Britain assured US its interests would be protected in Iraq war inquiry

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Among the first US State Department documents released by WikiLeaks were cables sent from the US Embassy in London and dated September 22, 2009. One of these reveals that the British government informed a US official it had "put measures in place" to protect American interests in advance of the Chilcot Inquiry into the 2003 Iraq war.

The cables, marked secret and classified, were first reported by the *Guardian* newspaper.

The assurance was made to US Under Secretary of State Ellen Tauscher by Jon Day, the director general for security policy of the British Ministry of Defence. The cable reads: "Day also promised that the UK had 'put measures in place to protect your interests' during the UK inquiry into the causes of the Iraq war."

The discussion took place at one of several meetings Tauscher held with British defence officials, diplomats and the Labour government's then-foreign secretary, David Miliband.

The meeting between Tauscher and Day was held some two months before the formal opening of the inquiry on November 24, 2009. Its convening had been announced by then-Prime Minister Gordon Brown five months earlier. The inquiry is ongoing, though it has not held public hearings for months.

Commenting on the cable, the *Guardian* speculated as to what the "measures put in place" may have been. It wrote: "No American officials were called to give evidence in public, and evidence from US officials was heard in private during visits by inquiry members to the US. The inquiry was also refused permission to publish letters between George Bush and Tony Blair written in 2002 in the run-up to the war, even though they were referred to in evidence."

Whilst the exact nature of the measures is unknown, the cable underscores the fraudulent character of the inquiry, headed by Sir John Chilcot, a former top civil servant who has been described as a "safe pair of hands" for the political establishment.

The personnel on the inquiry committee were all hand-picked by Brown and include two people, Sir Lawrence Freedman and Sir Martin Gilbert, who are on record as supporting the war.

The inquiry's remit extends only to establishing the "lessons that can be learned" from the Iraq war, and those testifying were assured beforehand that that no prosecutions or legal proceedings would arise from their appearances.

The cable on British assurances to the US on the inquiry also states: "He [Day] noted that Iraq seems no longer to be a major issue in the US, but he said it would become a big issue—a 'feeding frenzy'—in the UK 'when the inquiry takes off'."

Along with former Prime Minister Tony Blair, all the major British figures involved in the planning and conduct of the war have now appeared. These include Brown; the former foreign secretary, Jack Straw; then-Defence Minister Geoff Hoon; Blair's director of communications, Alastair Campbell; and former UK Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeremy Greenstock. Blair and Straw have been re-called to appear in the New Year.

Whilst millions of people in Britain were supportive of Blair and his co-conspirators being summoned for questioning, they have faced hardly a single probing question from the inquiry team.

Blair and the rest have used the Chilcot Inquiry as a forum to defend the decision to invade and occupy Iraq. Blair even used his appearance to draw a comparison between Iraq and the danger supposedly posed by Iran, stating that there were "very similar issues" involved.

Chilcot remarked in closing the first part of the

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inquiry on July 30 that it must “identify lessons for British governments facing *critical decisions or operations overseas of a similar kind in the future*” (emphasis added).

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