

Danish whistleblower charged after accusing prime minister of exaggerating Iraqi WMD

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A former Danish intelligence officer, Major Frank Soeholm Grevil, was charged on April 14 with breaching official secrecy rules by leaking documents indicating that Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen had exaggerated the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. The Liberal-Conservative Danish government has been one of Bush's staunchest allies in Europe over the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Major Grevil is accused of illegally passing on to the *Berlingske Tidende* newspaper 10 reports that he himself had sent to the prime minister in the run up to last year's invasion. The reports made clear that Iraq was unlikely to possess any WMDs.

The paper published the documents in February, after which Denmark's military intelligence agency asked the police to investigate the leaks. Two of the newspaper's journalists, Jesper Larsen and Michael Bjerre, have also been charged.

Grevil, who was fired from his job in March, said he leaked the documents because the government had deliberately misinterpreted the reports he had helped write. The major said that the intelligence he had worked upon indicated that "no reliable information on operational weapons of mass destruction" existed.

Grevil added that most of the Danish intelligence documents were "mainly a rewriting of the reports by US and British" spying agencies.

Rasmussen has denied Grevil's claims, insisting that the information he presented to the public corresponded to that received from intelligence officials. Speaking to the Danish parliament in the run-up to the war, after he had received Grevil's reports, the prime minister stated that he was convinced Iraq was in possession of WMDs. "This is not something we just believe. We know," he said.

Since Iraqi WMD have proven to be nonexistent,

Rasmussen has sought to promote other justifications for the illegal and predatory war. Currently the most favoured is that Denmark joined the US-led "coalition of the willing" because Saddam Hussein did not comply with United Nations resolutions after the 1991 Gulf War. "What decided us wasn't the WMD issue. This was not the reason for our engagement. But Saddam Hussein's lack of cooperation with the (UN) Security Council was to have consequences for him and led us to join the international coalition," the prime minister claimed.

A spokesman for the opposition Socialist People's Party, Villy Soendal, criticised the intelligence agency's move to prosecute Grevil: "The intelligence agency does not seek to protect state security but apparently the credibility of the head of government."

The opposition has also sought to increase its pressure on Rasmussen, who "manipulated or passed over information on Saddam Hussein's WMD threat" to justify Denmark's alliance with Washington, Soendal said.

Denmark has 500 troops deployed in Iraq's southern Basra region under British command and contributed a small naval detachment to the Persian Gulf during the invasion. It has also handed over 47 million euros to the US-promoted "democracy and good governance" fund for Iraq.

The actions of the conservative newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* in deciding to publish the leaked documents, and the harsh response of the state in bringing charges against the paper and Grevil, indicate growing tensions within the Danish elite over the course of the country's foreign policy.

The *Berlingske Tidende* has expressed the concerns of those who would like to see Denmark adopt a position similar to that taken by Spain under the new PSOE

government—re-orientating away from Washington’s increasingly reckless policy and back towards Paris and Berlin. They fear that continuing participation in the increasingly bloody occupation of Iraq is too risky, not least in terms of heightening anti-war feeling within the Danish working class.

Rasmussen’s government has sought to allay these concerns by maintaining that, as an interim Iraqi government is scheduled to take over power on July 1, the country will be more stable and the Iraqi authorities could sanction the presence of international troops, including Danish soldiers, in the country.

In March Rasmussen claimed this “hand-over” would create the possibility for a “new start” for US-EU relations. “This change will be significant for many of the countries that were sceptical towards the war, and that have become more and more involved in the development and the rebuilding of Iraq,” he said, referring to the possibility of France and Germany themselves contributing to the occupation forces.

However, the escalation of the anti-occupation struggle in Iraq and growing doubts regarding Rasmussen’s own credibility has made the government’s position even more difficult to maintain. A recent poll for the *Ritzau* news agency found 57 percent of Danes in favour of an independent investigation into the government’s basis for backing the US-led war in Iraq. The poll also found that whistleblower Grevil was viewed as more credible than the prime minister, with 54 percent stating that they doubted Rasmussen’s claims that his policy on Iraq was honest.



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