

Melissa Johnson

From: Andrew Gilligan-INTERNET
Sent: 30 June 2003 01:14 PM
To: Andrew Gilligan-INTERNET, Mark Damazer; Kevin Marsh, Richard Sambrook and PA
Subject: analysis of campbell's evidence - main part (1 more to come)

Alastair Campbell's evidence

The passion of Mr Campbell's evidence should not be allowed to obscure several important inconsistencies, elisions, evasions and even untruths in what he has said. None in themselves is shattering. Cumulatively, however, they amount, I argue, to further support for my source's charges about Mr Campbell.

The dodgy dossier

The exchanges on the dodgy dossier offer no direct proof about my source's charges, because they all relate to the September dossier. But since much of Mr Campbell's evidence on the dodgy dossier can be compared with other information in the public domain, it does allow us to test his use of language and his general truthfulness.

At Q946, Sir John Stanley asks him about the "sexing up" of Dr al-Marashi's work in the February dossier. Mr Campbell admits that it was done "for example, where 'hostile groups' became 'terrorist organisations'."

Actually, Dr al-Marashi's original words in his thesis were about "*opposition* groups in hostile regimes", not hostile groups. Mr Campbell is trying to minimise the import of Downing Street's changes to Dr al-Marashi by misrepresenting what he wrote in the first place. "Opposition groups" are not very close to terrorists. "Hostile groups" are much closer.

On its own this does not amount to much. It could easily be a slip. But it starts to build up. Mr Campbell also tells the Committee that "we have apologised *in relation to* Dr al-Marashi." (Q994, my italics). This is sort of half-true - the Government has expressed general regret, if not quite apologised, for not attributing Dr al-Marashi's work. But it clearly gave members of the Committee - certainly Sir John Stanley, see Q1152 - the impression that the Government had actually said sorry to Dr al-Marashi himself. As we know, they had not.

At Q964 Mr Campbell is asked whether the Government acknowledged a mistake over the dodgy dossier at the time the plagiarism was exposed. He replies: "The PM's spokesman in the very next briefing said, 'Something has gone wrong here, it should not have happened, mistakes have been made and we will have to look at it.'"

As the morning lobby briefing note of 7 February (on the Downing Street website) makes clear, the PM's official spokesman did not in fact say anything like this. He said: "Some (sic) of the second section was based on (sic) Dr al-Marashi's work which, in retrospect, we should have acknowledged...In our view, there was nothing for which we had to apologise...The document was solid and accurate and we stand by it...We reject completely the comment that the Government [in the PM's statement on 3 Feb] misled Parliament."

This continued to be the Government's position until the Foreign Secretary's evidence to you last week.

Alastair Campbell's changes to the September dossier

Mr Campbell says in his memo that "he made drafting suggestions as the document evolved" and admits in his evidence that the chairman of the JIC accepted some of the changes (Q975). But the exact nature

of the changes he is prepared to admit responsibility for increases over the course of his evidence.

First he says the changes he made were only presentational changes (Q974).

Then he is asked (Q1018):

"Q: Can you try to visualise for us how different the September dossier would have been if it had not been for your discussions on presentational issues?

A: Other than literally drafting points I cannot recall any substantial changes being made to the executive summary."

This seems to imply that he did make substantial drafting changes to the executive summary. He also fails to answer about the rest of the dossier.

Then he says (Q1092) that "the changes we made in relation to it [the dossier] had nothing to do with the *overriding* intelligence assessments." (my italics.) What is the difference between an intelligence assessment and an overriding intelligence assessment? Does that statement imply that No 10 could have made changes which went against the detail of the intelligence assessments - the very point at issue?

Mr Campbell is also (Q1008) asked about another of my source's charges, which is that unreliable information was given "undue prominence" in the dossier at his behest. He replies by misrepresenting what I said to the committee about this and by attacking the BBC and nobody notices that he has failed to answer the question.

Towards the end of his evidence Mr Campbell again refuses to deny, even half-confirms this charge when he says: "I suppose what you are saying is, were there discussions about how prominently to deploy [the uranium-to-Africa claim]. To be honest with you, I cannot remember the nature of those discussions. I think it was an important point." (Q1138)

When the 45-minute claim was added

Mr Campbell told the Committee that the 45-minute claim "existed in the very first draft" of the dossier (Q987). This is untrue. As the Foreign Secretary has told the Committee, the 45-minute claim was added later. The relevant exchange is as follows:

Richard Ottaway: So it was added later?

Jack Straw: Well- that's what I'm trying to tell you.

Peter Ricketts, FCO director-general, political, confirmed to you that in fact "there were drafts discussed in March" - consistent with media reports at the time that the dossier would be issued that month. But as we now know, or always have known if you believed my source, the 45 minute claim only arrived in the dossier in September, days before it was printed.

Later the Foreign Secretary said he had been passed a note by Alastair Campbell: "Alastair Campbell makes it clear in his letter to the Committee that the 45-minute claim was in the first draft *which had been presented to him.*"

An important distinction, but a close reading of Mr Campbell's own evidence suggests - although not conclusively - that this statement is not true either. Mr Campbell says (Q922) that the dossier was "the product of months and months of detailed work *with the intelligence agencies*" (my italics.)

From a purely common-sense point of view, it would also seem implausible that the Government's director of communications only became involved at the last minute with a draft document explicitly intended as a communication with the public. Mr Campbell describes the dossier as "one of the most important pieces of work developed during the entire build-up to the conflict" (Q916). Are we really to believe that he had no involvement at all with it, never even read it, in its five-to-six-month existence before September?

The quote in Q922 above from Mr Campbell also corroborates other evidence that the document did exist as a single "product" (albeit going through multiple drafts.)

All this must cast doubt on Mr Campbell's claim to the Committee that "the very first substantial draft that was put forward by the JIC was very largely the basis of what was duly published and presented to Parliament." (Q1001.)

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