

Court martial confirms Britain given advance warning of Iraq invasion

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A court martial into the killing of a British soldier, held on October 26, heard how United States defence officials passed on plans for war against Iraq to the British Army almost six months before the invasion.

The information emerged during the trial of Lance Corporal Ian Blaymire, who was facing charges for the manslaughter of fellow soldier John Nightingale while serving in Iraq. Both men were reservists with the Territorial Army (TA), deployed as drivers with the 217 Transport Squadron, part of 150 Transport Regiment Volunteers of the Royal Logistic Corps.

Nightingale died almost immediately after being hit in the chest, at point-blank range, by a bullet from an A2 rifle at Shaibah military camp, near the southern Iraqi city of Basra, on September 23 of last year. Blaymire was subsequently cleared of the charge.

In the course of the trial, the court at Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire, heard that contingency plans for the invasion of Iraq were drawn up by Lt. Col. Christopher Warren, staff officer at Land Command, Salisbury, Wiltshire, who was responsible for operational training for regular soldiers and reservists in the lead up to the war.

In a short piece in the *Independent* newspaper on October 27, Deputy Political Editor Colin Brown reported that Warren said US defence planners had passed on dates for which the invasion of Iraq was proposed. The hearing was told that army chiefs wanted to start training for the war at the beginning of December 2002. However, due to “sensitivities” the training was delayed.

Warren was asked by the defence counsel, Simon Reeve, what the “sensitivities” were. He replied, “Because in December there was a world interest. If the UK had mobilised while all this was going on that would have shown an intent before the political process

had been allowed to run its course.”

According to *PA News*, October 26, Reeve then asked Warren, “I assume there was a decision training was not to start at that time [i.e., early December 2002]?”

“Yes, training was not to start at that time,” Warren replied.

“Who told you?” Reeve asked.

“That would have come from the Defence Crisis Management Organisation in London. It is the political, military interface at the highest level,” replied Warren.

On October 27, the *Scotsman* carried an article on the court martial describing “plans codenamed P-Day, A-Day and G-Day” that were passed to the British military by US defence planners as early as October 2002. The BBC carried a similar account of the uncovered war plans.

The classified documents stated that P-Day was the date on which the US president would make a decision for going to war, which had been set for February 15, 2003. A-Day stood for the air strikes, provisionally due in the first week of March 2003, and G-Day was for the ground offensive, expected to start a couple of days later.

The dates and code names were revealed after the court martial was adjourned and held in private for the information to be discussed by the legal teams. Attempts by the prosecution to have the evidence heard in camera because of concerns over “secrecy” were dismissed by Assistant Judge Advocate General Paul Camp.

After several hours of discussion, Camp ruled that the press and public were entitled to hear the evidence.

The revelations constitute a damning refutation of the pre-war scenario elaborated by the US and UK governments—that of Iraqi non-compliance with

weapons inspections being the trigger for war. That plans to attack Iraq were drawn up almost half a year in advance of the invasion confirms that the diplomatic manoeuvring in the United Nations and elsewhere by Washington and London in the run up to the war was but an elaborate smokescreen to conceal the fact that war was a fixed objective and would go ahead with or without the backing of the UN.

The army's attempt to have details of the war plan heard in camera on the basis of national security interests is entirely spurious. No conceivable state secrets could be jeopardised by revealing war plans that had already been put into action before the eyes of the world. Rather, it is a continuation of the efforts made by the British ruling class to conceal the criminal character of its unprovoked war of aggression against a largely defenceless country.

In the face of mass opposition to the preparations for war against Iraq, Prime Minister Tony Blair repeatedly insisted that no prior decision had been made for an attack. Right up until the eleventh hour, he was claiming that should Saddam Hussein agree to "disarm" his weapons of mass destruction, war could be avoided.

Such statements were a cynical hoax. London and Washington were all too well aware that Iraq could not agree to give up what it did not possess, and were making their military preparations on that basis.

For months, several leading politicians have directly accused Blair of misleading the British people over the reasons for the war. In her evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee investigation on whether the government distorted intelligence material to justify its war plans, former cabinet minister Clare Short said that London and Washington had reached a deal in the summer of 2002 to attack Iraq.

She said that "three extremely senior people in the Whitehall system" had told her the decision had been made by Blair and President George W. Bush, and that the "target date was mid-February [2003] and later extended to March because of a difficulty with the Turks and so on and to give our prime minister a little more time."

In his evidence to the same committee, former Foreign Minister Robin Cook also implied that the case for war was concocted to fit an agreed invasion date. Referring to the string of false intelligence reports on

WMD put out before the war, Cook said, "I fear the fundamental problem is that instead of using intelligence as evidence on which to base the conclusion of a policy, we used intelligence as the basis on which we could justify a policy on which we had already settled."

The court martial hearing has vindicated their accounts. Blair is indeed guilty of a criminal conspiracy to slaughter tens of thousands of Iraqi people for reasons of geopolitical strategy by usurping the democratic rights of the British people.

It is telling that only a handful of news sources even reported the facts revealed during the trial, and even then in only the most cursory fashion. The failure of this story to make any big headlines confirms the complicity of the vast bulk of the media in the lies, deception and subterfuge used by the architects of the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq.



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