

Australian Foreign Minister denies suppressing report which confirmed that “hunt for Iraqi WMD was flawed”

By [Global Research](#)

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Downer denies suppressing WMD letter

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer has denied trying to suppress a letter from an Australian expert that said the hunt for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was flawed.

Dr John Gee wrote to the federal government when he resigned from the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) in 2004, saying there was a reluctance in Washington and Canberra to accept Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction.

Dr Gee said he was told Mr Downer had ordered the damning letter be suppressed.

But Mr Downer denied he had given any instructions for the letter to be buried.

“Of course not. Why would I?” he told reporters in Sydney.

He also rejected Dr Gee’s claims that John Quinn, the assistant secretary of the Iraq task force, had told the Office of National Assessments (ONA) in Canberra he was not allowed to give it the letter.

“I spoke to John Quinn today and that’s not what he told me,” Mr Downer said.

“I personally gave no instructions that it was to be or wasn’t to be distributed to anyone.

“As far as I knew, people around the government were very well aware of Dr Gee’s concerns.

“We had no reason not to want to hear what he had to say.”

Mr Downer said he did not know whether the letter went to the Department of Defence or the ONA, but “wouldn’t have had the remotest objection” if it did.

After hearing Dr Gee’s concerns, Mr Downer said he asked to see him when he returned from Iraq.

“I asked to see him because I was aware he had some concerns about the methodology of the Iraq Survey Group,” he said.

“If our people had some concerns about the methodology of the Iraq Survey Group I wanted

to know what their concerns were.”

He also said he spoke to the head of the ISG, Dr Charles Duelfer, who was in Australia two weeks after Mr Downer received Dr Gee’s letter.

“I discussed John Gee’s concerns with Mr Duelfer in my electorate office in Adelaide,” Mr Downer said.

He conceded the government’s confidence that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction “gradually declined as time went on”.

Dr Gee says he was told by a reliable source that Mr Downer ordered the letter be buried.

“My understanding is that he ordered it not to be circulated outside the department,” Dr Gee told ABC Radio today.

“The advice I gave the government was that there was no WMD in Iraq and I had lost confidence in the process that was being carried out in Iraq by the Iraq Survey Group.

“It didn’t seem to me to be an intellectually honest process.”

Mr Downer said he and Mr Quinn were both surprised by Thursday’s article in Fairfax newspapers, which reported Dr Gee’s concerns.

He turned on the author of the story when the reporter asked why he had not aired Dr Gee’s concerns publicly.

“I’m a foreign minister, we don’t normally do what you do and go off and slag at people day in day out, that’s not the name of the game for us,” he said.

Labor foreign affairs spokesman Kevin Rudd said Mr Downer had engaged in a cover-up.

“He covered it up, he didn’t want that message to get out to the Australian public before the 2004 federal election,” Mr Rudd said.

Rudd accuses Downer of WMD report cover-up

The Federal Opposition says Foreign Minister Alexander Downer is still not telling the truth about a report that criticised the search for weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in Iraq.

Mr Downer has denied that he suppressed a report by Australian chemicals weapons expert Dr John Gee, which expressed concern that the search for WMDs was primarily focused on trying to justify pre-war statements.

But the Opposition’s foreign affairs spokesman, Kevin Rudd, says Mr Downer is not offering a credible explanation.

“Mr Downer once again has been caught red-handed in the middle of a cover-up on the Iraq war and his credibility gets shredded each time one of these things come to light,” he said.

“It’s time he came clean, released his reasons for the handling of this critical report on WMDs at the time – his excuses to date are unbelievable.”

Mr Rudd says the information was damaging to the Government in the lead-up to the last election.

“The bottom line is Mr Downer was covering this up, just like he tried to cover up the Government’s knowledge of the AWB’s wheat for weapons scandal,” he said.

“And the reason? They had an election to fight and they didn’t want any of this damaging information out, prior to October 2004.”

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200609/s1730309.htm>

WMD expert quit Iraq search over ‘flawed methods’ of the CIA

AN expert who took part in the hunt for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq said today that he quit because he felt the programme was being used to justifying the United States’ decision to go to war.

John Gee, a chemical weapons expert with Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, quit the US-led Iraq Survey Group in March 2004.

His resignation came months before it finally concluded that Saddam Hussein’s regime had dismantled its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programmes years before the US-led invasion in early 2003.

His reasons weren’t made public at the time, but Mr Gee today said he resigned because the Iraq Survey Group’s activities were “to all intents and purposes determined by the CIA” and its methods and operations were “fundamentally flawed”.

The CIA analysts in teams searching for chemical and biological weapons were the same ones who concluded before the invasion – officially called Operation Iraqi Freedom – that they must exist, Gee wrote in his resignation letter.

“Much of the two teams’ work is geared to trying to justify pre-OIF judgements rather than any attempt to establish the facts surrounding Iraq’s WMD programs,” Gee wrote in March 2004.

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