

Britain: Veteran Labour MP challenges destruction of Lockerbie evidence

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Tam Dalyell, the Labour MP for the Scottish constituency of Linlithgow, used his parliamentary privileges to effectively accuse the British government of destroying evidence relating to the criminal investigation of the 1988 attack on PanAm flight 103, which killed 270 people.

Dalyell is the longest serving MP in Westminster—the so-called “father of the house”. Something of a maverick figure, he has a long record of raising awkward questions for successive British administrations. Dalyell harried Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher for years over the circumstances surrounding the sinking of an elderly Argentine warship, *General Belgrano*, off the Malvinas/Falklands Islands, by a British nuclear submarine during the 1982 war with Argentina.

Speaking on March 26, in an adjournment debate in which MPs can raise whatever they like, Dalyell insisted that Libyan Abdel Basset al-Megrahi, currently jailed for life in Barlinnie prison in Glasgow for the Lockerbie attack, was innocent. Dalyell, who has long followed developments around the Lockerbie disaster, asked what was being done to preserve evidence collected during police enquiries. He went on to ask, “Can an assurance be given that they will not be destroyed in the same way as certain police notebooks have apparently been destroyed?”

Dalyell quoted a statement given by a retired policewoman, Mary Boylan, who had been based at Lockerbie in 1988. In 1999 Boylan was asked to give a statement at Livingston Police Station, presumably relating to the upcoming trial of al-Megrahi and his then co-accused, Al Amin Khalifa Fhimah. She asked for her notebooks from 1988 to refresh her memory. She was told they could not be found and later read in the Scottish press that Lothian and Borders Police had

destroyed the notebooks.

Dalyell asked, “Who gave the instruction for the destruction of notebooks? After all, this was the biggest unresolved murder trial in Scottish legal history. The answer to that question is likely to be found not in Edinburgh, but in London.”

Dalyell said he had worked closely with five heads of the police’s “F Division” which covers West Lothian, as well as successive chief constables of Lothian and Borders Police: “I simply do not believe that any one of them, off their own bat, would have allowed, for reasons of routine and storage space, the destruction of notebooks relating to the biggest murder trial in Scottish history.”

Dalyell quoted a subsequent statement from Boylan in which she described how, in 1999, she attended Dumfries police station and was asked to describe a suitcase rim, with a handle attached. Boylan asked the Procurator Fiscal, a local Scottish legal official, about the significance of the case. He would not say, but, “What he did say was that the owner of said suitcase was a Joseph Patrick Curry and that I would be hearing and reading a lot about him at the time of the trial.” Boylan later found out that Curry was a US Army Special Forces Captain.

According to Dalyell, Boylan claims a colleague informed her that Curry’s suitcase contained the bomb that blew up the aircraft. Dalyell said, “I want to know who will verify the statement and show whether it is true or false. If the bomb was in Curry’s suitcase, Mr. Megrahi is hardly likely to be guilty.”

He concluded by asking for “these extremely serious matters [to] be taken on board by the government in London”.

Speaking after the debate Dalyell reiterated his suggestion that “something highly irregular has taken

place, apparently with consent.”

Joseph Patrick Curry was one of several members of a US Special Forces team on PanAm 103, whose luggage, and remains at the crash site were the subject of a great deal of well documented US CIA and FBI activity in the hours and days after the disaster. A special forces major, Charles McKee, and the CIA’s Beirut station deputy chief, Matthew Gannon, also died on the plane.

Click here for Dalyell’s statement as recorded in Hansard, the House of Parliament’s official record.



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