

British government under pressure: 13 doctors demand inquest into Dr David Kelly's death

Tony Blair sensitive to the accusation that he has 'blood on his hands'

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Global Research, July 12, 2009

Mail on Sunday 12 July 2009

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Law and Justice](#)

Editor's Note

Global Research has published a number of articles by British medical doctors initiative led by Drs. Stephen Frost and David Halpin on the issue of Dr. David Kelly's assassination.

What is significant is the fact that the British mainstream media has acknowledged the initiative of the medical doctors and the fact, amply documented, that David Kelly's death was not a suicide as conveyed in the official British government reports. The importance of the medical doctors initiative is far-reaching. It points to the criminalisation of the upper echelons of the British government.

Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research, July 12, 2009



No inquest: Dr David Kelly in the days before his death

The death of Government scientist David Kelly returned to haunt Labour today as a group of doctors announced that they were mounting a legal challenge to overturn the finding of

suicide.

Dr Kelly's body was found six years ago this week in woods close to his Oxfordshire home, shortly after he was exposed as the source of a BBC news report questioning the grounds for war in Iraq. Unusually, no coroner's inquest was held into his death.

The only official verdict has come from the Hutton Inquiry, commissioned by Tony Blair, which concluded that Dr Kelly, 59, died from loss of blood after cutting his wrist with a blunt gardening knife.

Critics regarded the report as a 'whitewash', and Mr Blair remains acutely sensitive to the accusation that he has 'blood on his hands' over the scientist's death. But now a team of 13 specialist doctors has compiled a detailed medical dossier that rejects the Hutton conclusion on the grounds that a cut to the ulnar artery, which is small and difficult to access, could not have caused death.

It will be used by their lawyers to demand a formal inquest and the release of Dr Kelly's autopsy report, which has never been published. It will also be sent to Sir John Chilcot's forthcoming inquiry into the Iraq War.

The 12-page opinion, a copy of which has been seen by The Mail on Sunday, concludes: '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.'



Speaking out: David Halpin, pictured with his wife Sue, is among the doctors behind the legal challenge

'We advise the instructing solicitors to obtain the autopsy reports so that the concerns of a group of properly interested medical specialists can be answered.'

The doctors do not say how, or why, they believe Dr Kelly did die but they have worked closely with campaigning Liberal Democrat MP Norman Baker, who believes that the scientist was murdered by enemies he made in the course of his work as a weapons inspector.

And two of the doctors have added to the sense of persistent intrigue surrounding Dr Kelly by claiming that thousands of emails relating to the case had 'vanished' from their

computers, in what one claimed was an act of 'state-sponsored sabotage'. A coroner's inquest into Dr Kelly's death was suspended before it could begin by order of the then Lord Chancellor Lord Falconer. He used the Coroners Act to designate the Hutton Inquiry as 'fulfilling the function of an inquest', but as a judicial investigation it had no power to make witnesses give evidence under oath.

After taking evidence from – but not cross-examining – Dr Nicholas Hunt, the pathologist who carried out the post-mortem examination, Lord Hutton concluded that 'the principal cause of death was bleeding from incised wounds to the left wrist' combined with the consumption of painkillers and 'silent coronary artery disease'.



Not forgotten: The sign marking Dr Kelly's grave in an Oxfordshire churchyard

The doctors also say that the level of the painkiller co-proxamol in Dr Kelly's blood was about one third of that required to produce death and point to Dr Hunt's comments at the end of giving evidence to Lord Hutton.

Asked if there was anything further he would like to say on the circumstances leading to Dr Kelly's death, he said: 'Nothing I could say as a pathologist, no.'

After the report was published, Dr Hunt added to the doctors' suspicions by telling Channel 4 that he thought a full coroner's inquest should be held.

The doctors have hired solicitor Martin Day, of Leigh Day and Co, and received advice from barrister Richard Hermer, QC, both of whom have a strong track record in civil liberties actions, including winning nearly £3million in compensation from the British Government for the family of Iraqi Baha Mousa, who died while being detained by UK troops.

They intend to use the Coroners Act to challenge Lord Falconer's suspension of the inquest.

One of the doctors, David Halpin, told The Mail on Sunday that they had argued their case in the legal document in 'microscopic' detail.

He said: 'We reject haemorrhage as the cause of death and see no contrary opinion which would stand its ground. I think it is highly likely he was assassinated.'

Mr Baker said: 'The fact that eminent medical experts feel so strongly that the official

explanation for Dr Kelly's death cannot be sustained and are now taking legal action against the Government to secure a proper inquest demonstrates both how suspect Lord Hutton's conclusions were and how this dark chapter cannot be closed unless Sir John Chilcott's inquiry into the Iraq war addresses this issue.

'A proper inquest into Dr Kelly's death must take place.'

Among the doctors is Christopher Burns-Cox, 71, the former senior consultant physician for the Frenchay Healthcare Trust, Bristol, and current co-chairman of the NHS consultants' association.



Campaign: Lib Dem MP Norman Baker at the place where Dr Kelly's body was found in 2003

Mr Halpin, 69, meanwhile, is a former lecturer in anatomy at King's College, London, and a former consultant in orthopaedic and trauma surgery at Torbay Hospital. He continued in general practice until 2005.

Mr Halpin said that he lost more than 6,000 pieces of correspondence – many relating to Dr Kelly – during his investigation, explaining that the mystery began when the 'firewall' on his computer, which all similar machines are fitted with as a security measure, became inactive without warning.

His emails started disappearing as though they were being sifted remotely. 'I believe this will have been done by a state-sponsored agency and not by an amateur acting singly,' he said.

A close associate of Mr Halpin's who has also taken an active interest in the case confirmed to The Mail on Sunday that at around the same time he, too, fell victim to what he believes was a rogue agent, losing 'somewhere in the region of 2,000 emails', many of which discussed Dr Kelly.

For professional reasons, the individual concerned, a civil servant, said that he could not be identified by name.

He said: 'I have no doubt that my computer was hacked into and I also have reason to believe that both my mobile telephone and my landline have been bugged until fairly recently. It echoes on the end of the line, things like that.'

‘But if I made an accusation like that in public without being able to prove it, it would compromise me and for the sake of my children I do not want to enter that territory. I cannot say any more about it at the moment.’

Mr Baker, who published a book about Dr Kelly’s death in 2007, also believes that his computer was hacked into remotely, leading to the loss of sensitive files about David Kelly from his constituency office in Lewes, East Sussex.

‘I think it is highly likely he was assassinated’ And Mr Halpin added that Rowena Thursby, who helped establish the Kelly Investigation Group which has campaigned for the inquest into Dr Kelly’s death to be reopened on several occasions, has also lost scores of emails in a similar, suspicious manner.

The developments come as investigative journalist Bob Coen prepares to screen a 90-minute documentary, Anthrax War, in London on the sixth anniversary of Dr Kelly’s death, this Friday.

The film claims that Dr Kelly’s death may have been linked to the secret world of germ warfare research.

Until his death Dr Kelly was privy to some of the state’s most sensitive information and worked closely with the intelligence services of all the major industrialised countries.

Among notable claims in the film, which was made over four years, is Dr Kelly’s connection with Dr Walter Basson, whose work for the South African apartheid regime used chemical and biological weapons research destined for extrajudicial execution, and whose goals included ethnic cleansing.

The film also suggests that Dr Kelly was preparing to write a book that would have breached the Official Secrets Act.

He could not have died from loss of blood, say the experts The draft version of the doctors’ dossier – a final version, including diagrams and a copy of Dr Kelly’s death certificate, is being prepared for lawyers this week – concentrates on the ulnar artery, a blood vessel in the forearm.

The Hutton Report quoted Dr Nicholas Hunt, the forensic pathologist who examined Dr Kelly’s corpse, as seeing ‘evidence of a significant incised wound to his left wrist, in the depths of which his left artery had been completely severed...

‘The arterial injury had resulted in the loss of a significant volume of blood, as noted at the scene.’

But the doctors draw on their specialist knowledge of human anatomy to argue in detail that a wound to this artery could not have resulted in enough blood loss to cause his death.

‘This artery has the width of a matchstick in its constricted state,’ they write.

‘It is not easily felt on the little finger side of the wrist... on the contrary, the radial artery pulse is easily felt beneath the skin on the opposite side of the wrist. It is thus more difficult to cut the ulnar artery.’

They go on to argue that, according to the evidence given by Dr Hunt to Lord Hutton's inquiry, Dr Kelly's blood would have quickly clotted, thus stemming the flow and preventing his death.

They write: 'Dr Hunt describes complete severance of this artery, ie transection. This means the elasticity of the artery would have caused it to retract within its sheath.

'Contraction of the circular smooth muscle within the arterial wall would have narrowed the artery, thus reducing or stopping blood flow.

Blood clots would have formed in the wound, but also within the narrowed artery.

'That clotting within the artery would have happened more speedily because the cutting was done with considerable trauma, thus causing more damage to the lining membrane, the intima.

Damage to the cells of the intima causes aggregation of blood platelets, thus hastening clotting within the vessel.'

The doctors cite a number of studies which they say prove for 'all practical purposes' that suicide using the means allegedly adopted by Dr Kelly 'does not exist in Britain'.

Although the doctors do not believe the painkillers taken by Dr Kelly contributed to his death in any way - as argued by Lord Hutton - they have restricted the scope of their dossier to refute the reasoning he used on the question of haemorrhage.

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