

Britain: Doctors demand inquest into death of Dr. David Kelly

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Thirteen specialist doctors have launched a legal campaign to demand an inquest into the death of leading weapons inspector and whistleblower Dr. David Kelly in July 2003.

Kelly was the only identified source for BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan's assertion that the government had "sexed-up" its September 2002 intelligence dossier making the case for war against Iraq, by inserting the claim that it could deploy chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes.

After he was outed, Kelly was forced to testify at two parliamentary inquiries on July 15 and 16, 2003. The following day Kelly went missing from his home. His body was discovered in woodland the next morning.

The Hutton inquiry convened by the then government of Tony Blair into the circumstances surrounding the doctor's death—which it utilised to blame the BBC for events—found that Kelly had committed suicide after cutting his wrist with a blunt gardening knife.

The *Mail on Sunday* has reported that the 13 doctors reject this conclusion and are calling for the suicide verdict to be overturned. Those involved in the campaign include Christopher Burns-Cox, former senior consultant physician for the Frenchay Healthcare Trust, Bristol, and current co-chairman of the National Health Service consultants' association and David Halpin, a retired consultant in orthopaedic and trauma surgery at Torbay Hospital.

The 12-page dossier prepared for their legal campaign states, "The bleeding from Dr. Kelly's ulnar artery is highly unlikely to have been so voluminous and rapid that it was the cause of death." It also cites a series of studies that the doctors say are proof that for "all practical purposes" suicide using the means allegedly adopted by Dr. Kelly "does not exist in Britain."

The dossier does not state how the doctors believe Dr. Kelly did die. A coroner's inquest into his death was suspended on the orders of then Lord Chancellor Lord Falconer, who deemed that the Hutton Inquiry had fulfilled that function.

The doctors hope to challenge Falconer's ruling and have instructed "solicitors to obtain the autopsy reports so that the concerns of a group of properly interested medical specialists can be answered."

Halpin said that the Hutton Inquiry was charged only with inquiring into matters surrounding Kelly's death, not the cause of death itself. Arguing that Kelly deserved a "proper inquest," Halpin stated, "Due process has been subverted."

"The group that I am part of is not prepared to let that go," he continued. "There is evidence of a cover-up."

"He was a very prominent germ and chemical warfare expert," Halpin said of Kelly. "That is relevant because of his knowledge of the biology of death."

"He had spent 10 years at Porton Down [a government laboratory], and he knew everything about killing things.

"So to take what was said to be a blunt knife and what was alleged to be his wife's co-proxamol tablets to try to kill himself is extraordinary.

"I think it's highly likely he was assassinated."

The *Telegraph* reported that Halpin believes his own computer was subject to hacking to remove thousands of emails discussing Kelly's fate. Some 6,000 emails disappeared, Halpin has stated, "as though they were being sifted remotely, which he believes was done by 'a state-sponsored agency.'"

It is not necessary to categorically endorse Halpin's theory of Kelly's assassination to recognise the numerous inconsistencies in the official version of his death.

The decision not to complete a coroner's inquest is itself extraordinary. Even before any investigation had been completed, the police had asserted that Kelly had bled to death after slitting one wrist.

The inquest itself was suspended after hearing evidence almost exclusively consisting of an amended medical report by Home Office pathologist Dr. Nicholas Hunt. Hunt stated that the main cause of death was haemorrhage from the wrist incision. A secondary cause of death was given as the ingestion of the painkiller co-proxamol, though toxicology reports showed the quantity used was not enough to prove fatal.

The superficiality of the investigation into Kelly's death is also at odds with the scientist's high-profile role. He had worked closely with MI6 throughout his career at the government's biological weapons facility and in debriefing Soviet defectors. A top weapons inspector in Iraq, he had a hand in the government's September dossier.

According to an article in the *Sunday Times*, January 25, 2004, by journalist Nicholas Rufford, Kelly was "sometimes...a consultant to the UN, sometimes a government scientist, sometimes an oracle on germ weapons to trusted journalists, sometimes an undercover man for the intelligence services.

"When he went to Iraq, it was under the control of the Foreign Office. He worked closely with British intelligence, both the defence intelligence staff (DIS) and MI6."

After he became a weapons inspector in Iraq in 1994, continues Rufford, "In London, Kelly became a key figure in an MoD [Ministry of Defence] unit called Operation Rockingham. Set up by John Morrison, deputy head of the DIS, its aim was to gather intelligence on Iraq from a multitude of sources and try to make sense of it. Sitting at the centre of a complex web of British and US intelligence organisations, the Rockingham cell became pivotal in the efforts to disarm Iraq.

"It guided inspection teams in Iraq to sites suspected of being used to hide weapons. It also advised the joint intelligence committee (JIC) that, in turn, reported to ministers."

Rufford's article cited the criticisms of the Rockingham cell and Kelly made by former UN inspector, Scott Ritter. In drafting reports for the UN

Security Council, members of the cell played a crucial role in influencing actions against Iraq. Ritter stated, "Kelly became Rockingham's go-to person for translating the data that came out of Unscm into concise reporting.... Kelly had a vested interest in protecting his image, which centred around his exposure of an Iraqi bio-weapons programme that had to continue to exist for him to continue to hold centre stage."

Given the political damage caused to the government following Kelly's exposure as Gilligan's source, and allegations that he represented a major security threat, it is implausible that there was not continual monitoring of the scientist's movements. Yet Kelly was apparently able to leave his home on July 17 at 3 pm and was not seen again until his body was found the following morning—some 10 hours after the scientist's family alerted police as to his non-appearance.

Kelly left no suicide note. In the morning before he disappeared, he had sent out emails to friends giving no indication that he was about to commit suicide. In one email sent to *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller, Kelly spoke of "many dark actors playing games" with him, and went on to state that he was waiting "until the end of the week" before judging how his appearance before the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee had gone.

Anthrax War, a documentary by investigative journalist Bob Coen, is expected to claim that Kelly's death could be linked to his knowledge of highly secretive data on international germ warfare research.



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