



Ninth Report
of the
Foreign Affairs Committee

Session 2002-03

The Decision to go to War in Iraq

Further Response of the Secretary of State for
Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

*Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for
Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
By Command of Her Majesty
February 2004*

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In its initial response to the Foreign Affairs Committee's Report on the Decision to go to War in Iraq (Cm 6062), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office deferred replying to recommendations 9-14 of the Report until after Lord Hutton's Report of the Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Dr David Kelly CMG. Lord Hutton reported on 28 January. The FCO's responses to the deferred recommendations are:

9. We conclude that the 45 minutes claim did not warrant the prominence given to it in the dossier, because it was based on intelligence from a single, uncorroborated source. We recommend that the Government explain why the claim was given such prominence. (Paragraph 70)

We disagree that the 45 minute claim was given undue prominence. It was included in Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) assessments, when the underlying intelligence became available. It was consistent with previous JIC judgements on Iraq's command and control arrangements. Other issues were given a similar level of prominence in the dossier: for example the judgement that Iraq was building up its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) capability and that it was concealing its programmes.

10. We further recommend that in its response to this Report the Government set out whether it still considers the September dossier to be accurate in what it states about the 45 minute claim, in the light of subsequent events. (Paragraph 71)

The Government stands by its interpretation in the dossier of the intelligence which was then available on the 45 minutes claim. The Government supports the work of the Iraq Survey Group and awaits its final report.

11. We conclude that Alastair Campbell did not play any role in The Inclusion of the 45 minutes claim in the September dossier. (Paragraph 77)

This is a statement of fact.

12. We conclude that it was wrong for Alastair Campbell or any Special Adviser to have chaired a meeting on an intelligence matter, and we recommend that this practice cease. (Paragraph 79)

The purpose of the 9 September meeting was not to review or assess intelligence, but to discuss public presentation of Iraq policy, including the publication of the WMD dossier. It was entirely appropriate for Alastair Campbell to call and chair such a meeting.

13. We conclude that on the basis of the evidence available to us Alastair Campbell did not exert or seek to exert improper influence on the drafting of the September dossier. (Paragraph 84)

We agree.

14. We conclude that the claims made in the September dossier were in all probability well founded on the basis of the intelligence then available, although as we have already stated we have concerns about the emphasis given to some of them. We further conclude that, in the absence of reliable evidence that intelligence personnel have either complained about or sought to distance themselves from the content of the dossier, allegations of politically inspired meddling cannot credibly be established. (Paragraph 86)

We welcome the Committee's conclusion that the claims in the September dossier were well founded on the basis of the intelligence then available. As stated above we do not agree that some of them were given undue emphasis. We also welcome the conclusion that allegations of politically inspired meddling cannot credibly be established.



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