

The Death of David Kelly and the “Sexed Up” WMD Report

Was BBC Andrew Gilligan's Original Source a Senior Member of Her Majesty's Government?

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The importance of identifying Andrew Gilligan’s “original” source (for his infamous BBC Radio 4 Today programme story on the sexing up of the September 2002 dossier, which was later used to justify the UK’s, and thereby the US’s, illegal invasion of Iraq) is not immediately obvious, but we think, after painstaking research, cannot be over-emphasised.

Suffice to say that the BBC eventually did what the UK Government had wanted them to do all along i.e. name Kelly as their source (the Government seemed determined to make Kelly the source from the moment that Kelly came forward and admitted to the Ministry of Defence that he had talked to Gilligan).

It seems highly likely to us that Kelly was indeed the fall guy, that he was indeed set up, as was suggested to him at the Foreign Affairs Committee when he gave his evidence on 15 July 2003.

On Sunday 20 July 2003, only two days after Kelly’s body had been found, the BBC surprised many people by breaking confidentiality (which one could reasonably argue was even more important to observe after death) and volunteering that Kelly was their “principal” source (when Kelly could no longer answer back). Most people took this to mean that Kelly was the ONLY source, when he clearly was not, indeed he was almost certainly not even the “principal” or “main” source. Crucially, the BBC did nothing to correct the almost universal misapprehension caused by their statement.

Thus the BBC (wittingly or unwittingly) assisted the Government in halting the search for the “real” source (or sources), and, in the context of Mr Toad’s references (see below) to “civil war within the Cabinet of HMG (Her Majesty’s Government)” and “USG’s (United States’s Government’s) plans to help HMG make up its mind with regard to Iraq’s WMD”, and the connection between the two, it is surely not difficult to appreciate the importance of halting that search (for the “real” source of Gilligan’s story).

Considerable suspicions have surrounded many aspects of the death of Dr David Kelly in July 2003, including the alleged manner of the death, its subsequent investigation, and the coverage of the whole affair in the mainstream media. Claims of murder by Liberal Democrat MP Norman Baker have continued to fuel speculation of foul play. Yet, in the light of these persisting suspicions, little attention has been paid to what could be the most important question of all: if David Kelly was not the only source for Andrew Gilligan’s

“sexed-up” story, as he was not, who was the original source?

On Sunday, 20 July 2003, two days after David Kelly was found dead in the woods, Richard Sambrook, Director of BBC News, named Kelly in a statement as the “principal source for both Andrew Gilligan’s report and for Susan Watts’s reports on Newsnight on 2 and 4 June”.^[1] Sambrook chose one word carefully, the word “principal”. Subsequent reports described the BBC as admitting Kelly was the “main source”.^[2] “Principal” means first or foremost, or “main”. “Principal”, or “main”, certainly does not mean the one and only source. Unfortunately, this is how the wider world came to understand the Sambrook/BBC statement.

Did Gilligan use Kelly to corroborate information from another source?

Sambrook’s evidence to the Hutton Inquiry clearly suggests the possibility of another source. Gilligan’s infamous Radio 4 report is described in an internal report as resulting “from two separate but related information sources”.^[3] Sambrook goes on to describe the other source as more general, and as “a background of concerns”.^[4] The fact that he talks about other sources or “concerns” in the context of Gilligan’s story is important. It is surely not unreasonable to consider that out of the “background of concerns” a prime and headline-grabbing piece of information was given to Gilligan, before he had spoken to Kelly, perhaps from a disgruntled person connected with the compilation of the September 2002 dossier. At the Hutton Inquiry, Sambrook also spoke of “unattributable briefings from members of the security services” to a number of journalists at the BBC who were “expressing some unease at the way Intelligence had been presented in public”.^[5]

Did a prime piece of information come Gilligan’s way through these channels? Did Gilligan take this original source and corroborate it during his conversation with Kelly on 22 May 2003? Kelly came forward voluntarily and always claimed he did not recognise some elements of Gilligan’s story. Kelly was also sure he was not the “main source” of the story, and shortly before Kelly’s death, after Kelly had given his evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC), that committee publicly concluded that Dr Kelly was not the “main source”.

Gilligan’s e-mail to Greg Simpson MP

One of the more mysterious and under-reported parts of the David Kelly affair concerns an e-mail sent by Andrew Gilligan to the Liberal Democrat MP, Greg Simpson. It was sent on 14 July 2003, on the eve of Kelly’s televised appearance before the Foreign Affairs Committee.^[6]

The subject heading of the e-mail reads “David Kelly – pls onpass David Chidgey”. David Chidgey was also a Liberal Democrat MP, and, more importantly, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee charged with questioning Kelly. In one part of the e-mail, Gilligan refers to “my colleague Susan Watts” having spoken with Kelly, clearly indicating that the BBC were exchanging information internally. Towards the end of the e-mail, Gilligan poses the question: “Is Kelly our source?” and answers his own question with: “we are not ruling anyone in or out as the source”, and: “I had many conversations with people inside and outside the Intelligence community about the issue of Iraqi WMD and the dossier. We suspect the MOD of playing games to try to eliminate names.”

The existence of the e-mail came close to being exposed three days later, on 17 July 2003,

during Gilligan's oral evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee:

Mr Chidgey: That is good. Thank you. I wonder if you can help me clear up something in the way that Dr Kelly responded to some questions from me. You are, of course, aware that he has spoken to other BBC journalists, in particular Sue Watts, I think.

Mr Gilligan: Sorry?

Mr Chidgey: You are aware that he spoke to...

Mr Gilligan: I am not aware of anything about Dr Kelly's dealings with other journalists, how could I be?[7]

At this point, Chidgey could have told the world about the e-mail, and that Gilligan was indeed "aware" of "dealings with other journalists", thereby providing the committee with a new line of inquiry. Chidgey declined to pursue.

Gilligan later apologised to the Hutton Inquiry for sending the e-mail. More questions need to be asked about this e-mail (along with Gilligan's oral evidence to the FAC), as it contains leads that suggest Gilligan had an original source BEFORE he approached Kelly.

"I have tried to persuade my source to go on the record, for obvious career reasons he is unable to ... "

At the FAC hearing on 17 July 2003 Gilligan makes some extraordinary and again under-reported remarks:

Gilligan I would respectfully submit to the Committee that anonymous source journalism does have its value and although I have tried to persuade my source to go on the record, for obvious career reasons he is unable to, and I must respect that confidence.

Sir John Stanley: The fact you have just said that is clearly absolute confirmation from you that your source is not Dr Kelly.

Gilligan: I simply cannot add anything at all to the evidence I gave about my source.[8]

Why was Committee member Sir John Stanley so sure that the BBC's source was not Dr Kelly? Because, two days earlier Kelly had gone on the record, in the fall glare of the television cameras and the wider world. So, who was the "anonymous source" who was "unable to go on the record"?

The other sources ...

In Gilligan's e-mail to Simpson, he says the source is someone "closely involved in compiling the document until a late stage".[9] Previously, he had said that the source was "one of the senior officials in charge of drawing up the dossier".[10] The mainstream version of events says this is David Kelly. The evidence appears to show beyond doubt that Kelly was around at a late stage, and involved in some discussions about the dossier. However there were others around at a late stage, perhaps up to seven or eight. Perhaps one of them spoke with Gilligan?

According to the BBC Conspiracy Files Dr Kelly timeline (online), on 19 September 2002, five days before the September dossier was published, “Dr Kelly takes part in an hour-long DIS meeting reviewing the draft of the dossier, in the Old War Office. Dr Brian Jones chairs the meeting with another seven or eight people present. Four pages of detailed comments were made. Entitled: “Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Dossier – Comments on Revised Draft (15 Sept 2002)”.[11]

“Mr A”, revealed in Norman Baker’s book as Rod Godfrey, a chemical weapons expert, later told the Hutton Inquiry about 12 comments which were made by Dr Kelly. The DIS drafting suggestions were passed on to the JIO Intelligence staff. None of those suggestions mentioned the 45 minute claim.[12]

Gilligan said he spoke to sources “inside and outside the Intelligence community” and the source was “closely involved in compiling the document until a late stage”.[13] Perhaps, one of those ‘seven or eight’, mentioned by Dr Brian Jones, provided Gilligan with some information? Perhaps one of them had a grudge against the Government, did not approve of the “sexing-up” of the dossier?

At 14.58 on 25 September 2002, Mr A sent an e-mail to David Kelly pointing to a mistake relating to the al-Qaeda plant: “Another example supporting our view that you and I should have been more involved in this than the spin merchants of this administration. No doubt you will have more to tell me as a result of your antics today. Let’s hope it turns into tomorrow’s chip wrappers ...”[14]

Mr Toad: “This from my friends on the river bank ...”

Andrew Gilligan may have received some prime information from a source inside or outside the Intelligence services, and Dr Kelly was used to corroborate it. Any research into the mysterious death of Dr David Kelly entails encountering many sources of information. One particularly plausible scenario was described by a “Mr Toad” in his one and only post on the Guardian Talk forum website. We reprint the post below and in full. We do not consider Mr Toad’s version to be definitive, but we do conclude that it provides leads worth exploring. It outlines a version of events which could be argued was unravelling before our eyes in July 2003, but was stopped by the death of Dr David Kelly.

Mr. Toad posts on the Guardian Talk forum on 30 December 2003:

“This from my friends on the river bank:

Hutton is a jigsaw puzzle. And like all the best puzzles there was a piece missing. Some people have found the missing piece, but they keep trying to put it in upside-down.

1998 – Mai Pederson attached to Kelly as UNSCOM translator.

1998 – UNSCOM out of Iraq

1998 – Tom Mangold presents Panorama documentary revealing extensive infiltration of UNSCOM by national security services.

1998+ Pederson / Kelly relationship remains close

2000-2003 MoD becomes suspicious of Kelly’s relationship with Pederson.

Begins moving Kelly towards the door marked 'exit', but does it quietly so as not to alarm Kelly or his friends overseas. No grading increase, retirement age reduced from 65 to 60, moved to PR role with no access to classified information.

May 2003 Gilligan interviews senior member of HMG, who makes the Campbell 45 minute claim 'off the record'. Gilligan cannot run the story without a creditable source, so is pointed to Kelly as 'unattributable' MoD source. Gilligan goes to Kelly, tells him he knows the 45 minute claim is fictitious and plays the 'name game', then goes home and writes up his piece overnight using info from source 1 effectively attributed to Kelly. Kelly is baffled by Gilligan's interview, but once Gilligan's piece goes out he realises he has been set up. He writes to MoD to admit the unauthorised interview but denies he is the original source of Gilligan's information. Kelly is called to meeting with line managers and told that orders from on high dictate that he will be the 'fall guy' or will lose his pension and find his relationship with Pederson plastered across the front page of the Telegraph and tv news. What Kelly did not realise was that this was a bluff. MoD were well aware of Pederson's actual role and would never have allowed the name to come out in this way at the time. Kelly does as he's told and goes before the parliamentary committee and ISC. This should be the end of it, except that Kelly broods on it and decides he will take steps to clear his name. Unfortunately, to do this he has to admit to the Pederson relationship. throughout the whole saga Kelly has been in close touch with Pederson, who has been reporting back to her masters. On July 17th Kelly tells Pederson he is going to leave his wife and going to the press to clear his name. Pederson reports immediately to her managers, the alarm bells go off in Washington as they believe she is about to be 'outed' and it's 'goodnight Vienna'.

Here's why:

The CIA did to Kelly what they did to everyone, lied to him about Iraq's WMD. The difference is that they thought Kelly's position as MoD bio-weapons expert would allow him to influence the policy of HMG. Here's how it was done: Pederson was a US airforce translator working from Arabic to English. After the removal of UNSCOM from Iraq in 1998, evidence of WMD capability came from satellites and smuggled documents. These would land first on the desk of Ms Pederson and her colleagues for translation, before passing to the scientists for analysis, who then advised USG. In the case of Pederson, however, the documents did not come from Iraq, but from the CIA. Pederson 'leaked' fake intelligence to Kelly over an extended period, which she claimed came from smuggled Iraqi documents indicating the existence of WMD.

By 2003, Kelly was completely convinced not only of the existence of WMD in Iraq, but also believed he knew what they were and where they were. However, when Kelly attempted to go to Iraq (post invasion) to locate them, he found his was mysteriously barred. On a first occasion his official visa proved worthless and he was turned back at Kuwait. On a second occasion he found himself confined to an airbase for the duration of his stay on security grounds. There may be some evidence that shortly before his death, Kelly became aware of the nature of Pederson's information.

In preparation for his next planned visit to Iraq Kelly appears to have shared informaton from Pederson with Gabriele Kraatz-Wadsack, a German army weapons inspector and biological weapons expert. It appears from her reply, however, that she was less than convinced as to the veracity of the information, as made clear by the 'concerns' she expressed. In short, Kelly's death was the result of two conspiracies colliding. The first being the civil war within the cabinet of HMG, which nearly resulted in the exposure of the second, USG's plans to help HMG make up its mind with regard to Iraq's WMD. Ultimately, it wasn't murder or suicide, but a series of unfortunate

accidents. Trouble with this jigsaw puzzle is, once you put it together, you realise it's just a part of a much bigger puzzle.”[15]

NOTES

- [1] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3081529.stm
- [2] http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/20/newsid_3798000/3798761.stm and <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2003/s906298.htm>
- [3] 112, 13 at <http://www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk/content/transcripts/hearing-trans07.htm>
- [4] 113, 9 at <http://www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk/content/transcripts/hearing-trans07.htm>
- [5] 112, 25 at <http://www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk/content/transcripts/hearing-trans07.htm>
- [6] Andrew Gilligan e-mail to the Liberal Democrat MP, Greg Simpson http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Politics/documents/2003/08/20/gilligan_chidgey.pdf and http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Politics/documents/2003/08/22/GUfac_6_0003.pdf
- [7] Q 228, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmcaff/uc1025-ii/uc102502.htm>
- [8] Q 342, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmcaff/uc1025-ii/uc102502.htm>
- [9] See note 6
- [10] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3090681.stm
full text of defence correspondent Andrew Gilligan's original report on BBC Radio 4's Today programme from 29 May, 2003.
- [11] 19 September 2002 - http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/conspiracy_files/6380231.stm
- [12] See note 11
- [13] See note 6
- [14] 25 Septemeber 2002 - http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/conspiracy_files/6380231.stm
- [15] Mr Toad transcript taken from <http://xymphora.blogspot.com/2004/01/david-kelly.html>

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