

RAY MCGOVERN

WALTZING

AWAY FROM

WAR

Australia

Bolts

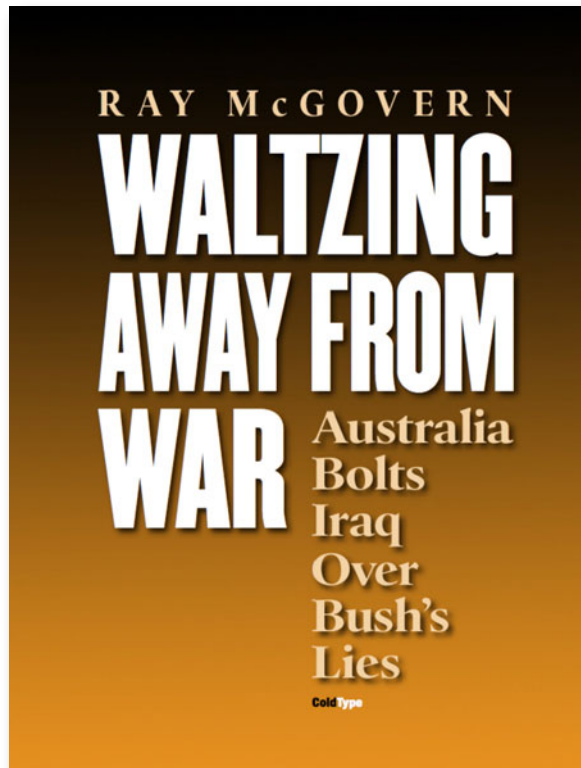
Iraq

Over

Bush's

Lies

ColdType



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**M**atilda is waltzing home from Iraq, and the Australians are lucky but chastened. Lucky for having lost not one soldier in combat of the 2,000 sent to join the "coalition of the willing" attack on Iraq in March 2003. Chastened because Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is now pulling no punches in decrying the subservience of his predecessor, John Howard, to Washington.

Announcing the withdrawal of the 550 Australian troops still in Iraq on Monday, Rudd echoed recent charges by former White House spokesman Scott McClellan about the Bush administration's "shading" of intelligence to "justify" an unnecessary war.

Rudd told Parliament he was most concerned by "the manner in which the decision to go to war was made; the abuse of intelligence information, a failure to disclose to the Australian people the qualified nature of that intelligence"; and the government's silence on "the pre-war warning that an attack on Iraq would increase the terrorist threat, not decrease it."

Rudd added: "This government does not believe that our alliance with the United States mandates automatic compliance with every element of the United States' foreign policy."

Stung by Rudd's candor, White House spokeswoman Dana Perino fell back on the canard that "the entire world" agreed on the threat posed by Saddam Hussein. As President Lyndon Johnson would have put it, That dog won't hunt.

If all agreed, why then was President George W. Bush unable to secure the approval of the U.N. Security Council, without which an armed attack on another country is illegal under international and U.S. law?

Among "coalition of the willing" leaders not named Bush, only the faith-based former British Prime Minister Tony Blair hangs on pathetically to the notion that "everyone" believed Saddam Hussein had WMD.

This is particularly odd since Blair acknowledges the authenticity of the (in)famous

Downing Street Memos. Perhaps his conversion to Catholicism will prompt him to confess that he lied – a reality long beyond dispute.

## **THE DOWNING STREET TRUTH**

As some will recall, Blair sent his intelligence chief off to Washington in summer 2002 to confer with his opposite number, and Bush intimate, CIA Director George Tenet.

In the spring of 2005, a patriotic truth-teller leaked to British media the minutes of a summit meeting of UK national security officials convened on July 23, 2002 at 10 Downing Street. (The minutes, which became known as the Downing Street Memos, were composed that same day by one of those officials and sent to the other participants.)

The minutes revealed that at CIA headquarters on July 20, 2002, Tenet informed his British counterpart that President Bush had decided to attack Iraq for regime change; that the war would be justified by the "conjunction" of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism; and that "the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."

So we did not really need Scott McClellan's recent revelations to understand that the intelligence was "fixed," even though our country's fawning corporate media (FCM) made a Herculean effort to suppress this key evidence – in part by ignoring and disparaging the Downing Street Memos when they surfaced three years ago.

Among the saddest aspects of this whole affair, at least for those who have been in the intelligence profession, is that no one within the U.S. intelligence establishment saw fit to go public and disclose the deception that was being used to "justify" a war of aggression. No one.

The only seasoned officials with the courage to speak out were three Foreign Service Officers – Brady Kiesling, Ann Wright and John H. Brown – each of whom resigned before the war since it was clear to them, even without access to the most sensitive intelligence, that the war could not be justified.

As for intelligence officials outside the United States, there were several profiles in courage.

Katharine Gun, a translator in the British equivalent of our National Security Agency, did successfully leak a very damaging Jan. 31, 2003, memorandum from NSA revealing that the U.S. and U.K. were pulling out all stops to sell the war, even intercepting messages to UN delegations in New York and elsewhere.

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It was all part of a last-ditch attempt to pressure non-aligned members of the UN Security Council into acquiescing to the U.S./U.K. desire to strike Iraq. Gun thought she might succeed in slowing or even stopping an attack on Iraq, if the world learned the lengths to which Bush and Blair were going to have their war.

Gun's explosive document, carried by the London Observer on March 2, 2003 – just two and a half weeks before the attack on Iraq – was suppressed or trivialized by the FCM (fawning corporate media) in the United States.

(Gun, who acknowledged leaking the document, was fired and charged under the Official Secrets Act. But the case collapsed when the British government balked at providing evidence that might have disclosed some government law experts had concluded that the Iraq invasion was illegal. Gun is now a member of VIPS/West.)

And after the war began, Danish Army Intelligence Major Frank Grevil gave the Danish media documents showing that Danish intelligence had reported to its government that the U.S. public rationale for war was not supported by authentic intelligence.

Grevil (another VIPS member) was sentenced to four months in prison for his efforts to tell the truth.

## **ANDREW WILKIE: RISING TO THE CHALLENGE**

Until he quit nine days before the attack on Iraq, Andrew Wilkie was a senior analyst in Australia's premier intelligence agency, the Office of National Assessments (ONA).

Of all the Australian, British and American all-source intelligence analysts with direct knowledge of how intelligence was abused in the run-up to the war – Wilkie was the only one to resign in protest and speak truth to power.

Those who dismiss such efforts as an exercise in futility should know that on Oct. 7, 2003, the Australian Senate, in a rare move, censured then-Prime Minister Howard for misleading the public in justifying sending Australian troops off to war.

The Senate statement of censure noted that Howard had produced no evidence to justify his claims in March 2003 that Iraq had stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons, and castigated him for suppressing Australian intelligence warnings that war with Iraq would increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks.

One senator accused Howard of "unprecedented deceit."

Ask the American FCM why they ignored that story.

Thanks to Wilkie's courage and determination , many Australians were able to come to an

early understanding that the reasons adduced for war on Iraq were cooked in Washington and served up by Australian leaders all too willing to give unquestioning support to the Bush administration.

## **AUSTRALIAN LEADERS NOW BEING HELD ACCOUNTABLE.**

VIPS invited Andrew Wilkie to Washington in July 2003 to speak at a briefing arranged by Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio, in the House Rayburn Building. There were 14 TV cameras in that room, but not one minute of TV coverage that afternoon or evening.

After his presentation, we strongly encouraged Wilkie to keep throwing light on this dark chapter of history; he was pleased to join VIPS/East.

We expressed our hope that U.S. intelligence analysts who also watched the deceit close-up would soon join him in speaking out. With a wan smile, Wilkie shook his head and pointed to the cost – including the character assassination to which he had already been subjected at the hands of his government.

On Aug. 22, 2003, Wilkie had an opportunity not yet afforded any VIPS of the American, British or Danish chapters. He laid out his case before parliament in Canberra, testifying that the attack on Iraq had little to do with WMD or terrorism. One particularly telling part of his testimony:

"Please remember the Government was also receiving detailed assessments on the U.S. in which it was made very clear the U.S. was intent on invading Iraq for more important reasons than WMD and terrorism. Hence all this talk about WMD and terrorism was hollow. Much more likely is the proposition the Government deliberately exaggerated the Iraq WMD threat so as to stay in step with the U.S."

In the wake of Wilkie's testimony, Australian pundits became more critical of the Howard government and its persistent refusal to acknowledge that, as one journalist put it, they were "conned by master manipulators masquerading as purveyors of objective intelligence."

Sounds a little like Scott McClellan, no? But, thanks to the FCM, most Americans hear it for the first time only five years later.

The candor of Wilkie's Aug. 22, 2003 testimony to the Australian parliament helps to dispel the myths and canards still wafting around about – among other things – how "the entire world" believed Saddam Hussein was a dangerous threat.

Accordingly, I include some of the more telling Wilkie excerpts below. **(Emphasis added in bold.)**

## **Opening Remarks to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS), and the Defence Signals Directorate (DSD)**

22 August 2003

**Andrew Wilkie:**



Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to appear before the Committee. You would be well aware that I resigned from the Office of National Assessments, before the Iraq war, because I assessed that invading Iraq would not be the most sensible and ethical way to resolve the Iraq issue. I chose resignation, specifically, because compromise or seeking to create change from within ONA were not realistic options.

At the time I resigned I put on the public record three fundamental concerns. Firstly, that Iraq did not pose a serious enough security threat to justify a war. Secondly, that too many things could go wrong. And, thirdly, that war was still totally unnecessary because options short of war were yet to be exhausted.

My first concern is especially relevant today. It was based on my assessment that Iraq's conventional armed forces were weak, that Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction programme was disjointed and contained, and that there was no hard evidence of any active cooperation between Iraq and al Qaida.

Now the government has claimed repeatedly I was not close enough to the Iraq issue to know what I'm talking about. Such statements have misled the public and have been exceptionally hurtful to me.

I was a Senior Analyst with a top secret positive vet security clearance. I'd been awarded a Superior rating in my last performance appraisal, and not long before I resigned I'd been informed by the Deputy Director-General that thought was being given to my being promoted.

Because of my military background (I had been a regular army infantry Lieutenant Colonel), I was required to be familiar with war-related issues...and was on standby to cover Iraq once the war began...

Now, in fairness to Australian and Allied intelligence agencies, Iraq was a tough target. From time to time there were shortages of human intelligence on the country. At other times the preponderance of anti-Saddam sources desperate for US intervention ensured a flood of

disinformation. Collecting technical intelligence was equally challenging.

A problem for Australian agencies was their reliance on Allies. We had virtually no influence on foreign intelligence collection planning, and the raw intelligence seldom arrived with adequate notes on sources or reliability. More problematic was the way in which Australia's tiny agencies needed to rely on the sometimes weak and skewed views contained in the assessments prepared in Washington.

A few problems were inevitable. For instance, intelligence gaps were sometimes back-filled with the disinformation. Worst-case sometimes took primacy over most-likely. **The threat was sometimes overestimated as a result of the fairy tales coming out of the US. And sometimes Government pressure, as well as politically correct intelligence officers themselves, resulted in its own bias.**

But, overall, Australian agencies did, I believe, an acceptable job reporting on the existence of, the capacity and willingness to use, and immediacy of the threat, posed by Iraq. **Assessments were okay, not least because they were always heavily qualified to reflect the ambiguous intelligence picture.**

How then to explain the big gap between the Government's pre-war claims about Iraq possessing a massive arsenal of WMD and cooperating actively with al Qaida and the reality that no arsenal of weapons or evidence of substantive links have yet been found?

Well, most often the Government deliberately skewed the truth by taking the ambiguity out of the issue. Key intelligence assessment qualifications like 'probably', 'could' and 'uncorroborated evidence suggests' were frequently dropped. Much more useful words like 'massive' and 'mammoth' were included, even though such words had not been offered to the government by the intelligence agencies. **Before we knew it, the Government had created a mythical Iraq, one where every factory was up to no good and weaponisation was continuing apace.**

Equally misleading was the way in which the Government misrepresented the truth. For example, when the Government spoke of Iraq having form (being up to no good), it cited pre-1991 Gulf War examples, like the use of chemical weapons against Iran and the Kurds. **Mind you, the Government needed to be creative, because 12 years of sanctions, inspections and air strikes had virtually disarmed modern Iraq....**

The Government even went so far as to fabricate the truth. **The claims about Iraq cooperating actively with al Qaida were obviously nonsense. As was the Government's reference to Iraq seeking uranium in Africa, despite the fact that ONA, the Department of Defence, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, all knew the Niger story was fraudulent. This was critical information. It beggars belief that ONA knew it was discredited but didn't advise the Prime Minister, Defence knew but didn't tell the Defence Minister, and Foreign Affairs**



**knew but didn't tell the Foreign Minister. ...**

In closing, I wish to make it clear that I do not apologise for, or withdraw from, my accusation that the Howard government misled the Australian public over Iraq, both through its own public statements, as well as through its endorsement of Allied statements.

The government lied every time it said or implied that I was not senior enough or appropriately placed in ONA to know what I was talking about. And the government lied every time it skewed, misrepresented, used selectively and fabricated the Iraq story.

But these examples are just the tip of the iceberg. For instance, the government lied when the Prime Minister's Office told the media I was mentally unstable. The government lied when it associated Iraq with the Bali bombing. And the government lied every time it linked Iraq to the War on Terror.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister in particular have a lot to answer for. After all, they were the chief cheerleaders for the invasion of another country, without UN endorsement, for reasons that have now been discredited. ..."





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