

British Government Coverup and Whitewash of Iraq War Crimes: The Chilcot Inquiry

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In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

Amidst howls of “whitewash” from media commentators and interested observers of all political hues, it seems the findings of the Chilcot Inquiry in to the Iraq war are finally to be published by the end of this year.

The Inquiry, Chaired by Sir John Chilcot ran from autumn 2009 to February 2011. Their Report is expected to run to several thousand pages with the total cost incurred from the date of the establishment of the hearings: “on 15th June 2009 up to 31st March 2012 ... £6,129,000.”

As of 16th May this year: “ On the present timetable, the Inquiry may incur further costs of some £2 million.”(1, pdf.)

From June 2013 to November 2013 the Inquiry: “submitted ten requests covering some two hundred Cabinet-level discussions and twenty five Notes” from Tony Blair to President Bush “and more than one hundred and thirty records of conversations between either” Tony Blair or subsequent Prime Minister Gordon Brown and President Bush.(2)

Finally, on the 28th May Sir John published his letter (3,pdf) to Cabinet Secretary Sir Jeremy Heywood recording their:

“agreement on the principles that will underpin disclosure of material from Cabinet level discussions between the (former) UK Prime Minister and the President of the United States which the Inquiry has asked to use in its Report ... My colleagues and I judge that this material is vital to the public understanding of the Inquiry’s conclusions.”

In the letter he also recalls some of the hurdles that have been put in the Inquiry’s path by the British government, past and present.

Sir Jeremy (NB: who was Private Secretary to Tony Blair prior to the 2003 invasion) appears to have followed in the footsteps of his predecessor Sir Gus O’Donnell who: “wrote to the Inquiry in January 2011 (making) clear that there was no prospect of reaching agreement that notes from Mr. Blair or records of discussions” (between him and President Bush) “should be disclosed in their entirety, even with redactions. Accordingly, the requests ... submitted last summer were for permission to disclose quotes or gists of the content. We have concluded they are sufficient to explain our conclusions.”

In July and August last year: “some potential gaps in the material provided by the

government” had been identified which have now been addressed, Sir John further notes in his letter.

Now it is down to “gists and quotes” from the notes, documents and a hundred and thirty conversations: Consideration will be based on the principle that this material should not reflect President Bush’s views.” Agreement is also: that the use of direct quotations from the documents should be the minimum necessary ...”

George W. Bush, with his Administration devised the horror of “Shock and Awe”, planned to attack Iraq two years before 11th September 2001, devising 935 public lies during the planning (4) and who said on 11th November 2002: “... for the sake of protecting our friends and allies, the United States will lead a mighty coalition of freedom-loving nations and disarm Saddam Hussein.

“See, I can’t imagine what was going through the mind of this enemy when they hit us. They probably thought the national religion was materialism, that we were so selfish and so self-absorbed that after 9/11/2001 this mighty nation would take a couple of steps back and file a lawsuit.” (5)

In spite of this:

“the material should not reflect George W. Bush’s views.” In light of the enormity of the breaches of international law and crimes seemingly devised by the Bush and Blair Administrations the level of protection and kid glove handling of the alleged culprits might be near unprecedented.

It should also be remembered that Baroness Eliza Manningham-Buller, former head of MI5 (2002-2007) told the Chilcot Inquiry that the Bush line that Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida were connected has no “credible intelligence” a view also held by the CIA she said – and that Saddam had “nothing” to do with 9/11. She added: “Arguably, we gave Osama bin Laden his Iraqi jihad.” The invasion also: “ radicalised young Muslims in Britain (Evidence 20th July 2010.)

However, not all are happy. On the BBC’s “Today” morning news programme, former Prime Minister Sir John Major, normally an unusually quiet and conciliatory man for a politician said:

“I think it is a pity the papers are going to be withheld for several reasons. Firstly, they will leave suspicions unresolved and those suspicions will fester and maybe worsen.

“Secondly, in many ways I think withholding them is going to be very embarrassing for Tony Blair, not least of course because he brought the Freedom of Information Act into law when he was in government.”

He pointed out that “strict rules” prevented the current government from getting involved, but the Labour Party or indeed Mr Blair could contacts the Cabinet Office and clear the full release of the documents.

“Mr Blair could, the previous Labour government could, and maybe in their own interests they should think about that because otherwise, as I say, this will fester and I don’t think anybody wishes to see that”, he stated. Of course for Blair to make such a request would be akin to a multi-millionaire alleged war criminal turkey voting for Christmas.

Former Labour MP Andrew Mackinlay also a previous Member of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee accused Chilcot of “surrender” adding:

“It is a bad, bad day for democracy and justice. The Establishment of this country, and the security and intelligence services, have won again. Truth has lost out ... We were lied to as a country time and time again on Iraq. The lies endure.”(6)

Rose Gentle whose soldier son Gordon was just nineteen when he was killed in Iraq in 2004, feels Blair himself is “behind” the gagging decision. She will not be alone, particularly as current Prime Minister David Cameron has talked of his admiration for him, regarding him as a “mentor” it would seem.

The most prescient and amusing account of the whole outrageous government cover up come from the blog of the most searingly honest and astute of MPs., Paul Flynn. The first three paragraphs of his 30th May blog on the subject are far too good to paraphrase:

“Surprised to hear today that I was lined up to do battle on the Chilcot betrayal with ‘Peter Jay.’ Even more surprised he used the words ‘shits’ three times at noon on the eminently respectable BBC Wales.

“I’ve not heard his name for years. But I remember him as a broadcast journalist son-in-law of Jim Callaghan. There were whispers of nepotism when he was appointed, without diplomatic qualifications, ambassador to the USA. His spell there was distinguished by personal indiscretions – including allegedly fathering a child with his children’s’ nanny. His colourful career afterwards included a spell as Chief of Staff to Robert Maxwell. In company Maxwell always called him ‘Mr Ambassador’.

“From today’s performance on BBC Wales, it’s clear he has now become very righteous and correct. He said that only ‘shits’ would want to publish the whole truth on the Bush-Blair correspondence that led to the Iraq War and the deaths of 179 UK soldiers. Is this how diplomats communicate? The loved ones of the fallen had no right to hear the whole truth, Jay explained. Protocol between the UK and USA was a higher priority. His is the authentic voice of yesterday’s contemptible establishment arrogance telling the lower orders ‘ Yours not to reason why. Yours, but to do and die.’”

Cameron of course, is still eyeing his very own war in intervening in Syria, surely not coincidentally, a course urged by Blair – so fearful that he is safely guarded by a large armed protection squad at British taxpayers expense where ever he goes. Incidentally, it seems Tony Blair is again currently bidding for another go as EU President.(8) Given the horrors he unleashed as a Prime Minister of a small island off France, imagine the nightmare if he prevails.

In the light of the sustained campaign in high places to render the Chilcot Inquiry impotent, it is perhaps worth concluding with the Freedom of Information Act the then Prime Minister

Blair introduced in 2000.

He became Prime Minister in 1997. In 1996 he stated of the proposed legislation:

“It is not some isolated constitutional reform that we are proposing with a Freedom of Information Act. It is a change that is absolutely fundamental to how we see politics developing in this country over the next few years...information is power and any government’s attitude about sharing information with the people actually says a great deal about how it views power itself and how it views the relationship between itself and the people who elected it.”

Further, also when in opposition, that: “Such an act would ‘signal a new relationship between government and people: a relationship which sees the public as legitimate stakeholders in the running of the country.’ “(9)

What a long time thirteen years is in politics and after an invasion or two. In his autobiography “A Journey”, published in 2010 he writes:

“Freedom of Information Act. Three harmless words. I look at those words as I write them, and feel like shaking my head ‘til it drops off. You idiot. You naive, foolish, irresponsible nincompoop. There is really no description of stupidity, no matter how vivid, that is adequate. I quake at the imbecility of it.”

Moreover: “Scandals will happen ... The problem with FOI is that it can be used to expose them.” Scandals don’t get much bigger than embarking on an illegal war, destruction of the “Cradle of Civilisation”, manufactured on a pack of lies.

Until, as has been tried on a number of occasions (10,11) someone finally arrests him and delivers him to the International Criminal Court, the least he can do is relieve the British taxpayer of the cost of the Chilcot Inquiry and pay for it out of the millions he has made since the slaughter of an upper estimate of one and a half million Iraqis and his departure from Downing Street.

Perhaps the Court will order his assets stripped, his seven mansions sold and used to compensate, in some small way, the maimed, bereaved, cancer patients resultant from the depleted uranium weapons used in Iraq and Afghanistan under his tenure. Globally, many still dream of international justice that is truly, universally, even handed.

A personal note: I emphatically believed this Inquiry would be yet another whitewash, given the totally establishment figures conducting it. I now believe their eyes and minds were opened to the historic lie-driven horror wrought upon Iraq and that Sir John has stood his ground and done his best against the iron wall of government resistance against this government proclaimed final “Open Inquiry.”

Notes

1. www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn06215.pdf

2. http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/news/update_on_inquiry_progress_-_november_2013.aspx

3. http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/55103/2014-05-28_Chilcot_Heywood.pdf
4. <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/01/23/bush.iraq/>
5. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/11/20021101-2.html>
6. <http://www.hemsworthandsouthelmsallexpress.co.uk/news/national/blair-could-intervene-on-chilcot-1-6645469>
7. <http://paulflynmp.typepad.com/>
8. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2645052/President-Blairs-plan-save-EU-He-tells-Germanys-Merkel-defend-Europe-far-right-fuelling-speculation-bid-Presidency.html>
9. <http://www.cfoi.org.uk/blairarticle060910.html>
10. <http://www.arrestblair.org/>
11. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/man-who-called-for-blair-to-be-arrested-for-war-crimes-fined-100-8323995.html>

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