

Letters on the death of Dr. David Kelly and the Hutton Inquiry

28 August 2003

The following is a selection of letters from our readers on the death of British whistleblower Dr. David Kelly and the judicial investigation headed by Lord Hutton into his death.

Dear Chris Marsden:

A friend of mine who is a medical practitioner, having studied in Britain in the 1970s, wrote the following in an email the other day:

"I was taught that it is just about impossible to bleed to death from a severed wrist artery, especially as the artery tends to go into spasm and block itself off."

If my doctor friend is right, I am rather amazed, as I have found no reference to such anywhere on the Internet. Obviously, if it is true, a person of Doctor Kelly's knowledge would be highly unlikely to use this method to commit suicide.

I should greatly appreciate it if you could check this out and let me know your verdict.

Regards,

RA

Dear Mr. Marsden:

Apropos the statement by a "Westminster source" about the BBC that "[t]hey want the evidence to be handed to the Hutton inquiry instead. They are worried that Gilligan is in a state of mind similar to Dr. Kelly's before he took his life."

Quite apart from the fact that nobody knows what Dr. Kelly's "state of mind" was immediately before his death, this sounds like fingering Gilligan for a hit, does it not? Zoe Williams of the *Guardian* has undoubtedly gotten the message, but is afraid to say so directly for fear of being labelled a "conspiracy theorist." But, Zoe dear, sometimes there *are* conspiracies.

I think someone should investigate Labour MP Eric Illsley and discover why he was so hostile to Gilligan. Perhaps Ms. Williams?

CZ

If you consider the bare facts of Kelly's death and ignore the wildly presumptuous claims of the media, it is pretty clear in which direction they point, and it is not that of suicide. Dr. Kelly's email to a journalist sent only hours before his death, with its chilling warning of "dark actors playing dark games," is not only indicative of murder, but also reveals that Kelly was well aware of the danger he was in. What is extraordinary, though, is that the whole of the press and the broadcast media interpreted these words—"dark actors playing dark games"—as signifying threats to deprive Kelly of his pension, or something similar. Now "dark" simply is not an appropriate term to describe disciplinary action of this kind, no matter how harsh; it is a term used to denote something that is evil and covert, and it is barely conceivable that the articulate and semantically precise Dr. Kelly would have used these words in so careless a manner.

Equally extraordinary is the stark fact that, despite the paucity of evidence to support the hypothesis that Kelly had taken his own life, none of the broadcast media or news media suggested that it might be anything other than suicide. Without a single exception the whole of the media, as a single voice, did its utmost to imply—even when it did not explicitly state—

that Kelly had been so stressed by recent events that he had taken his own life. No one suggested the obvious: that if you know you are in grave danger from "dark forces" you are going to be ... well, stressed. No one dared to suggest that Kelly might—just possibly—have been murdered. That itself is strange when you think of the media's usual appetite for sensationalism. But what is most extraordinary of all is that even before details of how he had died had been released by the police, the media was doing its best to plant in the mind of the public the idea that Kelly had committed suicide!

Let us start with the *BBC*. On 18 July at 19:54, after a body "matching the description of Dr. David Kelly" has been found but before police had released details of the manner in which he had died, the *BBC News* web site updated a report which ended with the following quotation from an MP: "He is not used to the media glare, he is not used to the spotlight he has been put under." Thus ensuring that the reader was left with the impression that this courageous and principled man, who had endured years of confrontation and harassment as a UN weapons inspector, couldn't handle the stress of being in the public eye and therefore had probably killed himself.

This is what *Sky News* had to say after Kelly went missing: "The disappearance of Kelly has raised concern over the way he was treated by MPs.... We ask you [the public] to say if you think Dr. Kelly was put under too much pressure."

Here's what the prime minister said, again before the police had released details of slashed wrists (quoted by *Sky News*): "Dr. Kelly's death ... is an absolutely terrible tragedy..."

Now "tragedy" is hardly an appropriate term to describe murder; it is however a perfectly apt term to describe a suicide.

Here's what the *Edinburgh Evening News* had to say, again on 18 July, after a body had been found but before there was any information released about the manner of death: "Whitehall insiders said the possible suicide of Kelly would make Campbell's future ... impossible."

The *Telegraph* not only presumed that Kelly had taken his own life but presumed to know what had led him to do so, in a piece entitled "The Wages of Spin is Death."

The *Guardian* too (18 July), before Kelly's body had been found, did its best to imply that Kelly had committed suicide: "[Recent events] would put personal pressure on him ... the man has been treated in a way that is absolutely inexcusable" and in another report in the same issue, "Andrew Gilligan will be feeling worried, frightened and pretty sickened by the news that ... Dr Kelly may have taken his own life".

When a post-mortem concluded that the cause of death was "haemorrhaging from a wound to his left wrist," nobody acknowledged the obvious: that evidence for suicide and evidence for murder made to look like suicide is identical. Nobody pointed out, either, how odd it was that Kelly, a microbiologist who must have had known of dozens of painless methods of killing oneself, should have chosen one that guaranteed an unpleasant and lingering death. From that point onward, presumption became fact and all media discussion revolved round what

led Kelly to take his own life and who drove him to it.

It is a measure of the persuasive power of the media that everyone—with the exception of a very few impervious to its influence—now believes unquestioningly that Kelly committed suicide.

Neither the press nor the broadcast media are free in the sense of having no constraints on what information they disseminate. The D-notice system ensures that the media does not publish “sensitive” government information, and while is not legally binding, failure to comply can be costly in many ways. Above and beyond the D-Notice, however, is the absolute authority of the Home Office to issue edicts circumscribing what information can and cannot be publicised, and this extends not only to newspaper and broadcast media but to publishing firms as well.

Anon

I read the comments with great interest. I have some doubts about Kelly’s death being a sad suicide scenario. Only a couple of days earlier he was telling the Select Committee that he didn’t have access to his home, so I assume this was one of the first visits home that he had, since the questioning. He writes a couple of emails it seems, including one to Judith Miller at the *New York Times*, in it discussing “dark actors playing games.” This is not such a cryptic statement for a man like Kelly, and frankly this is a clear pointer to the intelligence services. Kelly, although employed by the MoD, appears to have been a creation of the Foreign Office (MI6). We know this because during the committee hearing we discover that the MoD claims back all costs for his position and salary from the Foreign Office. Kelly alludes to this when he says that he “always has access to that kind of information” when asked about secret intelligence data. Not sometimes, but *always*, and he is “alerted to such intelligence.”

There is no doubt that Dr. Kelly was an highly regarded scientist, both in the government and in the invisible college of his peers. He was not properly questioned at the Select Committee; much was left unasked, as well as unanswered. However, when I discovered that he was found with electrocardiogram electrodes and pads on his chest, it starts to get stranger and stranger. I think we need to work out as best we can the movements of Dr. Kelly from the moment he left the Select Committee, until the moment he was discovered. We have no time of death or even cause of death yet? This examination should form the cause of death of this man, and hence his death certificate. Has he been issued with a death certificate yet? I assume the “journalists” were still interested in him after his evidence, can we somehow plot some times and places when they spotted or followed him? I think this man deserves to have some digging done.

It is also possible that we are dealing with a traitor. Perhaps Kelly’s disaffection with his whole position started years earlier. Perhaps he felt he was on the way out—really having his current position created for him when UNSCOM ceased to exist, and in some of his statements he does seem a little embarrassed about his role, which has remained substantially unchanged for a decade, and the fact he was not a member of the most senior of inspectors during or after the current war. Perhaps Kelly was cultivating himself for some fame, a book—perhaps a movie? Who knows what he was planning or promised.

Perhaps we do have a suicide. Here is a man, an expert in ways of killing and destroying. Ex-head of Microbiology at Porton Down, UK’s secret disease research lab. And he chose to walk a few miles into a wood, take some co-proxamol and slit his wrist? Co-proxamol is a combination painkiller, having paracetamol (similar to acetaminophen in the US) and dextropropoxyphene, an opiate-like painkiller. Depending on how many he took, Kelly could have killed himself with just those (there is rising concern about dextropropoxyphene in overdose for suicide) as it can cause all the same symptoms as a heroin/morphine overdose. Perhaps he just wanted to deaden himself to his act of slitting his wrist.

The fact he left his home at around 15:00 on 17 July 2003, not dressed for the wet weather, and not even taking a coat with him, lends some

credence to the idea that he killed himself, or it could have been that he thought he was going to meet someone, perhaps in a car—Kelly playing into the idea of secret meetings and subterfuge. It’s not an uncommon technique for MI6 to offer to meet people in, for example, the Savoy or the Ritz. Perhaps they contacted him to have a “chat.”

I am very uneasy about Dr. Kelly’s death, and cling to the hope that this inquiry will ask the questions we need answers to.

JD

Dear Editor,

I believe and having firsthand knowledge how our political system operates that it is not improbable that Dr Kelly was murdered. Who would have taken painkillers while taking one’s own life other than for a Blair headache? The circumstances of his death are suspicious without a doubt. It is very clear that there is more to this story that will probably never come out.

The worrying aspect of Dr. Kelly’s death associated with “blood on my hands Teflon Tony” is that he and his government will go down in history as the worst and [most] corrupt government in our history. Perhaps we should have a vote on that aspect? Is he worse than Cromwell, etc.?

MK

Hi Chris,

I am highly suspicious of the presumed suicide of David Kelly. The statement by Foreign Office diplomat David Broucher saying he [David Kelly] “would probably be found dead in the woods” seems a bit pat to me. David Broucher says he dug this up from deep within his memory hole. I very much doubt that. I would have thought it would have come to him immediately he heard the man had been found dead in the woods.

For example, I once said to a friend of mine, having left the hall where Inungafunga were playing, that it was “music to commit suicide by.” Some weeks later I heard that a young woman had gone home from the hall that night and committed suicide. I immediately remembered what I had said and so did the person I said it to, despite the fact we were both a little intoxicated at the time.

So I don’t believe this diplomat! His position would suggest that he has a good mind after all. It is just all too convenient for Blair et al.

MJD

These people are war criminals and that issue is being completely “overlooked.” They are all lying and trying to protect their asses. They are all war criminals—why aren’t they under arrest awaiting war crime trials? You have people committing perjury while playing games with semantics. What will be the outcome of this inquiry—maybe a few people will lose their cushy government jobs. And they will probably immediately be hired by the private sector for their political connections, write books, go on talk shows—what cruel punishment. This whole thing is sickening. This isn’t justice—it is a travesty of legal proceedings to allow criminals to avoid justice.

B and MG

Dr. Kelly was murdered. Everyone knows it, so why can’t it be said openly? Wrist slitting is a girlie way of trying to get attention, and I would have thought his killers could have found a more convincing way of arranging things, unless of course they were disturbed and had to finish it quickly.

I have been a Labour voter for all my fairly long life, but never again. The present government is rotten from the top down.

JK



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