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Iraq dossier 'solid' - Downing Street



AFP

Reports claimed some information was out-dated

A dossier of evidence against Iraq is "solid", Downing Street has insisted after allegations that it included plagiarised material that was 12 years out of date.

The UK intelligence document released on Monday was designed to help win over sceptics by detailing Saddam Hussein's efforts to hide weapons of mass destruction.

But it emerged that some of the document was copied from three different articles, including one written by a postgraduate student.

Excerpts from a paper relating to the build-up to the 1991 Gulf War by Californian student Ibrahim al-Marashi were used in the intelligence document.

The paper was published in the Middle East Review of International Affairs.

Other sections in the dossier were apparently taken

“ We consider the text as published to be accurate ”

Government spokesman

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"Taking material verbatim in this way looks pretty sloppy"

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"It is another example of how the government is attempting to mislead the country"

▶ [Ibrahim al-Marashi, Californian author](#)

"I have to say I'm flattered"

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from defence journal Jane's Intelligence Review.

A Downing Street spokesman insisted the dossier was "accurate" and that the government had never claimed exclusive authorship.

US praise

"The report was put together by a range of government officials," he said.

"As the report itself makes clear, it was drawn from a number of sources, including intelligence material.

"It does not identify or credit any sources, but nor does it claim any exclusivity of authorship."

Mr Blair's spokesman was pressed on the matter again on Friday, and acknowledged that Mr al-Marashi's work should have been credited.

He admitted that the second section of the report, on Saddam's regime, had included excerpts from the student's paper on Iraq's intelligence network.

But he said the document was "solid". "The overall objective was to give the full picture without compromising intelligence sources," he said.

He went on: "It was a pull-together of a variety of sources.

"In retrospect, we should, to clear up any confusion, have acknowledged which bits came from public sources and which bits came from other sources."

Concern



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The UK document received praise from US Secretary of State Colin Powell this week as he outlined his country's case against Iraq.

Shadow defence secretary Bernard Jenkin said the Tories were deeply concerned by the programme's report.

“ **Being an academic paper, I tried to soften the language** ”

Ibrahim al-Marashi

"The government's reaction utterly fails to explain, deny or excuse the allegations made in it," he said.

Cosmetic changes

"This document has been cited by the prime minister and Colin Powell as the basis for a possible war. Who is responsible for such an incredible failure of judgment?"

Liberal Democrat foreign affairs spokesman Menzies Campbell added: "This is the intelligence equivalent of being caught stealing the spoons.

"The dossier may not amount to much but this is a considerable embarrassment for a government trying still to make a case for war."

Mr Al-Marashi told the BBC Two Newsnight programme the government document was still accurate despite "a few minor cosmetic changes".

Anger

"The only inaccuracies in the UK document were that they maybe inflated some of the numbers of these intelligence agencies.

"The primary documents I used for this article are a collection of two sets of documents, one taken from Kurdish rebels in the north of Iraq - around four million documents - as well as 300,000 documents left by Iraqi security services in Kuwait."

Former Labour minister Glenda Jackson, MP for Hampstead and Highgate, was angry about the alleged plagiarism.

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She told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "If that was presented to Parliament and the country as being up-to-date intelligence, albeit collected from a variety of sources but by British intelligence agents..... it is another example of how the government is attempting to mislead the country and Parliament on the issue of a possible war with Iraq.

"And of course to mislead is a Parliamentary euphemism for lying."

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