which said that a civil servant, who was not named, had come forward to volunteer that he had met Mr Gilligan on 22 May.

(ii) The decision by the MoD to confirm Dr Kelly's name if, after the statement had been issued, the correct name were put to the MoD by a reporter, was not part of a covert strategy to leak his name, but was based on the view that in a matter of such intense public and media interest it would not be sensible to try to conceal the name when the MoD thought that the press were bound to discover the correct name, and a further consideration in the mind of the MoD was that it did not think it right that media speculation should focus, wrongly, on other civil servants.

(iii) It was reasonable for the Government to take the view that, even if it sought to keep confidential the fact that Dr Kelly had come forward, the controversy surrounding Mr Gilligan's broadcasts was so great and the level of media interest was so intense that Dr Kelly's name as Mr Gilligan's source was bound to become known to the public and that it was not a practical possibility to keep his name secret.

(4)(B) On the issue whether the Government failed to take proper steps to help and protect Dr Kelly in the difficult position in which he found himself my conclusion is as follows:

(i) Once the decision had been taken on 8 July to issue the statement, the MoD was at fault and is to be criticised for not informing Dr Kelly that its press office would confirm his name if a journalist suggested it. Although I am satisfied that Dr Kelly realised, once the MoD statement had been issued on Tuesday 8 July, that his name would come out, it must have been a great shock and very upsetting for him to have been told in a brief telephone call from his line manager, Dr Wells, on the evening of 9 July that the press office of his own department had confirmed his name to the press and must have given rise to a feeling that he had been badly let down by his employer. I further consider that the MoD was at fault in not having set up a procedure whereby Dr Kelly would be informed immediately his name had been confirmed to the press and in permitting a period of one and a half hours to elapse between the confirmation of his name to the press and information being given to Dr Kelly that his name had been confirmed to the press. However these criticisms are subject to the mitigating circumstances that (1) Dr Kelly's exposure to press attention and intrusion, whilst obviously very stressful, was only one of the factors placing him under great stress; (2) individual officials in the MoD did try to help and support him in the ways which I have described in paragraphs 430 and 431; and (3) because of his intensely private nature, Dr Kelly was not an easy man to help or to whom to give advice.

(5) On the issue of the factors which may have led Dr Kelly to take his own life I adopt as my own conclusion the opinion which Professor Hawton, the Professor of Psychiatry at Oxford University, expressed in the course of his evidence:

[2 September, page 132, line 2]

Q. Have you considered, now, with the benefit of hindsight that we all have, what factors did contribute to Dr Kelly's death?

A. I think that as far as one can deduce, the major factor was the severe loss of self esteem, resulting from his feeling that people had lost trust in him and from his dismay at being exposed to the media.

Q. And why have you singled that out as a major factor?

A. Well, he talked a lot about it; and I think being such a private man, I think this was anathema to him to be exposed, you know, publicly in this way. In a sense, I think he would have seen it as being publicly disgraced.

Q. What other factors do you think were relevant?

A. Well, I think that carrying on that theme, I think that he must have begun - he is likely to have begun to think that, first of all, the prospects for continuing in his previous work role were diminishing very markedly and, indeed, my conjecture that he had begun to fear he would lose his job altogether.

Q. What effect is that likely to have had on him?

A. Well, I think that would have filled him with a profound sense of hopelessness; and that, in a sense, his life's work had been not wasted but that had been totally undermined.

LORD HUTTON: Could you just elaborate a little on that, Professor, again? As sometimes is the case in this Inquiry, witnesses give answers and further explanation is obvious, but nonetheless I think it is helpful just to have matters fully spelt out. What do you think would have caused Dr Kelly to think that the prospects of continuing in his work were becoming uncertain?

A. Well, I think, my Lord, that first of all, there had been the letter from Mr Hatfield which had laid out the difficulties that Dr Kelly, you know, is alleged to have got into.

LORD HUTTON: Yes.

A. And in that letter there was also talk that should further matters come to light then disciplinary proceedings would need to be instigated.

LORD HUTTON: Yes.

A. And then of course there were the Parliamentary Questions which we have heard about, which suggested that questions were going to be asked about discipline in Parliament.

LORD HUTTON: Yes. Thank you.

MR DINGEMANS: Were there any other relevant factors?

A. I think the fact that he could not share his problems and feelings with other people, and the fact that he, according to the accounts I have been given, actually increasingly withdrew into himself. So in a sense he was getting further and further from being able to share the problems with other people, that is extremely important.

Q. Were there any other factors which you considered relevant?

A. Those are the main factors that I consider relevant.

Downing Street 10

Statement PM Tony Blair on Hutton report

28 January 2004

With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement following Lord Hutton's report into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr David Kelly.

I am immensely grateful to Lord Hutton, his team and inquiry staff for the work they have carried out. The report itself is an extraordinarily thorough, detailed and clear document. It leaves no room for doubt or interpretation. We accept it in full.

Lord Hutton has just finished reading the summary of his findings. Before coming to those I want to echo one thing Lord Hutton said about Dr Kelly himself. Lord Hutton makes his findings about Dr Kelly's conduct in respect of the matters at issue here, but as he says, nothing should detract from Dr Kelly's fine record of public service to this country. He was respected here and abroad. I am sorry that as a result of the gravity of the allegations made it was necessary to have this inquiry and that the Kelly family have had to go through reliving this tragedy over the past months. I hope now it is over, they will be allowed to grieve in peace.

Lord Hutton has given a most comprehensive account of the facts. It is unnecessary for me to repeat them. But let me emphasise why I believed it right to establish such an inquiry. Over the past six or more months, allegations have been made that go to the heart of the integrity of government, our intelligence services and me personally as Prime Minister. There are issues, of course, as to how the case of Dr Kelly was handled in personnel terms; and I shall come to those.

But these have not sustained the media, public and parliamentary interest over all this time. What has sustained and fuelled that interest has been, to put it bluntly, a claim of lying, of deceit, of duplicity on my part personally and that of the Government. That claim consists of two allegations: first that I lied over the intelligence that formed part of the Government's case in respect of Iraq and WMD published on 24 September 2002; the second that I lied or was duplicitous in respect of the naming of Dr Kelly, leaking his name to the press when it should have remained confidential.

Lord Hutton finds the following:

1. Contrary to the claim by the BBC that intelligence was put in the dossier against the wishes of the intelligence services; the dossier of 24 September was published with the full approval of the JIC, including the intelligence about Saddam's readiness to use some WMD within 45 minutes of an order to do so.
2. That the allegation by the BBC that the Government deliberately inserted this 45 minute claim probably knowing it was wrong was "unfounded".
3. That the allegation by the BBC that the reason for it not being in the original draft of the dossier was because the intelligence agencies didn't believe it to be true, was also "unfounded".
4. That no-one, either in the JIC or Downing Street acted improperly in relation to the dossier.
5. That the BBC claim that it was "sexed up" in the sense of being embellished with intelligence known or believed to be false was also "unfounded".
6. That Mr Gilligan's key allegations repeated by the BBC were never in fact said even by Dr Kelly himself.
7. That there was "no dishonourable or underhand or duplicitous strategy by the Government covertly to leak Dr Kelly's name to the media".
8. That on the contrary it was reasonable for the Government to conclude that there was no practical possibility of keeping his name secret and that the Government behaved properly in relation to naming him.
9. That the suggestion that either I or Sir Kevin Tebbit in our evidence were in conflict with each other or that one of us was lying was "incorrect and not supported by the evidence".

10. And for good measure, he also dismisses the allegations surrounding what I said on a plane to journalists in these terms.

"Some commentators have referred to answers by the Prime Minister to questions from members of the press travelling with him on an aeroplane to Hong Kong on 22 July and I have read the transcript of that press briefing. As I have stated, I am satisfied that there was not a dishonourable or underhand or duplicitous strategy on the part of the Prime Minister and officials to leak Dr Kelly's name covertly, and I am further satisfied that the decision that was taken by the Prime Minister and his officials in 10 Downing Street on 8 July was confined to issuing a statement that an un-named civil servant had come forward and that the Question and Answer material was prepared and approved in the MOD and not in 10 Downing Street."

Let me now return to the two central allegations.

On 29 May 2003, following the end of the conflict in Iraq, the BBC Today programme broadcast a story by its Defence Correspondent, Andrew Gilligan. It dominated the morning bulletins and reverberates to this day. It alleged that part of the September 2002 dossier - that Saddam could use WMD within 45 minutes of an order to do so - had been inserted into it by Downing Street, contrary to the wishes of the intelligence services and that moreover we "probably knew it was wrong even before we decided to put it in". There could not be a more serious charge. The source for this extraordinary allegation was said by the BBC to be "a senior official in charge of drawing up that dossier" and an "intelligence service source" implying a member of the JIC or assessments staff who would be in a position to know. If true, it would have meant that I had misled this House on 24 September and the country; that I had done so deliberately; and I had behaved wholly improperly in respect of the intelligence services.

From that day, 29 May onwards, that story in one form or another has been replayed many times in the UK, and all over the world.

It dominated my Press Conference in Poland on 30 May; and PMQs when I returned. It led that week to the Foreign Affairs Committee deciding to conduct an Inquiry into the issue. In particular, on the Sunday following the story, Mr Gilligan wrote an article in the Mail on Sunday, not merely standing by the story but naming Alastair Campbell as the person responsible in Downing Street. The headline read:

"I asked my intelligence source why Blair misled us all over Saddam's weapons. His reply? One word.....CAMPBELL"

This again, was completely untrue; and not merely stood up but further inflamed the original allegation of deceit.

The BBC has never clearly and visibly withdrawn this allegation. This has allowed others to say repeatedly I lied and misled Parliament over the 24 September dossier.

Let me make it plain: it is absolutely right that people can question whether the intelligence received was right; and why we have not yet found WMD. There is an entirely legitimate argument about the wisdom of the conflict. I happen to believe now as I did in March that removing Saddam has made the world a safer and better place. But others are entirely entitled to disagree.

However, all of this is of a completely different order from a charge of deception, of duplicity, of deceit, a charge that I or anyone else deliberately falsified intelligence.

The truth about that charge is now found. No intelligence was inserted into the dossier by Downing Street; nothing was put in it against the wishes of the intelligence services; no-one, either in Downing Street or the JIC, put any intelligence into it, "probably knowing it was wrong"; and no such claim to the BBC was made by anyone "in charge of drawing up the dossier". Indeed, Lord Hutton's findings go further. The claim was not even made by Dr Kelly himself.

The allegation that I or anyone else lied to this House or deliberately misled the country by falsifying intelligence on WMD is itself the real lie. And I simply ask that those that made it and those who have repeated it over all these months, now withdraw it, fully, openly and clearly.

Furthermore, Lord Hutton deals with the issue of the 45 minute claim. Instead of this being disputed by the intelligence services and inserted into the dossier at the behest of Alastair Campbell or Downing Street; the true position was that a concern about how it was phrased in the dossier was raised by a Dr Jones in DIS, was rejected by the Head of Defence Intelligence and never actually came to the attention of the Chairman of the JIC let alone Downing Street.

In any event, Dr Jones did not say it should have been omitted from the dossier. On the contrary Dr Jones thought it should be included as it was "important intelligence". Dr Jones told the Inquiry that Dr Kelly thought the dossier was "good" and Mr A, from the Counter Proliferation Arms Control Department said of himself and Dr Kelly "Both of us believed that if you took the dossier as a whole it was a reasonable and accurate reflection of the intelligence that we had available to us at that time."

Lord Hutton does fairly comment: "However I consider that the possibility cannot be completely ruled out that the desire of the Prime Minister to have a dossier which, whilst consistent with the available intelligence, was as strong as possible in relation to the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's WMD, may have sub-consciously influenced Mr Scarlett and other members of the JIC to make the wording of the dossier somewhat stronger than it would have been if it had been contained in a normal JIC assessment.". However he goes on to say: "although this possibility cannot be completely ruled out, I am satisfied that Mr Scarlett, the other members of the JIC, and the members of the Assessments Staff engaged in the drafting of the dossier were concerned to ensure that the contents of the dossier were consistent with the intelligence available to the JIC."

Lord Hutton also says, in terms, that Mr Scarlett "only accepted those suggestions which were consistent with the intelligence known to the JIC and he rejected those suggestions which were not consistent with such intelligence."

I hope that from now on the wholly unjustified attacks on the Chairman of the JIC John Scarlett and the JIC will cease. These people are people dedicated to this country and its wellbeing. The publication of intelligence by Government - which we did, let me remind the House, because of the clamour for it - was a unique exercise never done before, and difficult for all our Agencies. But in the interests of openly sharing intelligence with people, they worked hard in good faith to release it properly. And let me also remind the House that when this dossier was published it was routinely described at the time as "low key" and by Mr Gilligan, no less, on 24 September 2002 as "sensibly cautious and measured"; and actually moved public opinion hardly at all. Only in retrospect was it elevated into the single thing that conclusively persuaded a reluctant country to war.

The dossier reflected independent reports such as that of the IISS on 9 September. It reflected precisely that evidence which led the UN Security Council unanimously in November 2002 to agree Saddam and his weapons posed a threat to the world. The 45 minute claim was in fact mentioned once by me in my statement in this House on 24 September and not mentioned by me again in any debate, not even in the debate on 18 March or indeed by anyone else in that debate. Only again in retrospect, has history been rewritten to establish it as the one crucial claim that marched the nation into conflict.

Lord Hutton establishes clearly why the 45 minutes was put in the dossier, what its provenance was - and whether or not subsequently it turned out to be correct or not - finds it was put into the dossier entirely in good faith by the JIC.

So much for the first charge of dishonesty over the dossier. The second charge was over the naming of Dr Kelly. Again throughout these past six months, the context in which this has been debated has largely been that Dr Kelly's name should not have been revealed, it should have remained confidential and therefore anyone, including myself, who discussed or acted upon the issue was acting improperly.

In hindsight, of course, the name of Dr Kelly and his evidence to the FAC has taken on a different and altogether more tragic aspect. Rightly Lord Hutton puts it back into its proper contemporary context.

The truth is that by early July the FAC was actively engaged in examining the truth of the Gilligan allegations and due to report on 7 July. The ISC was about to begin its deliberations the same week. Evidence had already been given by the Government to the FAC and all of us, myself included were due to give evidence to the ISC beginning with the Chairman of the JIC on 9 July.

Suddenly in late June, Dr Kelly came forward and said to his managers he believed he may have been at least part of the source for the Gilligan story. That information was given to me personally on 3 July. By Monday 7 July it was apparent that in all likelihood he was indeed the source of the Gilligan story.

The dilemma we were in, therefore, as Lord Hutton accepts, was how we could possibly keep this information secret not just from the FAC, who had just taken evidence on this very point; but also from the ISC who were about to interview us all about the intelligence relating to Iraq, with the first session on the morning of Wednesday 9 July.

The evidence, very frankly given, of both my RHF, the Chairman of the FAC, and at least one of the Committee's members, was that if they had been told that the MOD knew the source and had interviewed him, the FAC would have wanted to do the same. As, of course, they did. Indeed, they told the Inquiry that they would have liked to have been told sooner.

The context therefore for the meetings on 7/8 July which I chaired was how to act properly in relation to these two committees where we were in possession of information plainly relevant to their inquiries and when one committee was on the point of publication and another about to begin proceedings.

The evidence of Sir David Omand was that it would be "improper" to keep this information secret and that we were under a duty to reveal it to Parliament. So as Lord Hutton accepts the whole basis of the claim that somehow Dr Kelly should never have been named or that his name was leaked in breach of a duty of

confidentiality, is based on a false premise. On the contrary our duty was to disclose his name to the Committees and allow them to interview him if they so wished; and Lord Hutton finds that our concern, at being accused of misleading those Committees was "well-founded".

In any event, again as Lord Hutton finds, no-one in fact "leaked" his name. Not myself, not the Secretary of State, not the officials. As Lord Hutton finds, the decision by the MOD to confirm Dr Kelly's name, if the correct name was put to it by a journalist, was based on the view that in a matter of such intense public and media interest it would not be sensible to try to conceal it.

There was no dishonourable or underhand or duplicitous strategy to name Dr Kelly. He was named for the reason we gave. And again I ask that those that have repeatedly claimed that I lied over this issue or that Sir Kevin Tebbit did, now withdraw that allegation also, unequivocally and in full.

Lord Hutton does however find that the MOD were at fault in not telling Dr Kelly clearly and immediately that his name would be confirmed to the press if it was put to the MOD. The MOD accepts these findings. However Lord Hutton goes on to say:

" However these criticisms are subject to the mitigating circumstances that (1) Dr Kelly's exposure to press attention and intrusion, whilst obviously very stressful, was only one of the factors placing him under greater stress; (2) individual officials in the MOD did try to help and support him in the ways which I have described in paragraphs 430 and 431; and (3) because of his intensely private nature, Dr Kelly was not an easy man to help or to whom to give advice."

I believe that the civil servants concerned were acting in good faith doing their best in difficult and unusual circumstances. Lord Hutton has not criticised any individuals in the MOD. Some have been subject to trenchant media criticisms far beyond what they ever should have had to bear. Sir Kevin Tebbit has, as has my RHF the Secretary of State. Both are cleared of any allegations of impropriety. My RHF in particular has been subject to a constant barrage of such claims as parts of the media have alternated between wanting his scalp or mine.

I hope that these attacks on him over this issue also cease.

I come to the final issue: the cause of Dr Kelly's death; in effect, why he took his own life, since it is now beyond doubt that he did.

Lord Hutton finds that no-one could have foreseen that Dr Kelly would commit suicide. He finds further that in all probability, he did not decide to do so until the day of his death. He finds that the reason he did so was not for any reason of conspiracy or dark motives. The truth is that Dr Kelly did speak to Mr Gilligan and whatever the distortion, it was an unauthorised meeting, as was his conversation with Susan Watts, the Newsnight journalist; and he was surprised to be asked about this at the FAC. Lord Hutton finds that the existence of a note of that conversation must have weighed heavily on his mind. Finally, on the day of his death he received notice of a series of Parliamentary Questions about his contacts which he was going to have to answer.

Dr Kelly was a decent man, whose very decency made him feel wretched about the situation in which he found himself.

No-one wished this tragedy to happen. All of us felt, and feel still, desperately sorry for Mrs Kelly and her family. None of us could have foreseen it because none of us, at that time, knew what Dr Kelly knew.

Lord Hutton puts it in this way at paragraph 15 of his report:

"I also consider it to be important to state in this early part of the report that I am satisfied that none of the persons whose decisions and actions I later describe ever contemplated that Dr Kelly might take his own life. I am further satisfied that none of those persons was at fault in not contemplating that Dr Kelly might take his own life. Whatever pressures and strains Dr Kelly was subject to by the decisions and actions taken in the weeks before his death, I am satisfied that no-one realised or should have realised that those pressures and strains might drive him to take his own life or contribute to his decision to do so."

In conclusion I repeat what Lord Hutton said in his Summary, at page 322.

"The communication by the media of information (including information obtained by investigative reporters) on matters of public interest and importance is a vital part of life in a democratic society. However the right to communicate such information is subject to the qualification (which itself exists for the benefit of a democratic society) that false accusations of fact impugning the integrity of others, including politicians, should not be made by the media."

That is how this began: with an accusation that was false then and is false now.

We can have the debate about the war; about WMD; about intelligence. But we do not need to conduct it by accusations of lies and deceit. We can respect each other's motives and integrity even when in disagreement.

Let me repeat the words of Lord Hutton:

"False accusations of fact impugning the integrity of others ... should not be made".

Let those that made them now withdraw them.

Tweede Kamer

Vragen van het lid Karimi (GroenLinks) aan de minister van Buitenlandse Zaken over hoeveelheden chemische of biologische wapens in Irak.

2030407110 - Ingezonden 28 januari 2004

1. Wat is uw oordeel over de opmerkingen van David Kay, voormalig hoofd van de Iraq Survey Group, dat in Irak geen belangrijke hoeveelheden chemische of biologische wapens gevonden zullen worden?¹ Deelt u zijn standpunt? Zo neen, waarom niet?
2. Wat is uw oordeel over de opmerkingen van president Bush in de State of the Union van dinsdag jl. als zouden er juist in Irak tientallen aanwijzingen zijn gevonden voor de ontwikkeling van massavernietigingswapens? Vindt u de verwijzingen van president Bush en het Amerikaans Irak-beleid nog geloofwaardig gezien de uitlatingen van David Kay die als teamleider van de door de Verenigde Staten, het Verenigd Koninkrijk en Australië opgerichte Iraq Survey Group, onderzoek deed naar massavernietigingswapens in Irak? Zo ja, waarom?
3. Hoe duidt u de uitleg van de Amerikaanse minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, Powell, dat Irak mogelijk vóór de oorlog geen massavernietigingswapens bezat en dat het een «open kwestie betreft», met de uitlatingen van president Bush dat er in Irak tientallen aanwijzingen zijn gevonden voor de ontwikkeling van massavernietigingswapens?
4. Hoe verhouden de verklaringen van David Kay zich tot het dreigingsbeeld dat door de regeringen van de Verenigde Staten en het Verenigd Koninkrijk werd gepresenteerd? Deelt u de mening dat de informatie over de aanwezigheid van massavernietigingswapens voor de oorlog in Irak niet gestoeld was op enige kennis en dat naar het lijkt de informatie voor de oorlog niet gedeugd heeft? Zo ja, wat was daar de reden van? Zo neen, waarom niet?
5. Welke verklaring, die van David Kay of die van president Bush, is voor de Nederlandse regering op dit moment geloofwaardig? Heeft dit consequenties voor het Nederlands beleid ten aanzien van non proliferatie en het versterken van de positie van de IAEA?
6. Deelt u de mening dat inzake het Iraakse wapenprogramma, de IAEA- en de VN-wapeninspecteurs achteraf het gelijk aan hun kant hadden? Zo neen, waarom niet?
7. Zijn de verklaringen van David Kay voor de Nederlandse regering reden tot andere inzichten als het gaat om de vermeende aanwezigheid van massavernietigingswapens in Irak? Zo neen, waarom niet?

Noot: 1. NRC-Handelsblad, 24 januari jl.

British American Security Information Council (BASIC)

The Hutton Inquiry Report: Missing the Bigger Picture

BASIC media briefing – 29 January 2004

In a carefully worded and detailed report released yesterday, Lord Hutton set out his findings into the circumstances surrounding the death of the UK government scientist, Dr David Kelly. A summary and assessment of the main findings is appended to this briefing. In short, Hutton:

- Clears the British Government of the central charge that it "sexed up" its Iraqi weapons dossier;
- Exonerates Alastair Campbell, the prime minister's former communications chief, from unduly influencing the Joint Intelligence Committee, chaired by John Scarlett;
- Clears Tony Blair of wrongdoing in the strategy which led to the unmasking of Dr Kelly, although the role of the Ministry of Defence is strongly criticised; and
- Heavily criticises Andrew Gilligan and the BBC for their reporting of the "45 minute claim" and their handling of the Kelly affair.

While the Hutton inquiry was welcome, BASIC has argued from the very beginning that its remit was far too narrow. As Lord Hutton himself confirmed, the question as to whether the intelligence in the government dossier was unreliable fell outside his remit. But during 2002 and 2003, the governments in London and Washington spent considerable energy in persuading their publics that war was necessary because Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. But no weapons have been found, and President Bush now only speaks of "weapons of mass destruction-related program activities".

Did the US and UK governments exaggerate the threat? Or were they themselves misled by available pre-war intelligence on Iraq's WMD capability?

BASIC Director Dr Ian Davis said that:

If Lord Hutton had been given a similarly narrow remit to investigate the sinking of the Titanic, he would have probably found the deck chair attendant culpable, while exonerating the captain for ignoring iceberg warnings and the ship owner for the shortfall in lifeboats. And no doubt the BBC would have been criticised for misreporting the size of the iceberg. It is now time to focus on how the intelligence on Iraq's WMD could be so wrong and how to avoid making the same mistakes with the next secretive tyrant.

Last weekend, BASIC released a major research report that attempted to do just that. In 'Unravelling the Known Unknowns: Why no Weapons of Mass Destruction have been found in Iraq' (see: <http://www.basicint.org/pubs/Research/2004WMD.htm>), the report's authors make several recommendations that address the intelligence and political failings that led the US and the UK to war with Iraq and undermined the legitimacy of the United Nations.

Preventing the spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons is a major concern for our time, but mistakes must be acknowledged, policies reviewed and doctrines amended. The main recommendations from the BASIC Report are also appended to this news release.

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Appendix I:

Summary and Assessment of the Hutton Report

By Andreas Persbo and Ian Davis, BASIC

Introduction

The scope of the Hutton enquiry was to "urgently conduct an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr Kelly". Lord Hutton decided that the question of whether the intelligence in relation to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) "was of sufficient strength and reliability to justify the Government in deciding that Iraq under Saddam Hussein posed such a threat to the safety and interests of the United Kingdom that military action should be taken against that country" was not one that fell within his terms of reference. (para. 9)

The major part of the 740-page report is a review of the evidence presented. Lord Hutton's handling of the evidence, however, gives the impression that where it appears to be inconsistent, he gives ministers and Government officials the benefit of the doubt - rather than the BBC. Despite its rather narrow scope and strict handling of the evidence, Hutton's report nevertheless contains some interesting conclusions.

The report clears the Government of the charge that it "sexed up" its Iraqi weapons dossier

Lord Hutton concluded that the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) had overall responsibility for the drafting of the dossier and that the dossier was published with the full approval of the Committee. (para 467.1.i)

Lord Hutton does not, however, take a stand on how the British intelligence community assessed the 45-minutes claim. He simply states that the intelligence community regarded the information as reliable. And since he concludes that the Government believed that the intelligence was correct, it follows that Andrew Gilligan's claim that the "Government probably knew that the 45 minutes claim was wrong" was an unfounded allegation. (para 467.1.ii) Rather, Lord Hutton deduces that Dr. Kelly had expressed concern about the 45 minutes claim, but those concerns had not been acted upon by the JIC. Instead the JIC approved the wording in the dossier.

Dr. Brian Jones, a senior weapons expert at the Ministry of Defence, also expressed concern over the content of the dossier, but the MoD did not act on his concerns either. In fact, the MoD only believed that the wording of the dossier was too strong and that the dossier should only reflect that "intelligence suggests" that some NBC weapons could be deployed within 45 minutes of an order to use them. (para 467.1.iv)

Lord Hutton argues that the "the term 'sexed-up' is a slang expression, the meaning of which lacks clarity in the context of the discussion of the dossier" and that the term has two possible meanings, namely that:

a) the dossier was embellished with items of intelligence known or believed to be false or unreliable to strengthen the case against Saddam Hussein or,

b) whilst the intelligence contained in the dossier was believed to be reliable, the dossier was drafted in such a way as to make the case against Saddam Hussein as strong as the intelligence contained in it permitted. (para 467.1.viii)

Given his findings, Lord Hutton concludes that the government could be said to have "sexed up" the report only if the term were used in the latter sense. However, since Lord Hutton already had decided that the government believed the 45-minute point to be reliable at the time of the BBC broadcasts, he considered "that the allegation was unfounded as it would have been understood by those who heard the broadcasts to mean that the dossier had been embellished with intelligence known or believed to be false or unreliable, which was not the case."

The report exonerates 10 Downing Street from unduly influencing the JIC

Regarding the involvement of 10 Downing Street in the drafting of the dossier, Lord Hutton states that the Prime Minister's office made it clear to the intelligence community that it "wanted the dossier to be worded to make as strong a case as possible in relation to the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's WMD". Therefore, the Prime Minister's office made written 'suggestions' to the intelligence community, while it at the same time held that "nothing should be stated in the dossier with which the intelligence community were not entirely happy". (para 467.1.v)

Interestingly enough, Lord Hutton concludes that several 'drafting suggestions' were sent to the JIC and that the JIC only accepted those "which were consistent with the intelligence known to the JIC". (para 467.1.vi) This implies that the Prime Minister's office did indeed suggest changes in the draft document inconsistent with current intelligence, but that those changes were rejected by the intelligence community.

Lord Hutton cannot rule out the possibility that the Prime Minister's desire to make as strong a case as possible against Iraq "...may have subconsciously influenced Mr Scarlett and the other members of the JIC to make the wording of the dossier somewhat stronger than it would have been if it had been contained in a normal JIC assessment". Nevertheless, Lord Hutton argues that the intelligence community's intention was to "ensure that the contents of the dossier were consistent with the intelligence available to the JIC". (para 467.1.vii)

The report clears the Prime Minister of any wrongdoing in the strategy which led to the unmasking of Dr Kelly

Lord Hutton never mentions the Prime Minister's office in the context of the strategy eventually leading to the exposure of Dr. Kelly to the media. Instead, he summarily states that there "was no dishonourable or underhand or duplicitous strategy by the Government covertly to leak Dr Kelly's name to the media". (para 4.A.1) In addition, Lord Hutton believes that the MoD's decision to confirm Dr Kelly's name if the correct name were put to it by a reporter was based on the view that it would not be sensible to try to conceal the name as the MoD thought that the press were bound to discover the correct name anyway. (para 4.A.ii) Therefore, Lord Hutton concludes that it was reasonable of the Government to believe that Dr. Kelly's name would eventually be exposed. However, Lord Hutton does criticise the MoD for not "informing Dr Kelly that its press office would confirm his name if a journalist suggested it". (para 467.4.B.i)

The report heavily criticises the BBC for its reporting on the dossier and its handling of the Kelly affair

Lord Hutton concludes that the BBC quoted Dr. Kelly incorrectly in its reporting of the dossier. (para 467.2) He says that the allegations "that the Government probably knew that the 45 minutes claim was wrong or questionable before the dossier was published and that it was not inserted in the first draft of the dossier because it only came from one source and the intelligence agencies did not really believe it was necessarily true" were unfounded. (para 467.3.i)

Lord Hutton then seriously questions the BBC's editing system and points to some faults in the BBC's management of the Government's subsequent complaint on the broadcast. (para 3.ii-iv) Therefore, the BBC Governors "are to be criticised for themselves failing to make more detailed investigations into whether this allegation reported by Mr Gilligan was properly supported by his notes and for failing to give proper and adequate consideration to whether the BBC should publicly acknowledge that this very grave allegation should not have been broadcast". (para 467.3.v.)

Conclusion

Lord Hutton's hearings made a remarkable contribution to open government, but his report has nothing to say on the broader questions on the decision to go to war. This omission, combined with the grave doubts now

circulating around Westminster and the media as to whether the overall balance of the report's conclusions are reasonable, only strengthens the case for an independent inquiry into the intelligence failures that took the UK into an unjustifiable war.

Appendix 2:

Conclusions and Recommendations from BASIC Special Report:

Unravelling the Known Unknowns: Why no Weapons of Mass Destruction have been found in Iraq
by David Isenberg and Dr Ian Davis, BASIC Special Report 2004.1 · January 2004
<http://www.basicint.org/pubs/Research/2004WMD.pdf>.

Introduction

This BASIC Report provides a timely update and summary of the evidence of Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), code for nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) weapons, that has been accumulated by the US inspectors in Iraq and from other public sources over the past eight months. There are four potential explanations for the failure to find banned weapons in Iraq:

Were the missing weapons destroyed or moved out of Iraq prior to the invasion?

This is an unlikely explanation for the general failure to find illicit weapons that had been identified so confidently prior to the war. The logistical problems of transporting or destroying large stocks of chemical and biological weapons just days before the US-led invasion are likely to have precluded this as a realistic option.

Were the weapons destroyed in the bombing campaign or stolen by looters?

Scores of suspect sites, industrial complexes and offices were stripped of valuable documents and equipment. Again, although it is very possible that much evidence for Chemical and Biological Weapons (CBW) would be degraded by looting or military action, all conclusive evidence could not possibly have been destroyed.

Isn't it a question of needing more time to find the weapons?

Tony Blair and some US inspectors continue to argue that more time is needed, and Pentagon officials have said that the search process could take up to a year to complete. That is rather ironic, considering that UNMOVIC said before the war inspections could be wrapped up in a few months. *It has been suggested that Iraq may have concentrated on dual-use programs in recent years - putting chemical and biological production equipment within commercial facilities so that it would not be discovered but could be used "on demand" or "just in time". This seems plausible enough but hardly constitute the imminent threat to the US, UK and the rest of the world that justified the decision to go to war.*

Were the missing weapons destroyed many years ago?

Claims that Iraq destroyed all its illicit chemical and biological weapons in the 1990s - claims that failed to convince the UN inspectors and UK and US intelligence officials prior to the invasion - are now being given greater credence. It is increasingly likely that Iraqi officials were telling the truth. Demetrius Perricos, acting chairman of the UNMOVIC, has pointed out that most of the weapons-related equipment and research publicly documented by the US-led inspection team in Iraq was known to the UN before the invasion.

Was the Iraqi WMD threat overstated by Britain and the United States?

Despite unparalleled searching, nothing has turned up. The evidence is overwhelming that Iraq did not have banned weapons at the time of the invasion. The brutality of Saddam Hussein's regime was not an adequate justification for war, and the US and British authorities did not seriously focus on it until long after the war began and the false justifications began to fall apart. Official statements made immediately before the war suggesting a far more advanced and extensive program need to be reassessed.

Final conclusions as to whether the primary fault lies with US and British intelligence on Iraq's WMD program, or with the part played by senior US and UK figures in interpreting and disseminating that evidence, must be deferred until further information becomes available. However, the case against President Bush already seems clear cut, especially given the recent testimony by former Treasury Sec. Paul O'Neill that the debate over military action against Iraq began as soon as the President took office.

What are the implications of these intelligence and political failings and what are the policy lessons for future challenges involving suspected WMD proliferation?

Acknowledge past mistakes

Tony Blair and George Bush must acknowledge that they were wrong about Iraq's WMD and show that they are taking sweeping action to rectify the concerns that led to this miscalculation. There must also be sufficient political space for political leaders to acknowledge their mistakes. In both the US and UK, the continuing search for hidden agendas and the lack of trust afforded to politicians are among the most corrupting aspects of politics.

Learn the right lessons

Despite continuing instability in Iraq and Afghanistan, both interventions are being lauded by US and British administration officials as political/military successes. While the hard line stance is said to be improving the security situation in other parts of the world, such claims are wildly overstated and mean that important lessons are lost. For example, Libya return to the international community is welcome but lies in the patient diplomatic initiative set in motion long before the recent pursuit of Saddam. The invasion of Iraq appears to have exacerbated the terrorist threat, reversed peace and democracy in parts of the Middle East and undermined the transatlantic alliance, the UN and international law.

Review the role of intelligence

The demands on intelligence gathering and assessment are enormous and the consequences of getting it wrong can be dire. One issue that undoubtedly affected intelligence assessments in Iraq was the prior failure of US and British intelligence to spot Al Qaeda's strategic ambitions, particularly the attack on 9/11. US and British intelligence agencies tended to "worst case" thinking, especially after political pressure was brought to bear. The failure to find any banned weapons makes it more difficult to trust intelligence reports about North Korean, Iranian or other "rogue state" threats. Already, in the crisis over North Korea's nuclear ambitions, China has rejected US intelligence that North Korea has a secret program to enrich uranium for weapons use.

Threats to our security - such as those from NBC proliferation and catastrophic forms of terrorism - are now much more diffuse and debatable. Since most of these threats are developed in secret, the case for maintaining secret specific intelligence is strong. This is not only to provide early warning, but to facilitate diplomatic and other policy responses short of military action. But it is vital to base future non-proliferation and counter-proliferation strategies on carefully collected and analysed open evidence rather than on prejudice or political expediency.

While there will always be a requirement to turn "raw" intelligence data into a document or information for public consumption, all intelligence assessments are doctored to some extent for public consumption. It is also self-evident that all governments have a tendency to edit and shape raw intelligence data to present the case in the best possible light. In the case of Iraq, it is clear that the requirement to persuade took precedence over the requirement to be objective. In future, therefore, public information that draws on intelligence data should have more health warnings and clearly set out the context for and motives behind publication.

Bring the spooks out of the shadows

In Britain at least, the intelligence agencies need greater visibility and accountability. If the existing Intelligence and Security Committee is not up to this task, then a new small oversight committee should be established to vet intelligence gathering and assessment procedures and be responsible for publication of unclassified intelligence reports and related materials. New ways of sharing the raw intelligence data with a broader cross-section of MPs should also be explored.

Politicians also need more detail in order to judge appropriate policy responses - particularly more context as to why something is going on. In the UK at present, almost all policy - as evidenced by the most recent Defence, Foreign and Development White Papers - assumes an established nexus between WMD proliferation, state failure and terrorism. However, all the available evidence suggests that most "states of concern" are actually diminishing their active support for terrorism, perhaps partly in response to the threat of US military force. Only Sudan and Afghanistan's former Taliban regime are known to have materially aided Al Qaeda. In terms of transferring WMD materials to non-state actors, the biggest risk lies in theft or diversion of the huge stockpiles in the existing nuclear states.

Re-examine the doctrine of pre-emption

Over reliance on intelligence makes the doctrine of pre-emption a flawed and dangerous instrument of foreign policy. Greater caution has to be exercised in thinking about pre-emptive warfare and its consequences. Moreover, if pre-emption became widely acceptable, it could encourage other countries that fear an assault to attack their rivals first, pre-empting the pre-emptor and escalating a conflict that might have been resolved without force. Or a nation under a sudden attack might choose to deploy CBW or nuclear weapons it otherwise might not use. When much of the world is working toward common understandings about the legal use of force, the very act of one country pre-emptively attacking another carries troubling echoes of vigilante justice.

Return UN Inspectors to Iraq

International inspections and monitoring actually worked effectively in Iraq. The return of the UN inspectors would confer some much needed legitimacy to the post-conflict search for weapons, and also help to re-engage the wider international community in the reconstruction effort. UNMOVIC should also be given the task of monitoring in Iraq on an ongoing basis once the 'coalition' military forces have left.

Create a permanent international cadre of inspectors

The British and US governments should also support the establishment of a broader mandate within UNMOVIC, as suggested by Hans Blix. Over the years, UNMOVIC has acquired much experience in the verification and inspection of biological weapons and missiles as well as chemical weapons, but only in Iraq. Its trained scientific cadres could be mobilized to provide the Security Council and other concerned actors with a capability for ad hoc inspections and monitoring elsewhere.

Support multilateral and international law-based solutions to WMD proliferation

Non-proliferation and arms control remain essential elements in the fight against further WMD proliferation. International arms control regimes must, however, be reinforced and adapted to current developments, both technological and political. We have reached a pivotal moment in inter-state relations with a real opportunity to shape a new world order based on the rule of law. The US and UK should be working to write those rules and get them implemented. Direct action will sometimes be necessary, including military action in extreme circumstances, to stop the rules being broken. But such action should only be undertaken within the rules of international law, and preferably with Security Council authorisation.

Think about WMD closer to home

WMD threat reduction should begin at home. It is not just a 'rogue' state problem. Existing nuclear-armed states (including the US and UK) should reaffirm their intention to implement the 13 disarmament steps agreed to in 2000 under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The US Senate's decision in May 2003 to at least partially rescind a ten-year ban on funding research and development of new 'low-yield' nuclear weapons was unnecessary and destabilising. Efforts to expand threat reduction programmes, such as the G-8 Global Partnership Against Weapons of Mass Destruction, to new regions and countries, such as North Korea, the Middle East and South Asia, should be actively supported.

Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken

Beantwoording vragen van het lid Wilders over de mogelijke aanwezigheid van Iraakse massavernietigingswapens in Syrië

DVB/NN-036/04 – 2 februari 2004

Antwoorden van de heer Bot, minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, op de vragen lid Wilders (VVD) over de mogelijke aanwezigheid van Iraakse massavernietigingswapens in Syrië (ingezonden 8 januari 2004).

Vraag 1

Heeft u kennisgenomen van het artikel 'Vernietigingswapens Irak verstopt in Syrië'?'¹

Antwoord

Ja.

Vraag 2

Is het waar dat in Syrië massavernietigingswapens van Irak verborgen zijn? Zo ja, welke massavernietigingswapens betreft het hier? Wat is uw oordeel hierover?

Vraag 3

Was de Nederlandse regering al eerder op de hoogte van deze informatie? Is deze informatie in internationaal verband al eerder ter sprake gekomen? Zo ja, wanneer en welke gevolgen zijn hier in bilateraal en multilateraal verband aan gegeven?

Vraag 4

Is een firma gelieerd aan de Syrische presidentiële familie betrokken bij het verbergen van Iraakse massavernietigingswapens en bij eerdere smokkelacties van wapens en olie? Zo ja, deelt u de mening dat dit onacceptabel is? Op welke wijze zult u uw ongenoegen hierover aan de Syrische regering in bilateraal en multilateraal verband overbrengen?

Vraag 5

Indien het gestelde onder vraag 4 op waarheid berust, welke politieke consequenties heeft dit voor de relatie met Syrië zowel in bilateraal als in multilateraal verband? Deelt u de mening dat in dat geval een Euromediterrane overeenkomst met Syrië niet aan de orde kan zijn?

Antwoord

Al enige tijd wordt met regelmaat geopperd dat Iraakse massavernietigingswapens in Syrië zouden zijn verborgen. Hetzelfde geldt voor het gerucht dat een aan de Syrische presidentiële familie gelieerde firma daarbij betrokken zou zijn geweest alsook bij de smokkel van wapens of olie naar Irak. De regering beschikt echter niet over informatie uit eigen bron om dergelijke berichten te kunnen bevestigen of te ontkennen. Het verbinden van politieke consequenties aan de relatie met Syrië is dan ook niet aan de orde.

Zoals ook door de Amerikaanse Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, Colin Powell, onlangs in een interview werd opgemerkt, is het moeilijk in te zien welk belang Syrië erbij zou hebben massavernietigingswapens voor Irak te verbergen en daarmee zelf een politiek risico te lopen.²

In EU kader insisteert Nederland op dit moment wel op opname van een stevige non-proliferatie clausule in een Associatie Akkoord met Syrië. Daarin zou onder andere het belang van nakoming van de reeds bestaande internationale verplichtingen op dit terrein moeten worden onderstreept, en zou Syrië moeten worden aangespoord om toe te treden tot die verdragen waar het nog geen partij bij is en om effectieve exportcontrole wetgeving aan te nemen.

Noten:

1. De Telegraaf, 5 januari jl.; 2. Interview met WPNT Radio (Philadelphia) op 21 januari 2004

Tweede Kamer

2030407450

Vragen van het lid Karimi (GroenLinks) aan de ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken en van Defensie over mogelijk onderzoek naar veiligheidsdiensten in de VS

2030407450 - Ingezonden 2 februari 2004

1. Heeft u het artikel gelezen «Kay wil onderzoek naar veiligheidsdiensten VS»?¹
2. Herinnert u zich het antwoord van uw ambtsvoorganger waarin deze stelt «De regering heeft telkens een eigen afweging gemaakt ten aanzien van de haar ter beschikking staande informatie»², waaronder informatie verstrekt door de Verenigde Staten en het Verenigd Koninkrijk en andere NAVO-bondgenoten, de presentatie in de VN-Veiligheidsraad op 5 februari 2003 door de Amerikaanse minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, Powell, en het rapport van de Britse regering inzake massavernietigingswapens in Irak?
3. Hoe duidt u het antwoord van uw ambtsvoorganger in het licht van de recente uitlatingen van het voormalige hoofd van de Iraq Survey Group, David Kay, dat de Amerikaanse inlichtingendiensten gefaald hebben bij het verwerven van adequate en juiste inlichtingen over de aanwezigheid van massavernietigingswapens in Irak? Welke conclusies trekt u ten aanzien van het werk van de Nederlandse inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten? Wat is uw oordeel ten aanzien van de informatie die beschikbaar werd gesteld aan de Nederlandse regering en uiteindelijk de basis vormde voor de politieke steun die de Nederlandse regering gaf aan de oorlog tegen Irak?
4. In hoeverre hebben de Nederlandse inlichtingendiensten in de kwestie Irak vooral gevaren op inlichtingen die zijn verkregen van de Amerikaanse en Britse inlichtingendiensten? Vindt u nog steeds dat de door de Nederlandse inlichtingendiensten geleverde en geanalyseerde informatie adequaat was?
5. Deelt u de mening dat de Nederlandse inlichtingendiensten te voorbarig Amerikaanse inlichtingen over de aanwezigheid van massavernietigingswapens in Irak overgenomen hebben, gezien de fundamentele kritiek van Kay op het functioneren van de Amerikaanse inlichtingendiensten? Vindt er een evaluatie van het werk van de Nederlandse veiligheids- en inlichtingendiensten plaats? Zo ja, bent u bereid de Kamer over de uitkomsten te informeren? Zo neen, waarom niet?
6. Bent u bereid tot een onafhankelijk onderzoek naar de wijze waarop de Nederlandse veiligheids- en inlichtingendiensten informatie over massavernietigingswapens in Irak vergaard en geanalyseerd hebben? Zo neen, waarom niet?

Toelichting: Deze vragen dienen ter aanvulling op eerdere vragen terzake van hetzelfde lid, ingezonden 28 januari 2004.

Noten: 1. de Volkskrant, 29 januari jl.; 2 Tweede Kamer, vergaderjaar 2002–2003, Aanhangsel 2903.

Bush Announces Independent Commission to Study WMD Intelligence

Group is to issue report by March 31, 2005

6 February 2004

President Bush announced February 6 that he was forming a nine-member independent commission to look at U.S. intelligence capabilities, especially intelligence about weapons of mass destruction.

The panel will be co-chaired by former Virginia Democratic senator and governor Charles Robb and retired federal judge Laurence Silberman.

Bush said he had named five other members to the panel -- Arizona Republican senator John McCain; Lloyd Cutler, former White House counsel to Presidents Carter and Clinton; Rick Levin, the president of Yale University; Admiral Bill Studeman, the former deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency; and Judge Pat Wald, a former judge on the D.C. Court of Appeals.

Two members still are to be chosen, the president said.

Bush went to the White House press briefing room to personally make the announcement, but took no questions.

"The commission I have appointed today will examine intelligence on weapons of mass destruction and related 21st century threats, and issue specific recommendations to ensure our capabilities are strong," the president said.

The commission, he explained, will compare the findings of the Iraq Survey Group, the U.S.-led group searching for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, with information the United States had prior to going to war with Iraq in 2003.

The commission also "will review our intelligence on weapons programs in countries such as North Korea and Iran" and "will examine our intelligence on the threats posed by Libya and Afghanistan before recent changes in those countries," Bush said.

Members of the commission will issue their report by March 31st, 2005.

Before making the announcement, Bush met with Charles Duelfer, the new head of the Iraq Survey Group and, according to White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan, told him that he "wants him to find the truth ... it is important that we know all the facts."

Following is President Bush's statement on the independent commission:

Statement by the President

6 February 2004

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon. Today, by executive order, I am creating an independent commission, chaired by Governor and former Senator Chuck Robb, Judge Laurence Silberman, to look at American intelligence capabilities, especially our intelligence about weapons of mass destruction.

Last week, our former chief weapons inspector, David Kay, reported that Saddam Hussein's regime had weapons programs and activities in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions and was a gathering threat to the world. Dr. Kay also stated that some pre-war intelligence assessments by America and other nations about Iraq's weapons stockpiles have not been confirmed. We are determined to figure out why.

We're also determined to make sure that American intelligence is as accurate as possible for every challenge in the future. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses the most serious of dangers to the peace of the world. Chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorist or terror regimes could bring catastrophic harm to America and to our friends.

It is the policy of the United States government to oppose that threat by any means necessary. Our efforts against proliferation begin with and depend upon accurate and thorough intelligence. The men and women of our intelligence community and intelligence officers who work for our friends and allies around the world are dedicated professionals engaged in difficult and complex work.

America's enemies are secretive, they are ruthless, and they are resourceful. And in tracking and disrupting their activities, our nation must bring to bear every tool and advantage at our command. In Iraq, America and our coalition enforce the clearly stated demands of the world -- that a violent regime prove its own disarmament. In the aftermath of September the 11th, 2001, I will not take risks with the lives and security of the American people by assuming the goodwill of dictators.

And now, as we move forward in our efforts to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, we must stay ahead of constantly changing intelligence challenges. The stakes for our country could not be higher, and our standard of intelligence gathering and analysis must be equal to that of the challenge.

The commission I have appointed today will examine intelligence on weapons of mass destruction and related 21st century threats and issue specific recommendations to ensure our capabilities are strong. The commission will compare what the Iraq Survey Group learns with the information we had prior to our Operation Iraqi Freedom. It will review our intelligence on weapons programs in countries such as North Korea and Iran. It will examine our intelligence on the threats posed by Libya and Afghanistan before recent changes in those countries. Members of the commission will issue their report by March 31, 2005.

I've ordered all departments and agencies, including our intelligence agencies, to assist the commission's work. The commission will have full access to the findings of the Iraq Survey Group. In naming this commission, these men as co-chairmen of the commission, I'm also naming, today, Senator John McCain; Lloyd Cutler, former White House Counsel to Presidents Carter and Clinton; Rick Levin, the President of Yale University; Admiral Bill Studeman, the former Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency; Judge Pat Wald, a former judge on the D.C. Court of Appeals. Those are seven members named. The commission calls for up to nine members. As we vet and find additional members to fill out the nine, we will let you know.

Thank you for your attention.

Tweede Kamer

Vragen van het lid Karimi (GroenLinks) aan de minister van Buitenlandse Zaken over de Nederlandse en Israëlische inlichtingendiensten.

2030407800 – Ingezonden 6 februari 2004

1. Heeft u kennisgenomen van het artikel «Israël misleidde VS over gevaar Irak»?¹
2. Is er ten aanzien van Irak sinds de aanval van Irak op Kuwait in 1998 sprake van samenwerking c.q. informatieuitwisseling tussen de Nederlandse en Israëlische inlichtingendiensten?
3. Hebben de Israëlische inlichtingendiensten de Nederlandse regering in afgelopen jaren, in het bijzonder sinds 11 september 2001 en in de aanloop naar besluitvorming over een aanval op Irak, verteld wat hun informatie was over de massavernietigingswapens, de productiecapaciteiten en de overbrengingscapaciteiten van Irak? Zo ja, wanneer en wat was de inhoud van die informatie?
4. Heeft op enigerlei wijze op enig moment sinds 11 september 2001 informatieuitwisseling met Israëlische inlichtingendiensten plaatsgevonden betreffende dreiging van Irak? Zo ja, wanneer en wat was de inhoud van de informatie die de Nederlandse regering van Israëlische inlichtingendiensten heeft ontvangen?
5. Welke rol heeft de informatie van de inlichtingendienst uit Israël gehad op de positiebepaling van de Nederlandse regering om de oorlog van de Verenigde Staten en het Verenigd Koninkrijk tegen Irak te steunen?
6. Hebben Israëlische politici in hun contacten de Nederlandse regering geïnformeerd over hun inschatting van het gevaar van massavernietigingswapens van Saddam Hussein voor de staat Israël? Wat was de inhoud van die informatie? Hoe heeft de Nederlandse regering die informatie toen beoordeeld en wat is uw oordeel nu gezien de verklaring van wapeninspecteur Kay?
7. Als het waar is dat de Israëlische inlichtingendiensten wisten dat Irak geen massavernietigingswapens had en deze informatie eigen bondgenoten en bevriende staten hebben onthouden, wat betekent dit voor de betrouwbaarheid van de vriendschap van Israël?
8. Is het waar dat Nederland voorafgaand aan de inval in Irak door Amerikanen is gevraagd om een patriotsquadron te stationeren bij de Jordaanse hoofdstad Amman? Is het waar dat het verzoek later werd ingetrokken? Zo ja, welk reden werd gegeven om het verzoek in te trekken? Wat was de Nederlandse reactie in beide gevallen?

Noot: 1. Het Parool, 4 februari jl.

Bush Says Saddam Posed Threat Through Ability to Produce WMD

Invasion of Iraq justified, he says on NBC's "Meet the Press"

By Bridget Hunter – 8 February 2004

The available intelligence in the months preceding the invasion of Iraq in 2003 "clearly said Saddam Hussein was a threat to America," President Bush said in a television interview broadcast February 8.

Although intelligence relating to Iraqi weapon stockpiles may not have been accurate, the United States responded to a real threat because Iraq had the capacity to produce chemical and biological weapons, had funded terrorism, and had the potential to develop nuclear weapons, Bush said on the NBC news program "Meet the Press" with Tim Russert.

The president said a commission he recently appointed "to look into intelligence failures regarding the Iraq war and our entire intelligence community" will take a "lessons learned" approach that is intended to improve the collection and analysis of intelligence.

"Intelligence is a vital part of fighting and winning the war against the terrorists," according to Bush, who added that the goal of the commission is to ensure "the intelligence services provide as good a product as possible for future presidents."

The president explained that the March 2005 deadline for the commission's report was set "because we didn't want it to be hurried."

In response to a question regarding whether he had brought the nation to war under false pretenses, the president responded that he had based his decision "on the best intelligence possible ... intelligence that not only our analysts thought was valid but analysts from other countries thought were valid." Bush added that the decision was made "in the context of the war against terror," in which every threat and the potential harm to America had to be taken seriously.

"I'm a war president.... And I see dangers that exist, and it's important for us to deal with them," he said.

The president stressed the potential for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and pointed to that country's weapon production capacity as proof of the legitimacy of the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's regime.

"David Kay [the former chief weapons inspector in Iraq] did report to the American people that Saddam had the capacity to make weapons.... He [Saddam Hussein] was a dangerous man in a dangerous part of the world," Bush said.

"I believe that it is essential that when we see a threat, we deal with those threats before they become imminent. It's too late if they become imminent ... and so that's why I made the decision I made," he added.

When asked whether it was appropriate to "launch a preemptive war without ironclad absolute intelligence," the president responded that there is no such thing as "ironclad absolutely solid evidence" when dealing with a dictatorship. "The evidence I had was the best possible evidence," he said.

Bush cited U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441 as proof that the United States was not alone in judging Saddam Hussein dangerous. "The world thought he was dangerous and needed to be disarmed," he said.

The president also elaborated on the differences between the situation in Iraq and that in North Korea, explaining the United States "needed to use force in Iraq and not in North Korea, because we had run the diplomatic string in Iraq." Bush said that diplomacy in North Korea "is just beginning," and said "[w]e are making good progress."

When questioned regarding the role of the United Nations in rebuilding Iraq, President Bush said the United Nations would play a "vital role," and added that "of course we want the international community to participate" in reconstructing that country.

During the hour-long interview, the president also responded to questions on a number of domestic issues, including the American economy and the upcoming 2004 presidential election.

Kay: WMD search shows intelligence weakness

28 January 2004

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Former top U.S. weapons inspector David Kay told members of the Senate Wednesday that the failure to turn up weapons of mass destruction in Iraq exposed weaknesses in America's intelligence-gathering apparatus.

"We've had a number of surprises," Kay told reporters after meeting behind closed doors with the Senate Intelligence Committee. "It's quite clear we need capabilities that we do not have with regard to intelligence."

Senators have been anxious to speak to Kay, one of a number of U.S. officials who have recently adjusted their positions on Saddam Hussein's military capabilities. The Bush administration cited a threat from such weapons as a principle justification for invading Iraq and toppling Saddam last year.

As special adviser to CIA Director George Tenet, Kay was chosen last year as the Iraq Survey Group leader in part because he was convinced weapons would be found. "My suspicions are that we'll find in the chemical and biological areas, in fact, I think there may be some surprises coming rather quickly in that area," he said on CNN in June.

Now, Kay has said that he believes large stocks of weapons are unlikely to be found. And he blamed faulty intelligence for misguided assessments.

Kay resigned Friday, saying he was stepping down because resources were being shifted away from the search.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John Warner, R-Virginia, called a hearing of his panel Wednesday to receive Kay's views directly, even though Kay no longer has an official government position.

Before sitting down with Warner's committee, Kay told reporters he believes the work of the Iraq survey group must continue.

Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-West Virginia, said: "Tis a quandary. We're at war and people are dying every day. We went to war on the presumption that we were going to be attacked very soon if we didn't do something and the reign of terror would come from weapons of mass destruction. I'm still in search of those weapons of mass destruction."

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Pat Roberts, R-Kansas, said his committee has finished a draft report on its inquiry into the prewar intelligence and plans to get it to members next week.

He said it appears the problem is with some intelligence agencies and not the policy-makers. "Anyone who believes otherwise has not done their homework and certainly was not listening to Dr. Kay," he said.

Sen. Trent Lott, R-Mississippi, said there's no question that the intelligence information the U.S. received was not all accurate.

"I still have a fundamental question that nobody has quite answered yet," Lott said. "We know he had biological and chemical weapons in the early 1990s. What happened to them? Did they move to another country? Were they destroyed? There are indications that maybe some of them have been eliminated."

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Tuesday that it's premature to speculate about "why we were wrong," and rejected Kay's statement that the work in Iraq is 85 percent done.

"Even if we are 85 percent done, what could you have in that 15 percent of information?" the U.S. official said. "The amount of chemical and biological agent that would be required is extremely small in terms of physical footprint. It could be easily hidden."

While inspectors have been unable to unearth weapons of mass destruction, they have found new evidence that Saddam's regime quietly destroyed some stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons in the mid-1990s, Kay told The Washington Post in an interview in Tuesday editions.

Kay said the evidence consisted of contemporaneous documents and confirmations from interviews with Iraqis and indicated Saddam did make efforts to disarm well before Bush began making the case for war.

Democratic presidential contenders have grabbed onto Kay's conclusion on the absence of banned weapons.

"The administration did cook the books," Howard Dean told reporters Tuesday. "I think that's pretty serious."

Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-South Dakota, has called for a new investigation by an independent commission, or a broadened probe by the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Kay's resignation and subsequent statements come as many in the administration subtly are changing their assertions about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, including President Bush. In last year's State of the Union, Bush called Saddam a "dictator who is assembling the world's most dangerous weapons."

In the State of the Union this month, Bush spoke of Saddam's programs, rather than weapons: "Had we failed to act, the dictator's weapons of mass destruction programs would continue to this day. "

When asked Tuesday by reporters about Kay's assertions, Bush didn't say that the banned weapons would eventually be discovered: "We know from years of intelligence -- not only our own intelligence services, but other intelligence gathering organizations -- that he had weapons -- after all, he used them."

Intelligence officials say the probe will take time, and plenty of work lies ahead. Kay and others have blamed looting immediately after the war on the difficulties in painting a picture. But Kay also has said that flawed intelligence from 1998 forward -- when United Nations inspectors withdrew from Iraq -- contributed to the mistakes.

Last February, Secretary of State Colin Powell told the United Nations Security Council that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction that posed "real and present dangers."

This weekend, Powell began to backpedal, saying the United States thought Saddam had banned weapons, but "we had questions that needed to be answered."

CBSNews

Bush Wants WMD 'Facts,' No Inquiry

30 January 2004

Washington - President Bush said Friday "I want to know the facts" about any intelligence failures concerning Saddam Hussein's alleged cache of forbidden weapons but he declined to endorse calls for an independent investigation.

The issue of an independent commission has blossomed into an election-year problem for the president, with Democrats and Republicans alike supporting the idea. Former chief weapons inspector David Kay has concluded that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction, which Mr. Bush had cited as a rationale for going to war against Iraq.

Mr. Bush said he wants to be able to compare the administration's prewar intelligence with what will be learned by inspectors who are now searching for weapons in Iraq. There is no deadline for those inspectors, the Iraq Survey Group, to complete their work.

"One thing is for certain, one thing we do know ... that Saddam Hussein was a danger, he was growing danger," the president told reporters during a brief question and answer session after a meeting with economists.

Parting company with many of his fellow Republicans, Sen. John McCain of Arizona said Thursday he wants an independent commission to take a sweeping look at recent intelligence failures.

In an interview with The Associated Press, McCain said he believes the public needs an assessment that won't be clouded by partisan division. McCain said he is seeking a full-scale look not only at apparently botched intelligence on Iraq's weapons capabilities, but also flawed estimations of Iraq, North Korea and Libya and the faulty assessments from other Western intelligence services.

"I am absolutely convinced that one is necessary," McCain said, "because this is a very serious issue and we need to not only know what happened, but know what steps are necessary to prevent the United States from ever being misinformed again."

Some of the Democratic candidates for president said they support an independent commission.

Former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean criticized Vice President Dick Cheney, saying that he berated CIA operatives because he did not like their intelligence reports.

"It seems to me that the vice president of the United States therefore influenced the very reports that the president then used to decide to go to war and to ask Congress for permission to go to war," Dean said during a campaign debate Thursday night.

North Carolina Sen. John Edwards said his support for the Iraq war was based on years of intelligence briefings and evidence of Saddam Hussein's atrocities against his own people. He supports an independent commission "that will have credibility and that the American people will trust, about why there is this discrepancy about what we were told and what's actually been found there."

Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry said that whether Cheney berated CIA officials to shape the intelligence that he wanted is "a very legitimate question. ... There's an enormous question about the exaggeration by this administration."

But Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Pat Roberts, R-Kan., has expressed frustration with those who suggest an outside investigation is needed before his committee has a chance to complete an inquiry now underway. Senate Armed Service Chairman John Warner, R-Va., supports letting the committee finish its work.

The House and Senate intelligence committees that have been looking into the issue for the past seven months have unearthed failures in prewar intelligence similar to those identified by Kay, The Washington Post reported Friday.

The newspaper quoted unidentified congressional officials as saying the committees believe CIA analysts never seriously considered the possibility that Saddam no longer possessed weapons of mass destruction. But Republicans and Democrats on the two intelligence committees disagree over whether the fault lies with the analysts or with the policymakers that used murky intelligence as a basis for war.

National security adviser Condoleezza Rice on Thursday said that existing efforts to learn the extent of Saddam's weapons arsenal are sufficient while downplaying the discrepancy between prewar intelligence and what has (or hasn't) been found in Iraq.

"I think that what we have is evidence that there are differences between what we knew going in and what we found on the ground. That's not surprising," Rice said on the CBS News Early Show.

"In a country that was as closed and secretive as Iraq, a country that was doing everything that it could to deceive the United Nations, to deceive the world," Rice said.

"I would remind people that in Libya and Iran, we have found we probably significantly underestimated the significance of those weapons of mass destruction programs. So in part, this is a problem of dealing with very closed societies that are doing everything that they can to hide the extent and nature of their programs."

In a speech in Merrimack, N.H. on Thursday, Mr. Bush called the invasion of Iraq a "war for our security" and said he welcomed a debate over his reasons for launching the war, in which at least 519 Americans have died.

"We'll debate about the decision, and I look forward to those discussions with the American people," Mr. Bush said. "I'm absolutely convinced it was the right thing to do. And I look forward to explaining it clearly to the American people."

Kay and some Democrats, including Senate minority leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., have also stated the need for an outside investigation into the intelligence community. Along with the Senate inquiry, several retired intelligence officers have delivered a review to CIA Director George Tenet on the performance of the CIA and other agencies.

McCain, who was one of the loudest voices in a successful campaign to form a commission on the Sept. 11 attacks, said he spoke to administration officials, but doesn't know what — if any — action the White House will take. McCain believes the investigation would take over a year, removing the findings from election-year politics.

McCain said the commission should consider a series of questions: Were the estimates wrong? If so, why? Who is responsible? What steps need to be taken to ensure that the president has accurate intelligence information?

CNN

U.S. acknowledges Iraq intel flaws

30 January 2004

WASHINGTON (Reuters) --U.S. President George W. Bush's national security adviser acknowledged on Thursday there may have been flaws in prewar intelligence about Iraq but brushed aside calls for an independent investigation into the matter.

"I think that what we have is evidence that there are differences between what we knew going in and what we found on the ground," Condoleezza Rice told CBS.

She added, "That's not surprising in a country that was as closed and secretive as Iraq, a country that was doing everything that it could to deceive the United Nations, to deceive the world."

Bush based his decision to invade Iraq last year on what he called a "grave and gathering danger" posed by Iraq's weapons. He acted without U.N. backing, cutting short efforts by U.N. inspectors to check out the weapons reports in Iraq.

In a series of television interviews, Rice defended Bush's decision and said the United States may never learn the whole truth about Iraq's arms capabilities because of looting, which U.S. forces failed to stop immediately after the invasion.

For months, administration officials had expressed confidence banned weapons would be found.

But after the top U.S. weapons hunter concluded Iraq had no stockpiles of biological or chemical weapons, the White House said on Monday it would review prewar intelligence. On Tuesday, Bush tempered his prewar insistence that Iraq had an arsenal of banned weapons.

The weapons issue is a hot topic in campaigning for the November presidential election, with Democrats saying Bush misled the country over the level of the Iraqi threat.

Bush's main international ally over Iraq, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, has come under similar pressure from political opponents but Blair drew comfort on Wednesday from an independent report rejecting a BBC claim that Blair had hyped the threat from Baghdad.

The White House acknowledged last year that it had been a mistake to accuse Iraq of trying to buy African uranium. The allegation -- included in Bush's State of the Union address -- was found to have been based partly on forged documents.

"When you are dealing with secretive regimes that want to deceive, you're never going to be able to be positive" about intelligence, Rice told NBC on Thursday.

She said the U.S. team hunting for Iraq's weapons would "gather all of the facts that we possibly can," leaving open the possibility that its findings may be inconclusive.

She blamed gaps in data on looters who sacked government offices after the invasion and on ousted Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, who she said was so secretive that "he allowed the world to continue to wonder" what weapons he still had.

Critics say the administration did little to secure sensitive sites immediately after the invasion, undercutting efforts to find the evidence of weapons.

David Kay, who had led the U.S. team hunting for Iraq's weapons, warned on Wednesday of an "unresolved ambiguity" about Saddam's weapons capabilities partly due to the looting of documents, laboratories and military bases.

He said he would support an independent investigation into the intelligence.

Rice said the Iraq Survey Group, which is continuing to search for weapons in Iraq, should complete its work and that the intelligence community had already launched its own investigation.

Gen. John Abizaid, head of the U.S. military's Central Command, stressed the importance of pressing on with the weapons search.

"If we did get the WMD wrong, OK, I understand that. But I can tell you that there are certain things that we got extremely right which allowed us to conduct a campaign that was pretty quick and, you know, pretty decisive in a very short period of time," he told reporters.

Rice said the administration would not change its position that Saddam had to go. "The judgment is going to be the same: This is a dangerous man in a dangerous part of the world and it was time to do something about this threat," she said.

Observer

US officials knew in May Iraq possessed no WMD

Blair comes under pressure as Americans admit it was widely known that Saddam had no chemical arsenal
By Peter Beaumont, Gaby Hinsliff and Paul Harris – 1 February 2004

Senior American officials concluded at the beginning of last May that there were no weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, The Observer has learnt.

Intelligence sources, policy makers and weapons inspectors familiar with the details of the hunt for WMD told The Observer it was widely known that Iraq had no WMD within three weeks of Baghdad falling, despite the assertions of senior Bush administration figures and the Prime Minister, Tony Blair.

The new revelation came as White House sources indicated that President George Bush was considering establishing an investigation into the intelligence, despite rejecting an inquiry the previous day.

The disclosure that US military survey teams sent to visit suspected sites of WMD, and intelligence interviews with Iraqi scientists and officials, had concluded so quickly that no major weapons or facilities would be found is certain to produce serious new embarrassment on both sides of the Atlantic.

According to the time-line provided by the US sources, it would mean that Number 10 would have been aware of the US doubts that weapons would be found before the outbreak of the feud between Number 10 and Andrew Gilligan, and before the exposure of Dr David Kelly as Gilligan's source for his claims that the September dossier had been 'sexed up' to exaggerate the Iraqi threat.

It would suggest too that some officials who defended the 24 September dossier in evidence before the Hutton inquiry did so in the knowledge that the pre-war intelligence was probably wrong. Indeed, comments from a senior Washington official first casting serious doubt on the existence of WMD were put to Downing Street by The Observer - and rejected - as early as 3 May.

Among those interviewed by The Observer was a very senior US intelligence official serving during the war against Iraq with an intimate knowledge of the search for Iraq's WMD.

'We had enough evidence at the beginning of May to start asking, "where did we go wrong?,"' he said last week. 'We had already made the judgment that something very wrong had happened [in May] and our confidence was shaken to its foundations.'

The source, a career intelligence official who spoke on condition of anonymity, was also scathing about the massive scale of the failure of intelligence over Iraq both in the US and among its foreign allies - alleging that the intelligence community had effectively suppressed dissenting views and intelligence.

The claim is confirmed by other sources, as well as figures like David Albright, a former UN nuclear inspector with close contacts in both the world of weapons inspection and intelligence.

'It was known in May,' Albright said last week, 'that no one was going to find large stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. The only people who did not know that fact was the public.'

The new disclosure follows the claims last week by Dr David Kay, the former head of the Iraq Survey Group, a hawk who believed Iraq retained prohibited weapons, that he now believed that the alleged stockpiles 'had never existed'.

It also comes as the House and Senate intelligence committees, which have been hearing evidence on why no weapons have been found, prepare to publish their reports this month.

Although it is expected that they will conclude that there was no political interference in the intelligence process, as some critics have alleged, the reports are expected to be damning about the quality of the intelligence that led to war.

The revelation is likely to lead to increased pressure both in Britain and the United States for an inquiry into the intelligence marshalled in favour of war.

In recent weeks Bush has come under concerted pressure over the issue, with Democratic presidential candidates accusing both him and Vice-President Dick Cheney of manipulating pre-war intelligence to make the case for invasion.

White House sources said that President Bush is considering the formation of an independent panel to investigate pre-war intelligence on Iraq that he used to justify going to war.

Aides are discussing it with congressional officials, sources familiar with the discussions said last night.

Bush had rejected an independent investigation amid White House fears of a political witch-hunt by Democrats hoping to unseat him in elections this year, but began in recent days to reconsider the position.

'I want the American people to know that I, too, want to know the facts,' Bush told reporters on Friday.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said a range of options for such a panel was being explored and that an agreement was hoped for soon.

The White House would not comment.

Arizona Republican Senator John McCain broke party ranks to join Democratic demands for an independent probe into how US intelligence got it wrong, given the failure by searchers to find weapons of mass destruction.

Washington Post

Bush to Back Probe of Iraq Data, Officials Say

Reported Shift Comes Amid Pressure From Hill

By Dana Milbank and Dana Priest – 1 February 2004

President Bush has agreed to support an independent inquiry into the prewar intelligence that he used to assert that Saddam Hussein was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction, Republican and congressional sources said yesterday.

The shift by the White House, which had previously maintained that any such inquiry should wait until a more exhaustive weapons search has been completed, came after pressure from lawmakers in both parties and from the former chief U.S. weapons inspector in Iraq.

There was no official confirmation from the White House yesterday, but sources in the government said Bush's announcement of support for an independent commission is imminent. Vice President Cheney has begun to call lawmakers on the intelligence committees, who have encouraged the administration to proceed with an inquiry.

The White House has not settled on what type of independent review it would favor and has not backed any specific plan.

Bush's shift in position represents an effort to get out in front of a potentially dangerous issue that threatens to cloud his reelection bid. An independent commission would not necessarily absolve Bush politically, congressional officials said, but it could quiet the current furor and delay calls for top-level resignations at the CIA and elsewhere until after the elections, diluting the potency of the issue for Democrats.

David Kay, who resigned his post nine days ago, testified Wednesday that "we were almost all wrong" about Iraq's weapons programs. He said it was unlikely that stockpiles would be found in Iraq.

Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, said yesterday that convening a blue-ribbon panel is important, because "we're in danger now of seeing the politicization of the whole intelligence issue."

The panel, Roberts said, would have to be bipartisan and include only recognized experts whose recommendations could "leapfrog" over the current debate and quickly tackle the issue of how to fix intelligence deficiencies. "It would be helpful not only politically, but also for the nation," Roberts said.

Sources said Bush intends to endorse a commission in the coming days while remaining publicly agnostic on the accuracy of the intelligence that the administration used to take the nation to war in Iraq. Though some in the White House favor a frank admission that the intelligence was wrong -- something lawmakers and inspectors have given -- Bush and his aides have so far concluded that would only increase the pressure on them.

The details about the commission are not yet firm, including how much authority it would have to investigate not just the intelligence-gathering apparatus, but also how the administration used the intelligence it was given.

By joining the effort to create the commission rather than allowing Congress to develop its framework on its own, Bush will likely have more leverage to keep the focus on the CIA and other intelligence agencies rather than on the White House. Democrats have asserted that Bush exaggerated the intelligence on Iraq to justify going war, a theory that was boosted by recent allegations from former Treasury secretary Paul H. O'Neill that Bush had contemplated Hussein's ouster long before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Politically, the decision to back an independent probe contains substantial risks for Bush. It means the White House will have to surrender some control over the timing of the investigation, raising the possibility that such a panel could release information about the intelligence failures before the Nov. 2 elections. But the pressure on Bush to accept an independent inquiry became intense after Kay, in testimony on Wednesday, said it is "important to acknowledge failure" and that his own view is that "it is going to take an outside inquiry, both to do it and to give yourself and the American people the confidence that you have done it."

Six separate panels -- the House and Senate intelligence committees, a CIA internal review team, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, the newly refocused CIA-led Iraq Survey Group and an army team -- are already investigating the prewar intelligence process.

Roberts' committee is likely to be the first to complete its work, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of March. According to congressional officials, it will also likely be the most hard-hitting, calling into question the competence not only of mid-level CIA analysts but also of the top CIA leadership, including Director George J. Tenet.

Roberts and other congressional officials said they believe any independent panel should not begin its work at least until after the Senate report has been issued. "We are going to answer a lot of questions," he said.

Rep. Porter J. Goss (R-Fla.), chairman of the House intelligence committee and a former CIA case officer, said even when his committee report is issued, which may not be until the end of the year, "I expect there will be yet another investigation, for years to come . . . and there should be."

But Goss and Roberts said they believe partisan politics would make it impossible for the new commission to get any real work done before the elections. "Not this year," Goss said. "You couldn't get the members together, or even the rules set up. This is not easy, because nobody trusts anybody."

A member of Congress said the administration can be expected to deal with the intelligence failure "by moving the boxes around" and giving more authority over intelligence matters to the Department of Homeland Security.

Though they did not explicitly rule out an independent probe, Bush and his aides were dismissive of the notion last week even after the former chief weapons inspector, Kay, backed the idea. They said the Iraq Survey Group should first complete its search, a process that could take a year or more. Asked about an independent inquiry on Friday, Bush said: "I want to be able to compare what the Iraq Survey Group has found with what we thought prior to going into Iraq."

The administration has generally resisted probes of this nature. The White House long objected to an independent inquiry into the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, ultimately relenting under congressional and public pressure. Bush insisted on tight control over the intelligence material to be viewed by the commission, causing a constant struggle with the panel and leading to a dispute last week over whether commission members would have access to their own notes.

With the creation of the new commission, the White House will have two outside probes underway that could prove politically dangerous. The Justice Department has given semiautonomy to an inquiry into who in the administration leaked the identity of CIA operative Valerie Plame after her husband, Joseph C. Wilson IV, criticized the administration's assertion that Iraq had sought nuclear material in Africa.

Guardian

Bush yields to pressure for independent WMD inquiry

Weapons inspector's doubts trigger investigation into intelligence failures

David Teather in New York – 2 February 2004

President George Bush has bowed to mounting pressure and agreed to order an independent investigation into why the intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction appears to have been so flawed, according to reports last night. The commission of inquiry will also study intelligence gathered on al-Qaida and weapons proliferation, senior White House officials said.

"The president wants a broad, bipartisan and independent review of our intelligence, particularly relating to weapons of mass destruction and counter-proliferation efforts," an official told Reuters.

The decision represents a remarkable about face by Mr Bush's administration, which had, until now, resisted calls for an investigation until the completion of the search for weapons.

A panel of "distinguished citizens who have served their country in the past" will lead the inquiry, modelled on the Warren commission, a 10-month investigation which re-examined the assassination of John F Kennedy. The White House has yet to set a time limit for the inquiry, the findings of which are likely to have a big impact on the presidential campaign.

Members of Congress from both parties had been pressing for an independent inquiry. But the sense of urgency intensified last week when the former chief US weapons inspector, David Kay, said the stockpiles probably did not exist and offered the blunt public testimony that "we were almost all wrong" about Iraq's arms programmes.

Yesterday's announcement was welcomed by senior Republicans. Senator Trent Lott, a key member of the Senate intelligence committee, told CNN: "I'm not a fan of commissions, generally speaking, but in this case, there's no question that there was an intelligence failure, in some form or another. What I want to know is, what happened? Why wasn't it more reliable, why wasn't it more accurate? And, more importantly, what are we going to do about it?"

The decision by Mr Bush appeared to be an attempt to take control of what could become a dangerous sore on his re-election campaign if left to fester. Backing an inquiry deflects claims that the administration is evading difficult questions, and by getting involved in the creation of the panel, instead of leaving it to Congress, the White House could also have a say in the parameters of the investigation.

Former weapons inspector David Albright said the government could use the commission to deflect blame for the failure to find weapons of mass destruction.

"The bottom line for them [the Bush administration] is to delay the day of reckoning about their use of the weapons of mass destruction information," Mr Albright said. "David Kay can blame the CIA and say 'Oh, I

made all these comments based on what I heard from the intelligence community.' President Bush can't do that. He's the boss."

The US media had also been drawing comparisons between Tony Blair's cooperation with the Hutton inquiry and what the New York Times called Mr Bush's "spin and evade" approach.

Despotism

The White House has yet to close the book on finding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, but it has been shifting its position and is no longer adamant they will be found. More emphasis has been put on the despotism of Saddam Hussein as a justification for his removal.

At the end of last week Mr Bush offered his first admission that prewar intelligence might have been faulty when he said he wanted to "know the facts" about the gathering of information.

Earlier, the national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, admitted that Washington had not found what it had expected in Iraq. "I think that what we have is evidence that there are differences between what we knew going in and what we found on the ground," she said.

Even last week, though, the White House was maintaining that any independent inquiry should be stayed until the completion of the work of the Iraq Survey Group, something that could take between six months and a year.

The investigation could prove damaging for Mr Bush's election campaign if the results are published before voting on November 2, and if they implicate the administration.

Democrats have argued that intelligence on the weapons programme in Iraq was exaggerated to justify the invasion. That view was recently given weight by the former treasury secretary Paul O'Neill, who claimed in a book that Mr Bush had decided to oust Saddam before the terrorist attacks of September 11.

In his testimony before the Senate armed services committee, Mr Kay, who resigned 10 days ago, backed an outside inquiry. He said he thought the Bush administration had been misled by its intelligence sources, and warned yesterday that flawed intelligence on Iraq had weakened the case for a policy of pre-emption.

"If you cannot rely on good, accurate intelligence that is credible to the American people and to others abroad, you certainly cannot have a policy of pre-emption," Mr Kay said.

Senator Joseph Biden, a Democrat, agreed. "America's credibility's at stake," he told CNN. "This isn't about politics any more."

Others, though, have questioned the pressure from policymakers on intelligence agencies to support the case for war.

Six separate panels, including the House of Representatives and Senate intelligence committees, are already working on investigations into the prewar intelligence. The Senate committee is scheduled to be the first to publish its findings, in March.

BBC News

Pressure builds for WMD inquiry

2 January 2004

Tony Blair is under mounting pressure to order an independent inquiry into the intelligence material used to justify Britain's role in the Iraq war.

President George Bush is expected to launch a similar probe in the US.

The Conservatives will table a Commons motion on Monday for an inquiry, a move also backed by the Liberal Democrats.

Tory leader Michael Howard told BBC Radio 4's Today: "I hope the prime minister won't continue to be the odd man out and... to be isolated on this."

Senior officials in the US said details on the inquiry would be given by President Bush early this week.

Pressure has grown since the former chief US weapons inspector, David Kay, said Iraq appeared to have no weapons of mass destruction.

Hutton debate

In the UK, a Downing Street spokesman said: "We've been in close discussions with the US for the last few days but will not comment further until an official announcement is made in the US."

Mr Blair will be questioned about intelligence when he makes his regular appearance at the influential Commons liaison committee of select committee chairmen on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, MPs will debate the Hutton report, which did not cover the strength of pre-war intelligence, and disappointed critics of the war.

Last week Downing Street said it would wait and see whether the Iraq Survey Group turned up evidence of WMD.

But Tory leader Michael Howard, said while he still believed the Iraq war was justified, an independent inquiry into the quality of intelligence presented before the conflict was now needed.

"I hope that he will agree very speedily, within the next couple of days, to the holding of an inquiry of this kind," he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

Mr Howard said he believed an independent person, someone of "high reputation" and possibly a privy councillor, should conduct the inquiry.

He said no-one wanted "a repeat of the controversy which has arisen in the aftermath of the Hutton report".

'Categoric evidence'

"It probably would be helpful if the prime minister consulted me and Charles Kennedy about the terms of reference and about the identity of the person to hold such an inquiry," he said.

Liberal Democrat foreign affairs spokesman Sir Menzies Campbell said news of the planned US inquiry would "put yet more pressure on the British Government".

"Washington is now dictating the British political agenda. The government's satisfaction at the Hutton report may well be short-lived."

But Commons leader Peter Hain said he had seen "categoric evidence" that Saddam Hussein had chemical and biological WMD.

"I saw that intelligence, so did the prime minister, so did other Cabinet ministers," he told BBC One's Politics Show.

"That informed our decision to go to topple him. I think we were right to do so."

He said he saw no point in having an inquiry until the Iraq Survey Group had completed its work.

BBC News

Spain rules out Iraq WMD inquiry

3 February 2004

Spain has ruled out an inquiry into whether Iraq had weapons of mass destruction before the US-led invasion.

Spanish Foreign Minister Ana Palacio said she would not follow the British and US decisions to hold inquiries into the intelligence used before the war.

Ms Palacio said Spain had supported the war on the basis of reports from the United Nations.

Last week a former US chief weapons inspector said that Iraq did not have stockpiles of banned weapons.

Intelligence demand

Jose Luis Zapatero, leader of the Spanish opposition PSOE, has called on the governing Popular Party to account for what he called "the lies" surrounding the government's reasons for going to war.

PSOE spokesman Jesus Caldera said the party had also demanded the declassification of secret documents from the Spanish intelligence services.

But Ms Palacio told Europa Press agency: "The position of the Spanish government was always adopted, and at all times, on the basis of data and a consensus which existed at the United Nations.

"As everyone knows, there was a consensus on the need to disarm, which was written into several UN resolutions."

She said the consensus was "total" and included international leaders who were opposed to war and sought to disarm him by other means.

"I don't have to show that they (weapons of mass destruction) exist," she said. "They existed and Saddam Hussein's regime is asked to say where they are."

Government spokesman Eduardo Zaplana also ruled out an investigation.

Aznar's confidence

He said the Spanish Government had been "and is absolutely coherent" on the issue, adding that the government line was "the best for the national interest and that of world security".

A majority of Spaniards were said to have opposed their government's support for the conflict despite a failure to get a UN resolution backing military action.

Ten Spaniards have died since 1,300 soldiers were sent to Iraq in August.

When Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar backed the conflict in February last year he told Antena 3 television: "You may be sure, as may all the people watching this, that I am telling the truth.

"The Iraqi regime has weapons of mass destruction, it has links to terrorist groups and has shown throughout its history that it poses a threat to everybody."

He later told TVE state television: "I am absolutely convinced that these weapons, which exist, will appear."

US President George Bush's creation of a bipartisan committee to look at its Iraq intelligence on Monday appeared to raise the pressure on the UK to launch its own investigation.

The UK followed suit on Tuesday, announcing an independent inquiry to examine intelligence which led to the decision to go to war.

Parool

Israël misleidde VS over gevaar Irak

4 februari 2004

AMSTERDAM - De Israëlische inlichtingendiensten wisten dat Irak geen massavernietigingswapens had. Toch lieten ze de eigen bondgenoten, de VS voorop, in de waan dat de dreiging er wel was. Ook de eigen bevolking is om de tuin geleid met waarschuwingen dat men gasmaskers moest bezitten ter voorbereiding op een mogelijke Iraakse aanval.

"Het was niets anders dan een dure show," zei het Israëlische parlamentslid Yossi Sarid van de linkse Meretzpartij gisteren. "De Israëlische inlichtingendiensten wisten dat de dreiging heel, heel erg gering was. Het was in Israël bekend, dat het verhaal dat de Iraakse massavernietigingswapens binnen 45 minuten geactiveerd konden worden, oudewijvenpraat was," zei hij.

Toch liet de Israëlische leiding de Amerikanen begaan. Sterker nog, de regering deed alsof oorlog dreigde. Vierentwintig uur per etmaal patrouilleerden gevechtsvliegtuigen boven het land. De bevolking werd opgeroepen 'afgeplakte kamers' voor te bereiden om daar te schuilen bij een gasaanval.

Als reden voor die houding noemde Sarid, die lid is van de parlementaire commissie voor Buitenlandse Zaken en Defensie: "Israël wilde het scenario van president Bush niet verpesten." Bush noemde voor de oorlog de aanwezigheid van massavernietigingswapens in het Irak van Saddam de belangrijkste reden voor de inval. Maar Ehud Yatom, parlamentslid van de regerende Likoeidpartij, beweert dat Israël de VS wel heeft ingelicht over zekere twijfels aan het bestaan van Iraakse massavernietigingswapens. "Israël zei dat er zich klaarblijkelijk zulke wapens in Irak bevonden, maar dat we ze niet met eigen ogen hebben gezien. De grote VS hoefden echter niet op Israël te vertrouwen," zei Yatom.

Ook de voormalige Amerikaanse wapeninspecteur Scott Ritter zegt dat Israël al jaren wist dat Irak geen massavernietigingswapens bezat. "Toch instrueerde het veiligheidsestablishment (de regering en de militaire leiding) de bevolking om gasmaskers te draen, een stap die Israël miljarden heeft gekost," aldus Ritter op de internetsite Ynet van de Israëlische krant Yediot Ahronot. "Als de Israëlische inlichtingendiensten wisten dat Irak geen massavernietigingswapens had, dan wisten de CIA en de Britse inlichtingendienst dat ook," beweerde Ritter tegen Ynet.

Ritter, een marine-officier buiten dienst, kreeg in 1998 van leden van de Israëlische inlichtingendienst te horen, dat Irak van vijand nummer één tot nummer zes was gedegradeerd.

De zaak heeft ook een Nederlandse kant. Voorafgaand aan de hun inval in Irak hebben de Amerikanen op gegeven moment Den Haag gevraagd om een Patriotsquadron van de Koninklijke Luchtmacht te stationeren bij de Jordaanse hoofdstad Amman, gelegen tussen Irak en Israël. De Patriots waren bedoeld als bescherming tegen Iraakse ballistische raketten. Even later werd het verzoek ingetrokken. De dreiging was blijkbaar overschat en tijdens de oorlog tegen Irak is Amman niet beschermd. Wel stonden Nederlandse Patriots gestationeerd bij Turkse vliegvelden.

CNN

Expert: WMD dossier fears ignored

4 February 2004

LONDON, England (Reuters) --Some British intelligence officials believed Iraq's chemical and biological weapons capability was overstated in a government dossier used to justify war, but their concerns were ignored, a former intelligence official said on Wednesday.

"In my view, the expert intelligence analysts of the DIS (Defence Intelligence Staff) were overruled in the preparation of the dossier back in September 2002, resulting in a presentation that was misleading about Iraq's capabilities," Dr Brian Jones wrote in the Independent newspaper.

Jones, now retired, was head of a team of government chemical and biological weapons experts who formed part of the Ministry of Defence's intelligence service.

The newspaper article is likely to add further fuel to the controversy surrounding intelligence assessments of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Prime Minister Tony Blair agreed on Tuesday to hold an inquiry into the quality of intelligence on banned Iraqi weapons, bowing to pressure for an explanation as to why no biological or chemical weapons have been found 10 months after Saddam Hussein was toppled in the U.S.-led war.

In September, Jones gave evidence before a separate inquiry into the suicide of defense ministry weapons expert David Kelly, who was unmasked as the source of a BBC report that alleged Blair had exaggerated the threat posed by Iraq to justify war.

During his testimony, Jones outlined his concerns about the assertion in the 2002 dossier that Saddam could launch banned weapons at just 45 minutes notice.

Jones wrote in the Independent that experts at DIS had felt the dossier should have stated there was a probability Iraq had some chemical or biological capability at some level but that the case should not have been made in stronger terms.

"Despite pointing this out in comments on several drafts, the stronger statements did eventually appear in the executive summary," Jones wrote.

Last week, the judge heading the inquiry into Kelly's death said the BBC report that the government had "sexed up" the risk posed by Iraq was unfounded.

Judge Lord Hutton's criticism of the BBC, which led to its chairman and director general resigning last week, was seen as a victory for the government, but the failure to find any banned weapons in Iraq has dented Blair's credibility.

Washington Post

Rumsfeld: More Time Needed for WMD Search

Defense Secretary Defends Iraq War in Senate Testimony

By William Branigin – 4 February 2004

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld held out the possibility today that U.S. investigators would eventually find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and said he doubted the "theory" of a former chief weapons inspector that Iraq did not possess stockpiles of such weapons before U.S. forces invaded last year.

Addressing the Senate Armed Services Committee for the first time since David Kay told the same panel last week that intelligence analysts were "almost all wrong" about banned weapons in Iraq, Rumsfeld defended President Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq, and he denied that administration officials had manipulated the intelligence to justify the invasion.

But under Democratic questioning, he backed away from his assertion before the war that the administration knew former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein possessed banned weapons in the months leading up to the March 2003 invasion.

"Intelligence will never be perfect," Rumsfeld said. "We do not, will not and cannot know everything that's going on in this world of ours." He added: "I'm convinced that the president of the United States did the right thing in Iraq; let there be no doubt."

Rumsfeld spoke to the Senate panel in the chamber normally used by the House Armed Services Committee because the discovery of the toxin ricin in a suite of offices used by the Senate majority leader had resulted in the closure of three Senate office buildings yesterday.

The defense secretary also defended the U.S. intelligence community, saying they could be excused for concluding that Hussein was pursuing chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

"He did not behave like someone who was disarming and wanted to prove he was doing so," Rumsfeld said.

"The Congress [and] the national security teams of both the Clinton and the Bush administrations looked at

essentially the same intelligence, and they came to similar conclusions that the Iraqi regime posed a danger and should be changed."

Rumsfeld put forward several "alternative views" on why nothing has been found in Iraq so far to confirm the prewar estimates of weapons of mass destruction, known as WMD.

"First is the theory that WMD may not have existed at the start of the war," he said. "I suppose that's possible, but not likely."

He said other possibilities were that chemical or biological weapons did exist in Iraq, but were moved to one or more other countries; that the banned weapons were "dispersed and hidden throughout Iraq;" that the country's WMD was destroyed before the war; that Iraq had only small quantities of biological or chemical weapons with a "surge capability for a rapid buildup;" and that the whole WMD program was "a charade by the Iraqis," with Hussein either fooling the world or being fooled himself by subordinates.

Rumsfeld did not say which view, if any, he believed. But he suggested that chemical or biological weapons could still be hidden in Iraq.

"Think, it took us 10 months to find Saddam Hussein," he told the committee. "The reality is that the hole he was found hiding in was large enough to hold enough biological weapons to kill thousands of human beings. . . . And unlike Saddam Hussein, such objects, once buried, can stay buried. In a country the size of California, the chances of inspectors finding something buried in the ground without their being led to it by people knowledgeable about where it was is minimal."

While U.S. investigators have not proven that Hussein had the weapons that intelligence analysts said he did, they also have "not proven the opposite," Rumsfeld said. When the work of the 1,300-member Iraq Survey Group is complete, he said, "we will know more."

Rumsfeld came in for some sharp questioning by Democrats on the committee, notably Sens. Carl M. Levin (D-Mich.) and Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), who cited U.S. intelligence studies that said there was no reliable evidence of Iraq's production and stockpiling of chemical weapons before the war.

Kay's conclusion that Hussein possessed no weapons of mass destruction when the war began "is a devastating refutation of the Bush administration's case for war in Iraq and, I think, seriously undermines our credibility in the world," Kennedy told Rumsfeld. The Massachusetts Democrat also blasted the Bush administration's proposal for an "independent, bipartisan" inquiry into the intelligence failure. What the government was offering, he said, was an "investigation by a committee hand-picked by the administration, with findings to be made only after the 2004 election."

Under questioning from Kennedy, Rumsfeld backed away from his September 2002 Senate testimony in which he said "we know" that Hussein continues to hide large stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons.

"I could be wrong," Rumsfeld said today. "I'm asked a lot of questions. I use a lot of words, and I'm sure, from time to time, I say something that, in retrospect, I wish I hadn't."

He recalled another occasion on which he had expressed such certainty, after U.S. forces had invaded Iraq and he was asked where the weapons of mass destruction were.

"And I may have said -- I think I said -- 'We know where they are. They're up north. They're not down here.' And I was referring to the suspect sites. And you're quite right; shorthand, 'We know where they are,' probably turned out not to be exactly what one would have preferred in retrospect."

Independent

Intelligence chief's bombshell: 'We were overruled on dossier'

By Paul Waugh, Deputy Political Editor – 4 February 2004

The intelligence official whose revelations stunned the Hutton inquiry has suggested that not a single defence intelligence expert backed Tony Blair's most contentious claims on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

As Mr Blair set up an inquiry yesterday into intelligence failures before the war, Brian Jones, the former leading expert on WMD in the Ministry of Defence, declared that Downing Street's dossier, a key plank in convincing the public of the case for war, was "misleading" on Saddam Hussein's chemical and biological capability. Writing in today's Independent, Dr Jones, who was head of the nuclear, chemical and biological branch of the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) until he retired last year, reveals that the experts failed in their efforts to have their views reflected.

Dr Jones, who is expected to be a key witness at the new inquiry, says: "In my view, the expert intelligence analysts of the DIS were overruled in the preparation of the dossier in September 2002, resulting in a presentation that was misleading about Iraq's capabilities."

He calls on the Prime Minister to publish the intelligence behind the Government's claims that Iraq was actively producing chemical weapons and could launch an attack within 45 minutes of an order to do so. He is "extremely doubtful" that anyone with chemical and biological weapons expertise had seen the raw intelligence reports and that they would prove just how right he and his colleagues were to be concerned about the claims.

Downing Street was triumphant last week when Lord Hutton ruled that Andrew Gilligan's claims that the dossier was "sexed up" were unfounded, but Dr Jones's comments are bound to boost the case of the BBC and others that the dossier failed to take into account the worries of intelligence officials. Colin Powell, the US Secretary of State, said yesterday that he might not have supported military action against Baghdad if he had known that Iraq lacked weapons of mass destruction.

Acutely aware of the American inquiry into the war, Mr Blair said that a committee of inquiry would investigate "intelligence-gathering, evaluation and use" in the UK before the conflict in Iraq. Lord Butler of Brockwell, the former cabinet secretary, will chair the five-strong committee, which will meet in private. The Liberal Democrats refused to support the inquiry because they said that its remit was not wide enough.

Dr Jones was the man whose decision to give evidence electrified the Hutton inquiry as he disclosed that he had formally complained about the dossier. The Government attempted to dismiss his complaints as part of the normal process of "debate" within the DIS and claimed that other sections of the intelligence community were better qualified to assess the 45-minute and chemical production claims.

But today Dr Jones makes clear that he was not alone and declares that the whole of the Defence Intelligence Staff, Britain's best qualified analysts on WMD, agreed that the claims should have been "carefully caveated". Furthermore, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which allowed the contentious claims to go into the dossier, lacked the expertise to make a competent judgement on them.

Dr Jones makes clear that it was John Scarlett, the chairman of the JIC, who was responsible for including the controversial claims in the executive summary of the dossier that was used to justify war. It was Mr Scarlett's strong assessment that allowed Alastair Campbell to "translate a probability into a certainty" in Mr Blair's foreword to the document, Dr Jones adds. He says he foresaw at the time of the Government's dossier He says he foresaw at the time of the Government's dossier in September 2002 that no major WMD stockpiles would be found. He made a formal complaint about the dossier to avoid himself and his fellow experts being cast as "scapegoats" for any such failure.

In his article, Dr Jones warns that intelligence analysts should not be blamed for the lack of any significant finds in Iraq and points out that it was the "intelligence community leadership" - the heads of MI6 and MI5 and Mr Scarlett - who were responsible for the dossier. It would be a "travesty" if the DIS was criticised over the affair, he says.

Dr Jones complains that he and others were not allowed to see vital intelligence supporting the 45-minute and chemical production claims. He reveals, however, that he has discovered from a colleague that the reports from the ground did not meet his and others' concerns about the wording of the JIC's assessments. Also, he says, the Deputy Chief of Defence Intelligence, Tony Cragg, did not see the supposedly clinching intelligence and took on trust assurances from MI6 that it was credible.

The Government yesterday finally slipped out its response to the Intelligence and Security Committee's report last autumn on the intelligence case in the approach to war. For the first time ministers conceded that they "understand the reasoning" for the committee's criticism that the presentation of the 45-minute claim in the dossier "allowed speculation as to its exact meaning", including the firing of WMD on long-range missiles. But the Government said it had not linked the claim to ballistic missiles.

It also rejected the MPs' call for complaints such as that of Dr Jones to be sent direct to the JIC chairman. "It is important to preserve the line management authority of JIC members," it said.

BBC News

Blair 'unaware' of WMD threat

4 February 2004

Tony Blair has said he was unaware the 45 minute claim over Iraq's WMD meant only battlefield weapons when he urged MPs to vote for war in March last year.

His comments came during a Commons debate on the Hutton report as a former intelligence official said information may have been "misinterpreted".

The September 2002 dossier said Iraq could deploy chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes.

The Hutton inquiry was told the claim referred only to battlefield weapons.

But Mr Blair stood by his decision to join the US in invading Iraq, and emphasised to MPs that the Hutton report had cleared the government of "sexing up" its Iraq dossier.

And he called the BBC report which sparked the Hutton inquiry "100% wrong".

Weapons fears

Fears over WMD were a cornerstone of the government's case for war with Iraq.

But the prime minister said on Wednesday he had not known what sort of weapons were being referred to at the time of the Commons vote on 18 March 2003.

Joint Intelligence Committee chairman John Scarlett told the inquiry the intelligence about the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's forces referred only to weapons such as mortars and shells but not long-range ballistic missiles.

Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said at the inquiry he had known the intelligence only referred to battlefield weapons but did nothing to correct media reports.

But former foreign secretary Robin Cook, who quit the government because of his opposition to the war, expressed surprise about the idea Mr Blair was unaware of the nature of the weapons referred to.

"In my resignation speech I did make the very point that we were considering battlefield weapons and that Saddam probably had no real weapons of mass destruction," he said.

"I find it difficult to reconcile what I knew and what I am sure the prime minister knew at the time we had the vote in March."

Tory foreign affairs spokesman Michael Ancram said later Mr Blair's response raised "serious questions about what the government knew when Britain went to war with Iraq".

The House of Commons debate was briefly disrupted when protesters heckled Mr Blair prompting Speaker Michael Martin to suspend the sitting while the public gallery was cleared.

'Cleared'

In the chamber, Mr Blair dismissed fresh concern about the intelligence gathered about Iraq and again defended his decision to go to war.

He told MPs he accepted the Iraq Survey Group had not found the banned weapons he had expected to be uncovered, but they had found evidence of weapons programmes.

Even if the group found nothing more "we would have been irresponsible in the highest degree not to have acted against Saddam", he argued.

But Dr Brian Jones, a retired senior official in the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS), told the Independent newspaper the DIS' "unified view" was for there to be careful caveats about assessments of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons.

But they had been overruled by the heads of the intelligence agencies.

Mr Blair said Dr Jones' concerns had been considered by the head of defence intelligence, who decided the dossier's wording was correct.

Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy complained a new inquiry into intelligence chaired by ex-cabinet secretary Lord Butler would not address the "fundamental question which the public want addressed", which was the political judgment to go to war.

CNN

Tenet defends prewar judgment on Iraq

CIA chief denies political pressure affected intelligence

5 February 2004

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- CIA Director George Tenet on Thursday defended the prewar U.S. intelligence estimate of Iraq's weapons capabilities and rejected suggestions that political pressure influenced the agency's assessment.

"No one told us what to say or how to say it," Tenet said in a speech at his alma mater, Georgetown University. "We will always call it as we see it."

Tenet said the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate -- parts of which were published during the congressional debate over authorizing the use of military force against Iraq -- never characterized Saddam Hussein's government as an "imminent threat."

Leading up to the war, Bush and his top aides stressed the urgency of stopping Saddam.

In a speech to the United Nations in September, Bush called Saddam's regime "a grave and gathering danger." The next day, he said Saddam was "a threat that we must deal with as quickly as possible." And in an Ohio speech October 7, 2002, Bush said "the danger is already significant and it only grows worse with time."

Tenet said Baghdad's use of chemical weapons in the 1980s, its efforts to resist U.N. weapons inspectors in the 1990s and information from satellites, intercepted communications and defectors indicated Saddam planned to reactivate those programs.

"[The CIA] painted an objective assessment for our policy-makers of a brutal dictator who was continuing his efforts to deceive and build programs that might constantly surprise us and threaten our interests," he said.

Tenet said the United States needs more time to account for Iraq's suspected weapons programs.

When the facts are in, he said, the agency "will never be completely right or completely wrong."

"Unfortunately, you rarely hear a patient, careful or thoughtful discussion of intelligence these days," Tenet said. "But these times demand it because the alternative -- politicized, haphazard evaluation without the benefit of time and facts -- may well result in an intelligence community that is damaged and a country that is more at risk."

Rep. Ed Markey, D-Massachusetts, a member of the House Homeland Security Committee, called for Tenet's resignation after Thursday's remarks.

"In January 2003, he allowed President Bush to include the fraudulent claim about yellowcake uranium from Niger in the State of the Union address," Markey said in a written statement. "In February 2003, he sat behind Colin Powell as he systematically presented intelligence on Iraqi WMD that was alarmist and untrue. Later in February 2003, he did not clarify the CIA's intelligence position when the on-the-ground U.N. weapons inspectors reported their negative findings."

Countering criticism

The speech allowed Tenet to respond to criticism from David Kay, the former U.S. top weapons inspector in Iraq, who said intelligence given to President Bush before the war on Iraq's weapons programs was wrong.

Kay told a Senate committee last week that he believes Iraq was unlikely to have significant stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. Bush administration officials had cited those as a key reason leading up to the invasion last year.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Pat Roberts, R-Kansas, said Thursday his committee's review has found no evidence that political pressure shaped U.S. intelligence.

He compared the intelligence gathered by the United Nations, United States and other countries as "a train that just kept moving."

"While there may have been other bits of information or intelligence that would say, 'Whoa, wait a minute, we need to stop the train,' it never really stopped," Roberts said. "Virtually every intelligence agency, including the U.N., came up with the same assumption, that there would be stockpiles of WMD" in Iraq.

More than 500 U.S. troops have been killed in the Iraq war, but no banned weapons have been found.

Tenet said intelligence analysts disagreed on several aspects of Iraq's weapons programs, "and those debates were spelled out in the estimate."

"It is important to underline the word estimate because not everything we analyze can be known to a standard of absolute proof," he said.

Tenet's address included a strong defense of the CIA's human intelligence efforts, saying information from American and allied spies had led to the capture of three key al Qaeda figures -- including suspected 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed -- and the exposure of the network spreading Pakistani nuclear weapons technology to other countries.

Agency's role cited in disarming Libya

Tenet also rejected suggestions that the extent of weapons programs in North Korea, Iran and Libya caught Washington by surprise.

Libya agreed in December to give up its efforts to develop a nuclear bomb.

"Only through intelligence did we know when Libya started its first nuclear weapons program and then put it on the back burner for years," he said. "Only through intelligence did we know when the nuclear program took off again. We knew because we had penetrated Libya's foreign supplier network."

Tenet said Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan's transfer of nuclear technology "was shaving years" off the time some countries needed to develop nuclear weapons.

"His network is now answering to the world for years of nuclear profiteering," Tenet said.

Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, has admitted transferring nuclear weapons technology to Iran, North Korea and Libya. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf pardoned him Thursday, saying he remained a national hero despite his admission.

Tenet's speech comes a day after Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told senators he isn't ready to conclude that Iraq no longer had weapons of mass destruction before the U.S. invasion.

Rumsfeld told the Senate Armed Services Committee that U.S. weapons inspectors need more time to reach final conclusions about whether chemical and biological weapons existed.

Bush announced Monday that he would appoint a presidential commission to review U.S. intelligence on the proliferation of WMD in Iraq.

"Knowing what I knew then and knowing what I know today, America did the right thing in Iraq," Bush said Thursday in Charleston, South Carolina.

Intelligence Committee members began receiving copies Thursday afternoon of the panel's draft report on intelligence regarding Iraq

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-California, said the committee failed to examine whether the Bush administration willfully used bad intelligence to make the case for war.

"This is the cauldron boiling beneath the surface ... about which the Senate Intelligence Committee is prohibited from looking at," she said.

Roberts appealed to Democrats to resist what he called the "blast furnace" of election-year politics and avoid prejudging the report.

But Feinstein, who voted to back the use of military force to disarm Iraq, said Democratic senators have been shut out of the investigation.

She said the information presented to Congress before the war "created an impression that there was an imminent threat."

"I don't think there would have been 77 votes in the United States Senate to authorize the use of force had these statements not been made," she said.

Brabants Dagblad

Kabinet wil geen onderzoek wapens Irak

6 februari 2004

DEN HAAG (ANP) - Het kabinet voelt niets voor een onderzoek in Nederland naar de informatie van inlichtingendiensten over massavernietigingswapens in Irak. Dat bleek vrijdag uit de woorden van premier Balkenende, na afloop van de wekelijkse ministerraad.

„Onderzoeken in andere landen naar de inlichtingendiensten wachten wij af", zei Balkenende. PvdA, GroenLinks en SP dringen aan op een dergelijk onderzoek.

Balkenende zei vrijdag dat voor het Nederlands kabinet vorig jaar niet de massavernietigingswapens doorslaggevend waren geweest, maar VN-resolutie 1441. Daarin wordt gesteld dat de toenmalige Iraakse leider Saddam Hussein moet bewijzen dat hij géén wapens meer had.

Balkenende benadrukte dat de resolutie Saddam Hussein opriep om vragen over zijn wapenprogramma's te beantwoorden. „Dat deed hij niet. In die context zijn toen de in de resolutie aangekondigde 'ernstige consequenties' gevolgd." Maar vergeet niet dat de bewijslast niet bij Amerikanen of Britten lag, maar bij Irak."

Balkenende sloot niet uit dat er alsnog massavernietigingswapens worden gevonden in Irak. „De vragen van wapeninspecteur Blix zijn nog steeds niet beantwoord. Dat is niet bevredigend."

Reuters

France Denies All Allies' Iraq Intelligence Wrong

MUNICH, Germany (Reuters) - France on Saturday denied a U.S. senator's charge that it and other Western allies were as wrong as America in their pre-war intelligence on Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons programs.

Senator John McCain told reporters at a global security conference: "It wasn't just an American intelligence failure, it was German, it was French, it was British, it was Israeli -- it was all intelligence failures, and we need to find out why that happened."

Asked about McCain's comments, French Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie said France had not reached the same conclusions as "the Anglo-Saxons" on the basis of available intelligence such as satellite photographs.

She said that was why Paris had argued against last year's U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and in favor of letting U.N. inspectors keep searching for the alleged weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

"It's true that intelligence...has its limits. Knowing how to recognize its limits and find other means is the way to avoid committing mistakes," she told a news conference.

Nearly a year after the invasion of Iraq, countries like France and Germany, which fiercely opposed it, still dispute the justification for war cited by President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Dogged by questions about the pre-war intelligence and the way it was used, both leaders have announced independent inquiries into why their spy chiefs believed Saddam had chemical and biological weapons.

No such weapons have been found in Iraq since Saddam's fall last April, and Washington's former chief weapons hunter has said he doubts they existed.

McCain told reporters in Munich: "It's clear to me that the weapons of mass destruction were not there."

The Republican senator will sit on a bipartisan commission established by Bush to investigate intelligence failings. He has already said he does not believe the president manipulated the information he received.

Still not convinced

The charge that other countries suffered from flawed intelligence is likely to grate with other U.S. allies besides France. German intelligence chiefs have repeatedly said they were skeptical of the U.S. case for war, particularly of Washington's attempt to link Saddam to al Qaeda.

"Germany feels that events have proved the position it took at the time to be right," Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer told the conference earlier. "We were not and are still not convinced of the reasons for war."

Britain and the United States both argued at the Munich gathering for better integration of NATO intelligence.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said the alliance should "do a better job of seeing that the intelligence capabilities of the respective countries are brought together."

British Defense Minister Geoff Hoon said successful NATO action against elusive targets in the war on terror would depend on effective intelligence which NATO currently "lacks in an integrated form."

BBC News

Bush under fire over WMD inquiry

7 February 2004

Opposition Democrats in the United States have criticised a commission set up by President Bush to investigate pre-Iraq war intelligence failures.

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi said it was difficult to have confidence in a panel appointed exclusively by the president.

Others want the panel to report before the November presidential election.

The commission will also look at what the US knew about weapons programmes in North Korea, Iran and Libya.

The panel will be co-chaired by a Republican and a Democrat, and includes outspoken Republican John McCain.

Mr Bush said he wanted to know why intelligence reports about Iraq's weapons capability appeared until now to have been misleading.

The panel will "look at America's intelligence capabilities, especially our intelligence about weapons of mass destruction", the president said in a brief statement at the White House.

'Immune'

The main argument used by Britain and the US for invading Iraq last March was the perceived threat from weapons of mass destruction.

But no such weapons have yet been found, despite efforts by the Iraq Survey Group formerly led by David Kay.

"We are determined to figure out why," Mr Bush said.

The commission is to submit its report by 31 March 2005 - well after the presidential election.

The BBC's Adam Brookes in Washington says that by that time, the Republicans hope that Mr Bush will be safely re-elected and largely immune to any criticism the commission might offer.

UK Prime Minister Tony Blair has also set up an independent inquiry to examine intelligence which led the country to war.

'Streak of independence'

The chairmen of the new US commission - which will be expanded to nine members - were named as former Virginia Governor and Senator Charles Robb and retired judge Laurence Silberman.

Correspondents say the appointment of Arizona Senator John McCain will lend a streak of independence to the commission.

He has already said he believes the panel should look at the role of the politicians.

But speaking shortly after the announcement of the commission, Mr McCain told reporters: "The president of the United States, I believe, did not manipulate any kind of information for political gain or otherwise."

CIA Director George Tenet has defended the intelligence, saying the agencies had never claimed that Saddam Hussein was an "imminent threat" but warned about the future danger he could pose.

The search had to go on in Iraq for the weapons of mass destruction that US intelligence believed existed, he said.

Guardian

Blix says war leaders acted like salesmen

By Sarah Hall and Richard Norton Taylor – 9 February 2004

The former UN chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix, weighed into the controversy over weapons of mass destruction yesterday when he accused Tony Blair and George Bush of behaving like insincere salesmen who "exaggerated" intelligence in an attempt to win support for war.

In a carefully worded attack, Dr Blix said intelligence communities were too ready to believe the "tales" of defectors, and the British prime minister and US president, while not acting in bad faith, were too preoccupied with spin.

Referring to the government's controversial dossier, with its suggestion that WMDs could be deployed within 45 minutes, he insisted: "The intention was to dramatise it, just as the vendors of some merchandise are trying to exaggerate the importance of what they have.

"But from politicians or our leaders in the western world, I think we expect more than that. A bit more sincerity."

Dr Blix's intervention, on BBC 1's Breakfast with Frost, was immediately rejected by the government, with the leader of the Lords, Lady Amos, insisting that Lord Hutton had cleared the government of dramatising the 45-minute claim, and the secretary for constitutional affairs, Lord Falconer, urging the country to wait for the Butler inquiry, which will report in the summer.

"We shouldn't go on and on and on discussing the precise detail of this. Instead, we should let the inquiry proceed, not monster it in advance," he said.

But Robin Cook, the former leader of the Commons, ratcheted up his attack on the prime minister's credibility, and two other former ministers, the ex-defence minister Doug Henderson and former health secretary Frank Dobson, along with the Liberal Democrat leader, Charles Kennedy, and the shadow foreign secretary, Michael Ancram, called for Mr Blair to make a statement clarifying why he believed the 45-minute claim referred to long-range weapons of mass destruction when he took Britain to war.

Mr Cook repeated his allegation that the prime minister knew the intelligence only pointed to battlefield weapons when the two discussed the issue on March 5, 15 days before military action - a claim denied by Downing Street.

"I made it quite plain _ that it was obvious from the briefings that Saddam had no weapons of mass destruction and had only battlefield weapons _ I could not have been more blunt," he said.

Speaking on ITV's Jonathan Dimbleby programme, Mr Cook, added that "heads should roll" on the joint intelligence committee because of their apparent failure to adequately brief the prime minister - "an appalling failure of communication".

President Bush yesterday defended the decision to go to war, arguing that although weapons of mass destruction had not been found, Saddam Hussein "had the capacity to have a weapon, make a weapon. We thought he had weapons".

"I expected to find the weapons," he acknowledged. "Sitting behind this desk making a very difficult decision on war and peace; I made the decision on the basis of the best intelligence possible."

The democratic frontrunner, John Kerry, accused Mr Bush of trying to revise his rationale for war. "This is a far cry from what the president and his administration told the American people through 2002," Mr Kerry said.

"Back then President Bush repeatedly told the American people that Saddam Hussein has got chemical weapons. They told us they could deploy these weapons within 45 minutes to injure our troops. It was on that basis that he sent America's sons and daughters off to war."

Downing Street had hoped the WMD furore would dissipate after an ICM poll suggested that 72% of people felt MPs spent too much time on the issue and should return to the domestic agenda.

But Dr Blix, who headed the UN team searching for Saddam's weapons from November 2002 until the eve of war last March, questioned the wording of the infamous September dossier: "They say some WMDs can be ready to be used within 45 minutes. Well, which ones?"

"It certainly wasn't nuclear, because the report says that they were not developing nuclear, so they didn't have them. And what is meant by being ready? Is it a phial of anthrax that can be tossed at somebody? I mean, one can interpret it in different ways."

Asked about claims in the Observer that Britain had spied on UN allies in the run-up to Iraq, he said: "I wouldn't be at all surprised if that was the case _ I assumed when I was in New York that I might well have been bugged in my office."

The US Republican senator John McCain, a member of Mr Bush's inquiry into prewar intelligence, told a weekend security conference in Munich that there had been international intelligence failures, and added: "It's clear to me that the weapons of mass destruction were not there."

Reuters

Not Everyone Got It Wrong on Iraq, Russian Envoy Says

By Evelyn Leopold – 10 February 2004

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - Russia's U.N. ambassador said late on Monday his country was never sure Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, despite assertions from former U.S. arms inspector David Kay that "we were almost all wrong."

The furor over whether Iraq possessed unconventional weapons, a justification for the U.S.-led war, recently flared again after Kay said he believed there were no large stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq.

Russian ambassador Sergei Lavrov, at his annual meeting with the press, said that Russian officials repeatedly maintained they did not have enough information.

"We said that we don't have information which would prove that the WMD, weapons of mass destruction, programs remain in Iraq. We also said we don't have information that those programs have been fully stopped," Lavrov said.

Consequently, he said he supported a Security Council resolution in November 2002 giving "an unprecedented, intrusive mandate to U.N. inspectors and that is why we wanted the inspectors to finish their job."

After Kay told Congress on Jan. 28, "we were almost all wrong," many U.S. and British officials said that members of the U.N. Security Council, as well as United Nations inspectors, got it wrong also.

Russia opposed the war and at one time was Iraq's closest ally on the Security Council. Lavrov said Moscow believed U.N. inspectors provided an objective evaluation.

But Russia bitterly criticized the U.N. Special Commission, the inspection unit that worked in Iraq in 1998, before the U.N. arms experts were withdrawn on the eve of a U.S. bombing raid. They were not allowed to return until late in 2002 after the United States threatened an attack.

Lavrov said the current U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, known as UNMOVIC, could perhaps analyze any information the United States weapons hunters found.

"If remnants are there, could be revived, we want to make sure they are eliminated. We don't want some wrong groups in Iraq to lay their hands on WMD in Iraq, if there are any," Lavrov said.

But he said that Iraq could not be a long-term job for UNMOVIC. Solutions should be found to retain the expertise of the commission, particularly on biological arms and ballistic missiles, for which there were no international inspection mechanisms.

Associated Press

Generals Say They Believed Iraq Had WMD

By Pauline Jelinek – 10 February 2004

WASHINGTON - The generals who head the nation's military services said Tuesday they were convinced before the invasion of Iraq that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction.

In their first joint testimony since the war began, the chiefs of the Air Force, Navy and Marines stood by the decision to invade, even though intelligence used to justify the campaign apparently turned out wrong.

Marine Commandant Gen. Michael Hagee told the Senate Armed Services Committee he was "absolutely convinced" during the war planning stage that Saddam "had chemical weapons, if not biological weapons, and that he would use them" as soon as American troops crossed over the Iraqi border.

The Marine Corps went to "great lengths" to make sure troops had protective suits, masks and air filters, as well as chemical and biological detection devices, he said.

"I'm happy that I was wrong on that," Hagee said. "But looking back on the intelligence that we had at that particular time, there is nothing different that I would do, even having perfect vision looking back."

Army Chief of Staff Peter Schoomaker was not in his position at the time, but the other service chiefs pretty much agreed with Hagee.

"I stand by my position at that time," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper.

"It was my belief that this cause was just," said Adm. Vernon Clark, chief of Naval Operations. "That was my position then and that's what I believe today."

Clark read part of a letter he wrote to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld the day the invasion began.

"For some this is about WMD," Clark wrote. "For others, this is about al-Qaida. For us, it's about all of that and more. Iraq has been shooting at our aircraft for over five years."

He was referring to U.S. aircraft that patrolled no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq in an effort that officials said was designed to deny Saddam the ability to attack minorities living in those regions.

Rumsfeld said at a Pentagon briefing that if Saddam had chosen to cooperate with weapons inspectors and disclose what it had on weapons of mass destruction, war could have been averted. "He chose war. If he had chosen differently, if the Iraqi regime had taken the steps Libya is now taking, there would have been no war," Rumsfeld said.

The chiefs were responding to a request from Sen. John Warner, R-Va., the committee chairman, who noted that they have the responsibility to tell a president if they disagree about the need for war.

The decision to go to war has been called into question again in recent weeks since David Kay, who led the search for weapons of mass destruction, said he now believes no weapons stockpiles exist. The Bush administration had said its certainty that Saddam had weapons was the main reason for the campaign, but critics charge the administration wanted the war and manipulated intelligence to justify it.

"I think it's appropriate, since this is your first appearance as a group before this committee since the commencement of hostilities, that in your opening statements each of you ... advise this committee," Warner said. "You had the opportunity to approach the president ... if you had any doubts ... concerning the advisability of the use of force at the time it was used."

Michigan Sen. Carl Levin, the committee's top Democrat, said there were consequences to the intelligence problem on weapons and on other issues.

For instance, there were more than 500 sites where weapons of mass destruction were believed stored, he said, adding: "That means that there may have been targets that we did not strike because we were concerned about collateral damage from a potential release of chemical and biological weapons."

Intelligence also indicated Iraqi police would stay in their stations, and when that didn't happen, it likely contributed to the widespread looting that destroyed government files and buildings, Levin said.

The chiefs also expressed concerns about where they will get money during a period between budget proposals that looms later this year.

Senators also complained about the administration proposal, which would pay for continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan - and for a planned 30,000-troop increase in the number of people in the army - out of a supplemental budget rather than the regular department budget.

"I think what it does, it increases the size of the deficit and ... deceives the American people about the size of the deficit and the debt that we are incurring," said Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz.

The administration plans to ask for the supplemental in calendar year 2005 - after the November presidential election and months after the Sept. 30 end of the 2004 fiscal year.

Asked later at a Pentagon press conference how the gap would be handled, Rumsfeld said: "I guess the same way we did last year and the year before." The money will be taken from other accounts in the military's \$402 billion budget, he said.

Guardian

Straw unaware of 45-min details

By Matthew Tempest – 11 February 2004

The foreign secretary has revealed he did not know the government's claim that Saddam Hussein could unleash weapons of mass destruction "in 45 minutes of an order to do so" referred merely to battlefield munitions until after the Iraq war.

Jack Straw's admission, in a written parliamentary answer released last night, puts him in the same camp as the prime minister, who has said he was unaware that the "45-minute" claim did not refer to strategic missiles when he took the country to war.

In a brief written answer, Mr Straw states: "I became aware that the intelligence behind this assessment referred to battlefield weapons in June 2003."

This means that, while the defence secretary, Geoff Hoon, and the chairman of the joint intelligence committee, John Scarlett, knew ahead of the invasion that the claim only referred to battlefield munitions, Tony Blair and the foreign secretary did not.

The first time the public became aware of the caveat was during the sessions of the Hutton inquiry last August, when Mr Scarlett first made the distinction between battlefield munitions, and longer-range missile capability.

Yesterday in Washington, the US defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, said he could not remember ever hearing the 45-minute claim, which was made in the UK' government's September 2002 dossier on Iraq's suspected programmes of WMD.

Asked his opinion of the claim, Mr Rumsfeld told reporters at a Pentagon briefing: "I don't remember the statement being made, to be perfectly honest."

Mr Straw gave his answer in response to a question from Sir John Stanley, a Conservative member of the foreign affairs select committee.

Associated Press

Powell Defends War, Says He Expected WMD

By Barry Schweid – 11 February 2004

WASHINGTON - Under attack by House Democrats, Secretary of State Colin Powell said Wednesday he was surprised U.N. and American inspectors did not find storehouses of hidden weapons in Iraq.

But Powell told the International Relations Committee that "we presented what we believed the truth to be at the time."

Powell testified that President Saddam Hussein's apparent intent to develop and use weapons, his record of gassing his own people and his defiance of the United Nations all were - and remain - valid reasons for going to war to overthrow him.

He said President Bush and he had relied on intelligence provided by CIA Director George Tenet, and the only serious question raised about the analysis since the war was whether Iraq had storehouses of weapons of mass destruction.

"I don't think anyone in America should think that President Bush cooked the books," Powell said.

"The reason we told you there were stockpiles there was because we believed it to be true," Powell said. "We were surprised when they did not turn up."

But Reps. Gary Ackerman, D-N.Y., Robert Melendez, D-N.J., Rep. Robert I Wexler, D-Fla., and Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, challenged Powell about the administration's case, suggesting it may have been misleading from the outset.

"Truth is the first casualty of war," Ackerman said. "I would contend truth was murdered before a shot was fired."

"We went into this war under false premises," Melendez said.

Wexler told Powell he considered him to be "the credible voice in the administration."

"When you reached the conclusion that Iraq represented a clear and present danger to the United States, that meant a lot to me," Wexler said. "But the facts suggest there was a part of the story that was not true."

Powell fielded the assertions calmly, defending the president's judgment and his own.

But when Brown contrasted Powell's military experience to Bush's record with the National Guard, saying the president "may have been AWOL" from duty, Powell exploded.

"First of all, Mr. Brown, I won't dignify your comments about the president because you don't know what you are talking about," Powell snapped.

"I'm sorry I don't know what you mean, Mr. Secretary," Brown replied.

"You made reference to the president," Powell shot back.

Brown then repeated his understanding that Bush may have been AWOL from guard duty.

"Mr. Brown, let's not go there," Powell retorted. "Let's not go there in this hearing. If you want to have a political fight on this matter, that is very controversial, and I think it is being dealt with by the White House, fine, but let's not go there."

Powell then went on to defend the Bush administration's assertions on Iraq's prewar weaponry. "We didn't make it up," Powell said. "It was information that reflected the views of analysts in all the various agencies."

But the dispute with Brown did not end.

"Are you shaking your head for something, young man?," Powell asked when he noticed an aide to Brown apparently disagreeing.

"I seldom come to a meeting when I'm talking to a congressman and I have people aligned behind you giving editorial comment by headshakes," Powell said.

Brown, defending his assistant, said "I think people have opinions."

Eager to move on, the committee chairman, Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill., observed that "we're on a very emotional subject," but "we've been doing swimmingly until now."

Guardian

Ex-officer points to failings on 45-minute claim

By Richard Norton-Taylor and Vikram Dodd – 12 February 2004

A recently retired intelligence officer says in the Guardian today that he finds it incredible that Tony Blair or his close advisers did not ask the crucial question about the 45-minute claim in the government's dossier on Iraq's weapons programme.

Mr Blair has said that he was not told that the claim that Iraq could deploy banned weapons in 45 minutes referred only to battlefield weapons and not to longer-range missiles.

Lieutenant-Colonel Crispin Black, a former member of the defence intelligence staff, who left his job as an intelligence assessor in 2002, says: "I began to wonder seriously how the organisation I used to work for, which is responsible for the day-to-day briefing of the prime minister on intelligence matters, could have allowed matters to come to this pass."

Intelligence procedures must have been executed "incorrectly or sloppily in order to allow the prime minister to be kept in such a state of ignorance at such a crucial time on such a crucial matter", he writes.

"Neither [Robin] Cook nor [Geoff] Hoon saw fit to tell him for whatever reason", writes Col Black.

Mr Blair had to rely solely on verbal briefings from the chairman of the joint intelligence committee, John Scarlett, and others, he writes, "who told him about the 45 minutes bit of the intelligence but omitted to mention that it referred only to battlefield rather than strategic weapons.

"And neither the prime minister nor any of the brilliant young men and women on his staff asked the obvious question."

A Whitehall source familiar with the intelligence world told the Guardian yesterday that Mr Blair would have been briefed by Mr Scarlett.

A group of doctors also write in the Guardian today that they have continued doubts about Lord Hutton's verdict that the Iraq expert David Kelly committed suicide.

In a letter, six doctors, three more than wrote to the paper last month expressing doubts, say they remain convinced that it was "highly improbable" that Dr Kelly killed himself by cutting his left wrist.

In his comment, Col Black says that as he followed the Hutton inquiry "I could hardly recognise the organisation I had so recently worked for".

He points out that there were meetings with no minutes; an intelligence analytical group on a highly specialised subject which included unqualified officials in Downing Street but excluded the defence intelligence staff's lifetime experts; vague and unexplained bits of intelligence appearing in the dossier as gospel; sloppy use of language; and a "weird 'last call' for intelligence like Henry II raving about Thomas Becket - but with 'who will furnish me with the intelligence I need' substituted for 'who will rid me of that turbulent priest'."

Reuters

Senate Panel Expands Scope of Iraq WMD Probe

By Tabassum Zakaria – 12 February 2004

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Senate Intelligence Committee on Thursday decided to expand its investigation into prewar intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction to determine whether statements made by U.S. officials had been supported by the underlying information.

Democrats had been pushing for a broader scope to the inquiry to determine whether the Bush administration exaggerated the intelligence to make its case for war, but Republicans had resisted the demand.

After much debate, the committee behind closed doors adopted a resolution that said the investigation would go beyond looking at the accuracy of the intelligence on Iraq to also review public statements by U.S. officials between the 1991 Gulf War and the start of last year's U.S.-led invasion to check if they were substantiated by intelligence.

That period would cover the Democratic administration of former President Bill Clinton as well as the current Republican administration of President Bush.

The Iraq war has become a key issue in a presidential election year, with Democrats seeking to paint the Bush White House as having misled the public about the threat posed by Baghdad before the war because no weapons of mass destruction have been found.

Republicans have urged not jumping to conclusions, saying the hunt for biological and chemical weapons and an active nuclear weapons program has not ended.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Pat Roberts, a Kansas Republican, called the agreement a "refinement" of the panel's review.

"The resolution adopted unanimously today illustrates the commitment of all members to a thorough review, to learning the necessary lessons from our experience with Iraq, and to ensuring that our armed forces and policymakers benefit from the best and most reliable intelligence that can be collected," he said in a statement.

INITIAL REPORT

Roberts said he hoped an initial report would be released soon after which the committee would continue to work on recommendations.

Sen. John Rockefeller of West Virginia, the committee's senior Democrat, said the agreement reflected "a difficult and lengthy process" that ended in consensus being reached.

"We will address the question of whether intelligence was exaggerated or misused by reviewing statements by senior policymakers to determine if those statements were substantiated by the intelligence," he said in a statement.

The inquiry will also look at any intelligence activities relating to Iraq conducted by the Policy Counterterrorism Evaluation Group and the Office of Special Plans at the Pentagon. Critics say the controversial Office of Special Plans, now disbanded, had a team sifting through intelligence on Iraq to pick what would support war.

The Senate panel will look at how intelligence agencies used information provided by the Iraqi National Congress, an exile group that before the war was a key ally advising the United States against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The committee inquiry will compare prewar assessments to post-war findings about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and links to terrorism and will review prewar intelligence assessments about post-war Iraq.

The House Intelligence Committee is conducting a separate review of prewar intelligence on Iraq. Its chairman, Rep. Porter Goss, a Florida Republican, earlier this week said his panel had not found anything to suggest that the administration had manipulated intelligence on Iraq.

The White House has appointed a bipartisan commission to investigate intelligence on Iraq's banned weapons. Democrats have questioned whether a commission handpicked by the White House can truly be independent.

Guardian

Iraq inquiry targets 'systems' failures

By Richard Norton-Taylor – 13 February 2004

Members of the Butler inquiry into the intelligence agencies set up by Tony Blair after the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq said last night they will concentrate on failures in "systems" rather than on "the actions of individuals".

In their first public statement since their committee was hastily established last week, their message was that they will not concentrate on the main players in the dossier drafting exercise, notably Alastair Campbell, the prime minister's former communications chief, and John Scarlett, chairman of the joint intelligence committee.

The two men developed a relationship which many senior Whitehall and intelligence officials regarded as far too close.

The committee, under the former cabinet secretary, Lord Butler, said witnesses will be questioned by its members and not by lawyers, and that the inquiry will be carried out in private. It will focus "principally on structures, systems and processes rather than on the actions of individuals", and will report by the end of July.

The inquiry is charged with investigating "the accuracy of intelligence on Iraqi WMD ... examine any discrepancies between the intelligence gathered, evaluated and used by the government before the conflict ..."

Its remit also includes "the global trade in WMD", something which will please the intelligence agencies after the discovery of the alleged nuclear black market involving nuclear materials, Libya, Pakistan, and other countries.

The committee includes Sir John Chilcott, the former permanent secretary at the Northern Ireland Office, Field Marshal Lord Inge, former chief of the defence staff, and the two senior Labour and Tory members of the intelligence and security committee, Ann Taylor and Michael Mates.

Associated Press

Kay: Bush Should Admit Error on Iraq WMD

By Barry Schweid – 13 February 2004

WASHINGTON - Former U.S. weapons inspector David Kay is advising President Bush to acknowledge he was wrong about hidden storehouses of weapons in Iraq and move ahead with overhauling the intelligence process.

In an Associated Press interview, Kay said the "serious burden of evidence" suggests Saddam Hussein did not have caches of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons at the beginning of the Iraqi war, but was seriously engaged in developing missiles.

"You are better off if you acknowledge error and say we have learned from it and move ahead," Kay said in a 90-minute session Thursday with AP editors and reporters.

"I'm afraid if you don't acknowledge error, and everybody knows why you are afraid to acknowledge error, your political opponents will seize on it, the press will seize on it, and no one will give you credit," Kay said.

Since resigning last month, Kay has said repeatedly that U.S. intelligence was wrong in claiming that Saddam had stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons and advanced nuclear weapons programs. Those programs were the main justification for the Iraq war.

U.N. and U.S. searches have failed to find the weapons, and Bush has appointed a bipartisan commission to conduct an investigation. Democrats in the meantime are accusing the administration of misleading the American public.

White House press secretary Scott McClellan, asked about the suggestion that Bush acknowledge error, said Kay "has said the regime was possibly more dangerous than we thought before the war. He has pointed out that, absolutely yes, he agrees that it was a gathering threat."

He pointed out that Bush has said he had expected to find weapons in Iraq.

Bush and other officials insist weapons still could be discovered. In an interview on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press" program last weekend, Bush said, "They could be hidden, they could have been transported to another country." Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has also said he believes weapons could still be uncovered.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said this week he was surprised that the inspectors did not find the weapons in Iraq. "We presented what we believed the truth to be at the time," he told the House International Relations Committee.

Kay said satellites have shown a lot of traffic going from Iraq to Syria, but that U.S. investigators could not figure out what was being transported and "Syria wouldn't help."

"My only serious regret about the continued holding on to these hopes that eventually we will find it (weapons) is it allows us to avoid the hard steps necessary to reform the process," the former U.N. and International Atomic Energy Agency inspector said.

Kay stepped down from his role as CIA adviser for the weapons search after the military diverted resources from the search to bolster security for troops and fight insurgents. He described a constant battle to keep his staff of 1,400, in which he initially prevailed but began to lose ground in the fall. He said he wasn't informed of the final changes until after the decision had been made.

Without flatly ruling out the weapons might turn up, Kay said his search was complicated by the fact that Iraqis quizzed about Saddam's weapons programs "will lie to you without embarrassment."

Despite the lack of weapons of mass destruction, Kay said, Iraq had an aggressive program to develop missiles assisted by foreign technology and scientists.

Some of the scientists eventually left the country but they still helped Saddam by transmitting information to Iraq electronically, he said.

"We have absolute evidence and proof," Kay said. But he declined to identify those who he said helped Iraq or their countries.

Kay also said "the dominance of analytical opinion" was that two trailers found in northern Iraq were meant to make hydrogen for balloons, not biological weapons. CIA Director George Tenet said last week that the issue was still under debate.

Part of the problem, Kay said, was that the trailers had never been used for anything and that their equipment was not well suited for either hydrogen or biological weapons production. Documents and testimony from Iraqis point strongly toward the hydrogen idea, he said.

Another issue was the discovery of thousands of high-strength aluminum tubes in Iraq. Before the war, Bush administration officials said those tubes were meant to be used in centrifuges to make nuclear bomb fuel out of uranium.

Although Tenet said the issue was still open, Kay said analysts have concluded Iraq had no active nuclear program.

"There's no substantial disagreement that there was no centrifuge program," Kay said.

The most likely explanation for the tubes, Kay said, is that they were to be used for artillery rockets.

Kay repeated statements that he did not believe analysts felt pressured to shape their reports to bolster the case for war, a claim made by some Democrats.

Asked whether analysts believed their findings had been distorted, Kay said: "Were some people uncomfortable about some of the rhetoric? I think the fair answer to that is 'yes.'" He stressed that analysts are generally uncomfortable with any change to their wording, but understand that is the nature of politics.

"Politicians choose the best possible argument that will support the course of action they've decided on regardless of whether it's foreign policy or not," he said. "Is that cherry picking? That's the nature of the political process."

Observer

British spy op wrecked peace move

Martin Bright, Peter Beaumont and Jo Tuckman in Mexico – 15 February 2004

A joint British and American spying operation at the United Nations scuppered a last-ditch initiative to avert the invasion of Iraq, The Observer can reveal.

Senior UN diplomats from Mexico and Chile provided new evidence last week that their missions were spied on, in direct contravention of international law.

The former Mexican ambassador to the UN, Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, told The Observer that US officials intervened last March, just days before the war against Saddam was launched, to halt secret negotiations for a compromise resolution to give weapons inspectors more time to complete their work.

Aguilar Zinser claimed that the intervention could only have come as a result of surveillance of a closed diplomatic meeting where the compromise was being hammered out. He said it was clear the Americans knew about the confidential discussions in advance. "When they [the US] found out, they said, "You should know that we don't like the idea and we don't like you to promote it."

The revelations follow claims by Chile's former ambassador to the UN, Juan Valdes, that he found hard evidence of bugging at his mission in New York last March. The new claims emerged as The Observer has discovered that Government officials seriously considered dropping the prosecution against Katharine Gun, the translator at the GCHQ surveillance centre who first disclosed details of the espionage operation last March.

According to Whitehall sources, officials feared the prosecution would leave the Government and the intelligence services open to embarrassing disclosures. They were known to be concerned that the 29-year-old Chinese language specialist would be seen as a patriotic young woman acting out of principle to reveal an illegal operation rather than as someone who betrayed her country's secrets. They are also known to be worried that any trial would force the disclosure of Government legal advice on intervention in Iraq, described by one source as 'at best ambiguous'.

Gun has attracted high profile support, particularly in the US, where her case has been taken up by Hollywood stars, civil rights campaigners and members of Congress. Yesterday, Oscar nominee, Sean Penn, told The Observer that Gun was 'a hero of the human spirit'. Aguilar Zinser also paid tribute: 'She is serving a noble cause by denouncing what could be illegal acts,' he said.

The operation by the US National Security Agency and GCHQ was revealed by The Observer last March, after a leaked memo showed US spies had begun an intelligence 'surge' on members of the UN security council in which they needed British help.

Liberal Democrat Foreign Affairs spokesman Menzies Campbell last night called on Foreign Secretary Jack Straw to clarify Britain's role: 'If the allegations that these operations had ministerial authority are well-founded, then it could hardly be more serious for the Government. There will be understandable uproar at the UN. On the other hand, if the eavesdropping took place without Ministers knowing, then the question is, who was in charge?'

The Mexican government confirmed last week that diplomatic letters were sent to Straw last December asking him to clarify whether GCHQ was involved in spying on its UN allies. They have yet to receive a response. The Foreign Office refused to comment on the new allegations.

But the revelations of the former Mexican ambassador will not go away as he is planning a book about his experiences at the United Nations.

Aguilar Zinser told The Observer that the meeting of diplomats from six nations took place about a week before the decision not to put the resolution to the vote. They were working on a draft document of a compromise solution when the American intervened.

"We had yet to get our capitals to go along with it, it was at a very early stage. Only the people in the room knew what the document said. The surprising thing was the very rapid flow of information to [US] quarters.

"The meeting was in the evening and they call us in the morning before the meeting of the Security Council and they say, 'We appreciate you trying to find ideas, but this is not a good idea.' I say, "Thanks, that's good to know." We were looking for a compromise and they [the US] say, "Do not attempt it."

OPERATION ROCKINGHAM

BERICHTEN

Sunday Herald

Blair's secret weapon

By Neil Mackay – 8 June 2003

Investigation: A covert project, set up by the UK government, 'cherry-picked' intelligence to fit the hidden agenda of justifying war with Iraq, reports Neil Mackay

It was in the immediate aftermath of the first Gulf war and Britain knew even then that Saddam Hussein would one day have to be deposed. Allied forces had stopped short of ousting the Iraq dictator, but the British government was convinced it would one day have to finish the job.

The problem was how to convince the world that even a defeated Iraq still posed a serious threat. The answer came in 1991, with the setting up of a secret military intelligence operation whose existence has only now been uncovered by the Sunday Herald in the wake of damaging claims that Tony Blair and George Bush exaggerated intelligence reports to justify their invasion of Iraq this year.

The covert project was called Operation Rockingham and it was designed specifically to 'cherry-pick' information which pointed towards Saddam having a WMD stockpile that he could use imminently. Right up until the outbreak of war, the staff of Operation Rockingham, which was set up by the defence intelligence staff within the Ministry of Defence, deliberately overlooked 'mountains' of reports and intelligence documents which pointed towards Saddam destroying his arsenal and instead used 'selective intelligence' from just a tiny pool of data to create a false and misleading picture that the Iraqi ruler was a direct threat to the West.

Proof of Operation Rockingham came to light in a Sunday Herald investigation and its existence was backed up in a series of astonishingly frank interviews with Scott Ritter, the former chief weapons inspector in Iraq who served on the staff of General Norman Schwarzkopf -- who led the allied forces in the first Gulf war -- before joining the UN weapons inspections team, Unscm. Ritter was also a US military intelligence officer for eight years. His claims about Rockingham are supported by UK parliamentary documents and briefings with other British intelligence sources.

'As inspections developed throughout the 1990s it became clear that Unscm were accomplishing a great deal,' said Ritter. 'This became a liability for the UK and the US. Because of the level of Iraqi disarmament, France, China and Russia began talking about lifting sanctions. This wasn't what Britain and America wanted to hear -- they wanted sanctions and regime change.

'Operation Rockingham became part of an effort to maintain a public mindset that Iraq was not in compliance with the inspections. They had to sustain the allegation that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, even though Unscm was showing the opposite.'

Operation Rockingham began to liaise with Unscm -- ostensibly it was there to share intelligence with the weapons inspectors from within the United Kingdom spying community, but it soon became clear that this covert operation had a hidden agenda: deliberately creating a fake picture that Saddam was armed to the teeth.

Ritter added: 'Operation Rockingham cherry-picked intelligence. It received hard data but had a pre-ordained outcome in mind. It only put forward a small percentage of the facts when most were ambiguous or noted no WMD.' Staff once connected to Rockingham are now thought to be involved in the new Iraqi Survey Group which has been sent to Iraq in a bid to find WMDs.

To back up claims that Operation Rockingham was deliberately 'cherry-picking' intelligence and producing misleading reports, Ritter described how its staff blatantly ignored proof of Saddam's compliance. 'Britain and America were involved in a programme of joint exploitation of intelligence from Iraqi defectors. There were mountains of information coming from these defectors, and Rockingham staff were receiving it and then selectively culling reports that sustained the claims that weapons of mass destruction were in existence. They ignored the vast majority of the data which mitigated against such claims.

'In theory, Rockingham wasn't dangerous,' Ritter said, 'in theory, it was a clearing house for intelligence. But what is dangerous is the policy behind Rockingham. When I was an intelligence officer, I didn't tell my commander what he wanted to hear, I told him what the facts were. In combat, we have an old saying -- if you lie, you die.

'Operations like Rockingham become a danger to democracy if they lose their integrity. They are behind the scenes, in the shadows and away from public scrutiny. When a government is corrupt by way of such a policy, the public has a hard time holding the government accountable. We were all subject to a programme of mass deception, but now the lie has been exposed. In practice, Rockingham was dangerous.'

Ritter insists that the intelligence officers involved in cherry-picking selective intelligence were acting directly on political orders. 'In terms of using selective intelligence,' Ritter said, 'this policy was coming from the very highest levels.'

The only written reference to Operation Rockingham is found in a 1998 British parliamentary report. In it, Brigadier Richard Holmes, who was giving evidence to the defence committee, refers, in an off-the-cuff aside, to Operation Rockingham and linked it to Unscop inspections in Iraq.

Some of the Rockingham staff were military officers, others came from the intelligence services, such as MI6, and others were civilian ministry of defence personnel. From 1991 to 1998 it had three chiefs, one man and two women. Anyone who headed up Rockingham was guaranteed a very senior intelligence job after their stint on the operation.

Its tactics, according to Ritter, included leaking false information to the weapons inspectors, and then using the resulting inspectors' search as 'proof' of the weapons' existence. 'Rockingham was the source, in 1993, of some very controversial information which led to inspections of a suspected ballistic missile site,' said Ritter. 'We went to search for the missiles but found nothing. However, our act of searching allowed the US and UK to say that the missiles existed.'

He said the Rockingham team 'played (the inspectors) like fiddles', adding: 'Rockingham was spinning reports and emphasising reports that showed non-compliance and quashing those which showed compliance.'

The rebel Labour MP and father of the house, Tam Dalyell, is to raise the Sunday Herald's investigation into Operation Rockingham in the Commons on Thursday during a defence debate and demand an explanation from the government about the use of selective intelligence. Ritter has offered to give evidence to the British parliament.

Both the MoD and Downing Street refused to comment on Ritter's allegations about Operation Rockingham, saying they didn't make statements on intelligence matters. However, a number of British intelligence sources have spoken to the Sunday Herald about the operation. One said: 'I'd like to know if troops were sacrificed because we kept hyping up weapons of mass destruction.'

MI6, according to both intelligence sources and Ritter, were also involved in 'selective intelligence gathering'. However, referring to Operation Rockingham, Ritter said: 'MI6 were more honest ... However, they did have a bevy of human intelligence sources who were handpicked to sustain the concept of WMD. Other sources who contradicted evidence about WMD were ignored. Only data which sustained the myth was used.'

Ritter's revelations come at the worst of times for the US and UK. In America, the Senate and House of Representatives are preparing for a series of hearings into alleged manipulation of intelligence which deceived the US public into backing war, and in the UK, Blair is under fire following sustained claims by the intelligence sources that his government 'spun' intelligence to persuade parliament and people to support war.

A pre-war report by America's defence intelligence agency has also come to light which concludes there was 'no reliable information' that Iraq had chemical weapons. It dates from September 2002 when US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld was publicly claiming Saddam had huge WMD stockpiles. It says there is no proof 'on whether Iraq is producing and stockpiling chemical weapons or whether Iraq has -- or will -- establish its chemical warfare agent production facilities'. President Bush has vowed that America will find WMD in Iraq. Rumsfeld said on Thursday that he's confident his pre-war claims will be proved -- even though he claimed the previous week that Saddam might have destroyed all his WMD before the war.

The current UN chief weapons inspector, Dr Hans Blix, has also added to the woes of Bush and Blair by saying that the allies 'jumped to conclusions' that Iraq posed a security threat. At an appearance before the UN security council on Thursday, he added: 'It is not justified to (conclude) that something exists because it is unaccounted for.' Blix said there was no evidence that Saddam continued with his banned weapons programme after the 1991 Gulf war.

Blix later attacked the credibility of US-UK intelligence saying: 'We went to a great many sites that were given to us by intelligence, and only in three cases did we find anything -- and they did not relate to weapons of mass destruction. That shook me a bit ... I thought 'My God, if this is the best intelligence they had and we find nothing, what about the rest?''

Both Ritter and British intelligence sources said the selective intelligence gathered by Operation Rockingham would have been passed to the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) which was behind the dossiers published by Tony Blair and his government, claiming Iraq had WMDs. The most contentious parts

of the government's case for war was that Iraq could launch WMDs in just 45 minutes and that Saddam tried to buy uranium from Niger. Intelligence sources say the 45 minutes claim was inserted at Downing Street's behest to make the document 'sexier' and the International Atomic Energy Agency has said the uranium claim was based on forged documents.

British intelligence sources have equated the JIC with the Office of Special Plans (OSP), an intelligence agency set up inside the Pentagon by Rumsfeld. It has been accused of gathering selective intelligence at the request of its political masters to build a misleading case for war. Ritter says Operation Rockingham was supplying the JIC with intelligence reports, together with MI6. One British intelligence source said: 'The JIC is, in my view, the mirror organisation of the OSP. They both did the same thing. The JIC was receiving information from all the intelligence agencies.'

Blair said during Prime Minister's Questions in the Commons on Wednesday that the intelligence dossier published in September was 'based, in large part, on the work of the Joint Intelligence Committee'. He also said the claim that Iraq was trying to get uranium from Niger was 'judged by the (JIC) at the time to be correct'. Intelligence sources say the Niger claim emanated from Italian Intelligence. The Italians had apparently been asked to help the US and UK make the case for war and passed the document to the British. 'I don't know whether the Italians were involved in the forgery, or if they purchased the forgery, but everyone knew it was nonsense,' an intelligence source claimed.

In the Commons, Blair added that there was 'no attempt by any official or minister ... to override the intelligence judgements of the (JIC), including the so-called 45 minutes, a judgement made by the [JIC] and by them alone'. Intelligence sources say the 45 minute claim was linked to the Iraqi National Congress (INC), the controversial Iraqi opposition-in-exile organisation. If any connection to the INC was proved, it would completely discredit the 45 minute claim as no intelligence agency could withstand allegations that the INC would have exaggerated, and possibly distorted, information in order to secure the fall of Saddam. A UK intelligence source described the 45 minute claim as 'bollocks' and Ritter said the vast majority of information stemming from the INC was 'fabricated'.

As part of the inquiry into the nature of the intelligence leading up to the Iraq war, Blair has promised to give parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee 'all JIC assessments' and allow MP committee members to interview those 'who drew up the JIC report'. The Prime Minister has continually passed responsibility for the nature of intelligence to the JIC saying: 'The intelligence that formed the basis of what we put out last September, that intelligence came from JIC assessment.'

Blair, however, has refused to grant an open, independent judicial inquiry. One British intelligence source added: 'The JIC briefed the PM. I think it will be the spooks who take the fall for this.' The JIC is composed of senior members of all the UK's intelligence services. 'They were charged to get specific intelligence on WMD and to make a case for war,' a source said. 'But they were doing that on the say-so of politicians.'

Ritter insisted that Unscm destroyed most of Iraq's WMDs and doubts Saddam could have rebuilt his stocks. He says 90 to 95% of Iraq's WMD were destroyed by inspections and believes the remainder were either used or destroyed during the first Gulf war. Despite describing himself as a card-carrying Republican who voted for Bush, he has called the president a 'liar' over Iraq. This is his summation of the allied case for war: 'Not one single piece of information was proved,' said Ritter. 'We went to war based on garbage.'

Guardian

The very secret service

By Michael Meacher - 21 November 2003

David Kelly referred obliquely to Operation Rockingham. What role did this mysterious cell play in justifying the Iraq war?

David Kelly, giving evidence to the prime minister's intelligence and security committee in closed session on July 16 - the day before his suicide - made a comment the significance of which has so far been missed. He said: "Within the defence intelligence services I liaise with the Rockingham cell." Unfortunately nobody on the committee followed up this lead, which is a pity because the Rockingham reference may turn out to be very important indeed.

What is the role of the Rockingham cell? The evidence comes from a former chief weapons inspector in Iraq, Scott Ritter, who had been a US military intelligence officer for eight years and served on the staff of General Schwarzkopf, the US commander of allied forces in the first Gulf war. He has described himself as a card-carrying Republican who voted for Bush, but he distinguished himself in insisting before the Iraq war,

and was almost alone in doing so, that almost all of Iraq's WMD had been destroyed as a result of inspections, and the rest either used or destroyed in the first Gulf war. In terms, therefore, of proven accuracy of judgment and weight of experience of the workings of western military intelligence, he is a highly reliable source.

In an interview in the Scottish Sunday Herald in June, Ritter said: "Operation Rockingham [a unit set up by defence intelligence staff within the MoD in 1991] cherry-picked intelligence. It received hard data, but had a preordained outcome in mind. It only put forward a small percentage of the facts when most were ambiguous or noted no WMD... It became part of an effort to maintain a public mindset that Iraq was not in compliance with the inspections. They had to sustain the allegation that Iraq had WMD [when] Unscm was showing the opposite."

Rockingham was, in fact, a clearing house for intelligence, but one with a predetermined political purpose. According to Ritter, "Britain and America were involved [in the 1990s and up to 2003] in a programme of joint exploitation of intelligence from Iraqi defectors. There were mountains of information coming from these defectors, and Rockingham staff were receiving it and then selectively culling [picking out] reports that sustained the [WMD] claims. They ignored the vast majority of the data which mitigated against such claims."

Only one other official reference to Operation Rockingham is on record, in an aside by Brigadier Richard Holmes when giving evidence to the defence select committee in 1998. He linked it to Unscm inspections, but it was clear that the Rockingham staff included military officers and intelligence services representatives together with civilian MoD personnel. Within, therefore, the UK intelligence establishment - MI6, MI5, GCHQ and defence intelligence - Rockingham clearly had a central, though covert, role in seeking to prove an active Iraqi WMD programme.

One of its tactics, which Ritter cites, is its leaking of false information to weapons inspectors, and then, when the search is fruitless, using that as "proof" of the weapons' existence. He quotes a case in 1993 when "Rockingham was the source of some very controversial information which led to inspections of a suspected ballistic missile site. We ... found nothing. However, our act of searching allowed the US and UK to say that the missiles existed."

A parallel exercise was set up by Donald Rumsfeld in the US, named the Office of Special Plans. The purpose of this intelligence agency was the provision of selective intelligence which met the demands of its political masters. Similarly, in the case of the UK, Ritter insists that Rockingham officers were acting on political orders "from the very highest levels".

Both Ritter and British intelligence sources have said that the selective intelligence gathered by Operation Rockingham would have been passed to the joint intelligence committee (JIC), which was behind the dossiers published by the UK government claiming Iraq had WMDs.

The significance of this is highlighted by Tony Blair's statement: "The intelligence that formed the basis of what we put out last September... came from the JIC assessment." So Rockingham was an important tributary flowing into the government's rationale for the war.

This shoe-horning of intelligence data to fit pre-fixed political goals, both in the US and the UK, throws new light on the two most controversial elements of the government's dossier of September 2002. One was that Iraq could launch WMD within 45 minutes. Was this "sexed up" on the orders of No 10 or - derived allegedly from an Iraqi brigadier via an informant - did Rockingham put a gloss on it to please its political masters? The other highly contentious item in the dossier was that Saddam tried to buy uranium yellowcake from Africa. How did material that the International Atomic Energy Agency concluded on February 4 was a blatant forgery come to be included in President Bush's January 28 State of the Union address? And, since the British were named as the source, why did MI6 not spot this outlandish forgery? In fact, they alleged that the Niger claim came from another independent source, which has never been identified. Could this be because this disinformation served the Rockingham purpose only too well?

It is not only the massaging of intelligence that seems to have gone on, but also the suppression of the most reliable assessment of the facts. David Kelly, we now know, had been advising privately prior to the war about the likelihood of Iraqi WMD. He told the foreign affairs select committee: "I have no idea whether there were weapons or not at that time [of the September 2002 dossier]". And to the intelligence and security committee the next day he added: "The 30% probability is what I have been saying all the way through ... I said that to many people ... it was a statement I would have probably made for the last six months." Yet this view from the leading expert within government never saw the light of day. Why not?

If the tabloid headlines the day after the September dossier was published had read: "Blair says only 30% chance Iraq has WMDs" rather than "Brits 45 mins from doom" (the Sun), would the Commons vote still have backed the war? Rarely can the selective use of information have had such drastic consequences. If

there is one conclusion which must flow from the Hutton revelations, it must surely be the demand for a full-scale independent inquiry into the operation of the intelligence services around the top of their command and their interface with the political system.

• Michael Meacher was environment minister, 1997-2003.

Guardian

The role of Operation Rockingham

Letter by Scott Ritter – 29 November 2003

John Morrison's comments (Letters, November 22) on Michael Meacher's article (The very secret service, November 20) leaves much to be desired. While factually correct in the few substantive points made about Operation Rockingham, the letter is disingenuous about the role and impact it played concerning the shaping of British intelligence reports on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and the UN efforts to disarm them.

Given that British intelligence about the status of Iraq's WMD has been shown to be fundamentally flawed, the genesis of this failure should be addressed. Operation Rockingham's role in this is not small.

Morrison speaks of the "independent" nature of the intelligence work conducted by Operation Rockingham. The reality is that it institutionalised a process of "cherry-picking" intelligence produced by the UN inspections in Iraq that skewed UK intelligence about Iraqi WMD towards a preordained outcome that was more in line with British government policy than it was reflective of ground truth.

Many examples can be offered to counter Morrison's assertions that Operation Rockingham was little more than a "tiny intelligence cell", the sole purpose of which was to provide intelligence leads to the UN inspectors. Far from being the "shining example of the effective use of intelligence in support of the international community", Operation Rockingham was, in fact, more reflective of an institutional predisposition towards the politicised massaging of intelligence data that resulted in the massive failure of intelligence that we all have tragically witnessed regarding Iraq and WMD.

The role played by Operation Rockingham in this failure should be fully investigated by an independent committee of parliament. I stand fully prepared to support such an investigation in any way possible, including the provision of evidence under oath. I hope that Morrison would be as well.
Scott Ritter - Former UN weapons inspector.

UK House of Commons

House of Commons Hansard Written Answers for 12 Jan 2004 (pt 13)

12 January 2004

[...] Operation Rockingham

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the role and function is of the unit set up under Operation Rockingham; what its cost was in the last financial year; and if he will make a statement. [146708]

Mr. Ingram: Operation Rockingham was established in 1991 to provide support to UNSCOM inspections in Iraq. It has subsequently also supported UNMOVIC inspections and currently supports the work of the Iraq Survey Group. In the last financial year (2002–03), the cost of the team was £78,723.53. [...]

Guardian

'The public must look to what is missing from the report'

By Scott Ritter – 30 January 2004

Tony Blair's government is heralding the Hutton report as a victory, since it absolves it of any wrongdoing regarding the "sexing up" of intelligence about the threat posed by Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

The Hutton report was released at the same time as the former head of the Iraq Survey Group, David Kay, testified before the US Congress that there appear to be no WMD in Iraq, and that the intelligence was "all wrong". Given this, the Hutton findings have taken on an almost Alice in Wonderland aura. By focusing on a single news story broadcast by the BBC, Hutton has created a political smokescreen behind which Blair is

seeking to distract the British public from the harsh reality that his government went to war based on unsustainable allegations that have yet to be backed up with a single piece of substantive fact. Lord Hutton was in a position to expose this; he chose not to. It is left to the public, therefore, to carefully examine his report, looking not for what it contains but for what is missing.

A review of testimony submitted to the inquiry elicits a single reference to Operation Rockingham, a secretive intelligence activity buried inside the Defence Intelligence Staff, which dealt with Iraqi WMD and activities of the UN special commission (Unscm). This acknowledged that Rockingham managed the interaction between David Kelly, the weapons expert whose suicide led to the Hutton inquiry, and the UN. But Lord Hutton dug no further into this. If he had, some interesting insight would have been provided on several issues of concern, including the possibility of the "shaping" of UN intelligence data by Rockingham to serve the policy objectives of its masters in the Foreign Office and the joint intelligence committee.

Dr Kelly became Rockingham's go-to person for translating the often confusing data that came out of Unscm into concise reporting that could be forwarded to analysts in the British intelligence community, as well as to political decision-makers. Rockingham was in a position to know that, increasingly, the facts emerging from inside Iraq supported Baghdad's contention that there was no longer a biological weapons programme in Iraq, or any hidden biological weapons or agents.

But this data received little or no attention inside Rockingham. Dr Kelly was not only an active participant in the investigations in Iraq, but also a key player in shaping the findings to the British government. He was also one of the key behind-the-scenes advocates of the government position. For some time, the government had allowed him unfettered access to the press, where he spoke, often on the record, about his work with Unscm.

Any probing of Rockingham by Lord Hutton would have exposed it for what it had become - a big player in the shaping of information regarding Iraq's WMD inside the government and, through its media connections, in shaping public opinion as well.

Given Rockingham's penetration of Unscm at virtually every level, there existed a seamless flow of data from Iraq, through New York, to London, carefully shaped from beginning to end by people working not for the UN security council, but for the British government. Iraq's guilt, preordained by the government, became a self-fulfilling prophesy that only collapsed when occupied Iraq failed to disgorge that which Rockingham, and the rest of the UK intelligence community, had said must exist.

KRONIEK 2004

januari	Lord Robertson vertrekt als Secretaris-Generaal van de NAVO
1 januari	Ierland neemt voorzitterschap EU over
1 januari	Einde Nederlands voorzitterschap OVSE
1 januari	Verenigde Staten nemen voorzitterschap G8 over
20 januari - 26 maart	Eerste sessie Conference on Disarmament, Geneve
21-25 januari	World Economic Forum, Davos
6-7 februari	Annual Munich Security Conference, München
20 februari	Parlementsverkiezingen Iran
27 februari	Bezoek Schröder aan Washington
maart	Parlementsverkiezingen Spanje
1 maart	Ministeriële bijeenkomst VS-EU, Washington
8 maart	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
14 maart	Presidentsverkiezingen Rusland
5 april	Parlementsverkiezingen Indonesië
5-23 april	UN Disarmament Commission, jaarlijkse bijeenkomst, New York
15 april	Parlementsverkiezingen Zuid-Korea
26 april – 7 mei	NPT PrepCom, New York
mei	Bijeenkomst Chemical Weapons Convention, Den Haag
1 mei	Toetreding diverse landen tot de Europese Unie
10 mei -25 juni	Tweede sessie Conference on Disarmament, Geneve
juni	Verkiezingen Europees Parlement
juni	Parlementsverkiezingen Japan
8-10 juni	G-8 Summit, Sea Island, Georgia
28-29 juni	NAVO-top, Istanbul
1 juli	Nederland neemt voorzitterschap EU over
19-30 juli	Biological Weapons Convention, expert meeting, Geneve
september	Start Algemene Vergadering Verenigde Naties, New York
26 juli – 10 september	Derde sessie Conference on Disarmament, Geneve
13 september	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
20-24 september	IAEA General Conference, Wenen
27 september	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
2 november	Presidentsverkiezingen Verenigde Staten
25 november	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
6-10 december	Jaarlijkse bijeenkomst Biological Weapons Convention, Geneve

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Relevante delen van de partijprogramma's van de Nederlandse politieke partijen, plus citaten van politici op het terrein van oorlog en vrede.
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Overzicht van recente ontwikkelingen in de transatlantische betrekkingen, met name binnen de NAVO, mede naar aanleiding van uitspraken in de State of the Union.
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16. De NAVO-top in Praag – documenten
17. Aanval op Irak (3) – het inspectieregim
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19. Veiligheidsvraagstukken en de verkiezingen (2) – standpunten van de politieke partijen
Een update voor de verkiezingen van 22 januari 2003
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