

## Redundant UK Inquiry Re-Exposes Iraq War Lies

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Peter Dyer [sums up](#) well the sort of conclusions we can draw from the ongoing Chilcot Inquiry into Britain's role as sidekick launcher of aggressive war on Iraq:

"On March 18, 2003, on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, Elizabeth Wilmshurst resigned as Deputy Legal Adviser to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the British equivalent of the U.S. State Department.

"'I regarded the invasion of Iraq as illegal, and I therefore did not feel able to continue in my post,' she said later. Ms. Wilmshurst discussed her resignation while appearing before the current British inquiry into the Iraq War — the Chilcot Inquiry.

"In an office of 35 or so lawyers, she may have been the only one to resign. However, she testified that her perspective was shared unanimously among all the FCO Legal Advisers, including the head of the office, Sir Michael Wood.

"Sir Michael himself told the Chilcot Inquiry: 'I considered that the use of force against Iraq in March 2003 was contrary to international law. In my opinion, that use of force had not been authorized by the Security Council, and had no other legal basis in international law.'

"In sum: every lawyer charged with advising the British government on the legality of the Iraq invasion believed it was illegal."

And, of course, we already knew this. And, of course, we did not need to know it. We just need to read the U.N. Charter to know that aggressive wars are illegal. Dyer spends most of the rest of his article pointing out that even a hobbled toothless inquiry treating public documents as untouchable because "classified" and leading to no law enforcement actions is a giant leap forward from anything happening in the United States, the nation chiefly responsible for the crime under "investigation."

The Chilcot inquiry may ask to meet with former U.S. officials, as noted by [UPI](#), which also [reports](#) on the latest smoking gun tossed high onto the pile of thousands of smoking guns:

"Former British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw says he will check records of his pre-Iraq invasion phone calls with then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell.

"Straw made the promise Monday to Britain's Iraq Inquiry panel after allegations emerged that Powell told him in the weeks prior to the 2001 Iraq invasion that President George W. Bush would invade the country even if Saddam Hussein complied with nuclear arms inspectors, The Times of London

reported.

“The newspaper said the calls became an issue after Straw defended his decision to dismiss the advice of his chief legal adviser that the war would be unlawful.

“Inquiry panel member Lawrence Freedman, hinting that the panel may have documents showing Bush planned to attack Iraq even if U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix found that Saddam was complying with U.N. resolution 1441, asked Straw, ‘Was there any point where Powell said to you that even if Iraq complied, President Bush had already made a decision to go to war?’

“The Times said Straw, now Britain’s justice secretary, replied, ‘Certainly not to the best of my recollection. I would have to check the record of my many conversations I had with Secretary Powell.’”

But that is not how Straw replied. And there was more than a hint here that the questioner already knew the answer. This “inquiry” is being conducted by panelists in possession of numerous documents, both public and still private, that they are forbidden to discuss. The Downing Street Minutes and every other piece of documentation long since confirming for the public the truth into which this show is “inquiring” are deemed “classified” and unmentionable by the Chilcoteers. So, what would it look like to question Straw about a document proving Powell had told him (as the entire world outside of U.S. television viewers knows by now the United States told the United Kingdom) that Bush was going to war regardless of Iraq’s behavior?

Here’s [Chris Floyd’s account](#):

“And so, to close out its first phase, the Chilcot Inquiry recalled Straw — who had already given one sweaty, white-knuckle performance on the witness stand a few weeks ago. With the implacable politesse of the true British mandarin, panelist Sir Lawrence Freedman seized the opportunity to suggest to the right honorable minister that the right honorable minister might, perhaps, be lying through his right honorable teeth in denying that Colin Powell had informed him quite clearly that the Americans were going to war, come hell or high water, in March 2003. As the Guardian notes, Freedman’s questions make it clear that [he] has obviously seen some very interesting paperwork. Here is the exchange, from the Guardian:

“Freedman asked: Can you start by confirming that you knew that military action was planned by the US for the middle of March come what may? You were copied in, presumably, to reports of conversations between the prime minister and the president?

“Straw replied: Yes, I don’t think there was any key document that I should have seen that I didn’t.

“Freedman: Was there any point where [Colin] Powell said to you that even if Iraq complied, president Bush had already made a decision that he intended to go to war?

“Straw replied: Certainly not to the best of my recollection.

“Freedman went on: I was going to suggest you might want to look through your conversations and check.

“Mr Straw at last got the hint: I will go through the records because I think you

are trying to tell me something.

“Yes, Mr Straw. He is trying to tell you, and the world, that he has the paper in his hand documenting your conversation with Colin Powell: a clear admission of the war crime of military aggression, as it reveals that there was not even a pretense of a legally justifiable *casus belli* among the American and British leaders — just the cold, pre-determined intention to attack.”

And yet, what the best of our commentators across the Atlantic seem to miss is that the illegality of the war is taken as a point in its favor in the United States. “Proving” its illegality yet again is not really interesting in Washington. The Washington Post deemed it old news prior to ever mentioning it. President Obama openly declared his power to launch illegal wars in a Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech some weeks back. For us, an inquiry into war lies is a quaint tourist destination, like a European town with pedestrian streets and neighbors who speak to each other. We love visiting such things, but we wouldn’t want to live there.

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