

The Case of the Scarlett Leader

by Katharine Kanter

John MacLeod Scarlett, the man behind Britain's "sexed-up" report to justify the war on Iraq, stepped down as Chairman of Britain's Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) on July 30, only to be straightaway reincarnated as Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), better known as MI6.

Scarlett's appointment was announced by Prime Minister Tony Blair amid public outcry, and it raised a storm of unprecedented, open protest from figures at the highest levels of British intelligence, including his predecessor in the job, Sir Richard Dearlove, and Air Marshal Sir John Walker, former head of Defense Intelligence and ex-deputy Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee. The latter said the previous week that he found Scarlett's appointment "a bit difficult to take." The CIA was being "decapitated," he said. "They have resigned, and we are promoting the person who claimed ownership of the document [the 2002 Weapons of Mass Destruction report] and was chairman of the JIC."

Who is John Scarlett, the new Black Pope?

Unlike his predecessors in the august imperial spy institution, set up in 1912 on the eve of World War I, Scarlett has been for most of his working life, very much a modern media figure. Born in 1948, he was educated at Epsom College in Surrey, and at Magdalen (Oxford University), with a First in History in 1971. Fluent in Russian, he was immediately recruited by MI6, to be stationed at Nairobi, at Paris, and, most important, at Moscow. It was in Moscow that Scarlett organized the defection of Vasili Mitrokhin, the KGB's chief archivist from 1972 to 1984, to England in 1992.

Mitrokhin's defection was not publicly disclosed for seven years. The papers Mitrokhin brought with him concern Soviet intelligence going as far back as the Revolution of 1917. Given the role played by British intelligence in that Revolution, and the interesting hypotheses about the MI6 role

in events such as the 1936-38 Soviet show trials, in which Marshall Tukachevsky and 35,000 Russian officers were executed, the peculiar interest of Mitrokhin's sudden appearance in England, chaperoned by John MacLeod Scarlett, can hardly be overstated.

In 1994, after high-ranking KGB official Oleg Gordievsky defected, and another affair concerning British espionage against Russian arms industries emerged, Scarlett, who was by then Moscow station chief, was declared *persona non grata* and expelled from Russia.

It is of note, that in 1989, at the very moment the Iron Curtain fell, and when relations with Russia might have been established on a new, and more positive, footing, John Scarlett was deeply involved in what can only be described as extremely serious provocations. Oleg Gordievsky himself told the BBC Radio 4 "Today" program during the last week of July that "Scarlett . . . has got an experience that is incomparable with anyone else. He is the person who is the most suitable candidate to become head of MI6. It has nothing to do with small political points connected to the Hutton Inquiry."

On returning from Moscow in 1994 with such feathers in his cap, Scarlett climbed to become MI6's Director of Security and Public Affairs, before he "retired" in 2001. "Retired," is a manner of speaking. A mere three days before the attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, Scarlett was appointed Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, which centralizes intelligence assessments.

Almost exactly one year later, Sept. 24, 2002, the British government released an "intelligence" dossier entitled "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government" (the 2002 WMD report), a 55-page tome designed to sell to the British public, pre-emptive war on a Third World country. The most egregious of the many arguments

for war put forward in that report, was that Iraq was in a position to launch Weapons of Mass Destruction “within 45 minutes of an order to do so.” This claim was then picked up by the Bush Administration, citing Britain as the source.

Scarlett, Kelly, and the Hutton Inquiry

But there was someone in the woodwork with principles, and who would *not* be shut up. A high-level civil servant and weapons-systems expert, Dr. David Kelly, had been to Iraq to inspect its systems on 40 or so occasions. Incensed by the specious case for war presented in the 2002 WMD report, Dr. Kelly voiced his concerns to BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan.

When the Hutton Inquiry into the circumstances that had led to Dr. Kelly’s alleged suicide in July 2003 was published on Jan. 28, 2004, the extent to which John MacLeod Scarlett had worked as a political hack alongside Tony Blair’s Public Relations officers, Alastair Campbell and Jonathan Powell, came to light.

One should bear in mind that Dr. Kelly’s death occurred shortly after he was “outed” by someone in official circles as Andrew Gilligan’s secret source. Indeed, the matey little e-mail exchange among Scarlett, Campbell, and Powell (available on the Hutton Inquiry website), makes for astonishing reading.

For example, Powell to Scarlett, Sept. 18, 2002: “I agree with Alastair that you should drop the conclusion.”

Alastair Campbell to Scarlett, Sept. 19, 2002: “I don’t like the foreword, which makes him [Kelly] sound a bit James Bond-y. . . . Can we discuss?”

As commentator Gary Gibbon said on Channel Four news: “The Hutton Inquiry revealed that Mr. Scarlett conducted his own research to see if the Government scientist David Kelly was the source for allegations that the Government’s dossier stretched intelligence. . . . Mr. Scarlett helped out with a Ministry of Defence press release at the height of the crisis over David Kelly, and even advised the Prime Minister on what David Kelly might say if he were to be called as a witness before a parliamentary committee.”

Is Gibbon fabricating that extraordinary allegation? Well, here is a transcript from the Hutton Inquiry itself, on Aug. 26, 2003, where Scarlett is being questioned:

Hutton Inquiry: . . . You have a meeting with Sir David Omand.

What is discussed?

Scarlett: Well, I was due to meet him anyway. . . . David said to me, straightaway, that he wanted to tell me and seek my advice about a development which had been reported to him by Sir Kevin Tebbit from the Ministry of Defence. . . . Briefly, somebody had come forward to the [Ministry] to indicate that they might be the source for the Gilligan story; and David gave me his name.

Hutton Inquiry: So you, on the Friday evening, or early Friday evening, know the name of Dr. Kelly?

Scarlett: Yes.

Hutton Inquiry: And I think you are joined, we have heard from Jonathan Powell and Sir David Manning, by them at about 6 o’clock, is that right?

Scarlett: No, not quite right. David Omand and I went—arranged to go across to David Manning’s office in No. 10 [Downing Street], and at our initiative, to brief him as a member of the Prime Minister’s Office on this development.

Lord Hutton: . . . [W]hat went through your head when you were told that someone had come forward and said he had had a meeting with Mr. Gilligan, Mr. Scarlett?

Scarlett: . . . I was told, and David [Omand] knew, that there had been a meeting in a London hotel, that the question of 45 minutes had been discussed, no details, and that Alastair Campbell’s name had been mentioned. . . .

So what went through my head was that there was

Scarlett’s Golden Nuggets

The London *Times* reported on Aug. 2 that in March 2003, MI6 chief John MacLeod Scarlett allegedly sent a confidential e-mail, asking the Iraq Survey Group to add ten “golden nuggets” to its report, notably that Iraq was developing weaponized smallpox and had mobile biological labs and sophisticated equipment for use in nuclear weapons research.



John MacLeod Scarlett

The Iraq Survey Group is the 1,400-person body set up to find Iraq’s WMDs after the defeat of Saddam Hussein. The *Times* reported that Scarlett asked the group’s document be cut down from 200 pages of detailed analysis to 20, and left sufficiently vague to protect Blair’s assertions that Iraq’s weapons presented an imminent threat.

That the *Times* obtained such privy information at all, amid calls here, there, and everywhere for Scarlett to step down, speaks volumes.

a serious chance that this was indeed the source who was being quoted by Mr Gilligan.

It further came to light in the Hutton Inquiry transcript, that changes in the 2002 WMD report, suggested by Blair's Public Relations Officer Campbell, were, in fact, implemented by Scarlett, as though intelligence matters of the greatest import for war and peace were nothing but a public relations perception game!

Another excerpt from the Hutton Inquiry transcript:

Scarlett: Andrew Gilligan, when quoting his source [Dr. Kelly], said that the source believed that the report was relating to warheads for missiles.

Lord Hutton: Yes.

Scarlett: Which, in fact, it was not; it related to munitions, which we had interpreted to mean battlefield mortar shells or small caliber weaponry, quite different from missiles.

Scarlett acknowledged quite freely, that his services knew all along that there were no battlefield-ready WMDs at all, and thus, even on the government's own terms, there was no case, no matter how far-fetched, for attacking Iraq.

Now, one would hardly care to suggest that, as a body, the British intelligence services would qualify as great lovers of mankind, but whether their various factions would all support the Blair/Cheney axis drive to World War III, is very much a moot point.

Who's Behind Scarlett?

Despite top-level protests, John MacLeod Scarlett has gotten where he is, because circles far higher in the pecking order than a mere Prime Minister, support his elevation. It is on the recommendation of a mysterious Selection Panel, chaired by the Security and Intelligence Co-ordinator of the Cabinet Office, Sir David Omand, that Scarlett was appointed to head MI6.

Few people have heard of Sir David, and still fewer perhaps, know that Great Britain, too, has a thing called the Homeland Security and Resilience (HSR) Department. According to the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) website, RUSI's HSR Department was established in 2001, "to provide analysis and assessment to those who have to respond to 21st Century threats that have the potential to cause a catastrophic impact on the population, the economy, or the environment. Initial research activity concentrates on terrorism (including prediction, reassurance, prevention, attribution, response and recovery), particularly as it relates to: conventional, unconventional, and improvised weapons; individual and collective protection; transport security; search and detection; cyber and economic terrorism. . . ."

On July 1, 2004, RUSI's Homeland Security Department

released the speech Sir David gave at its launch. The speech is long, but what emerges between the lines, is the bent towards imperial *preventive* war overseas, and draconian repression of dissidents (*terrorists*) at home.

So now we know what the Scarlett Letter is: "T," for Terrorist. "T," is also the letter branded upon "Those Who Disagree." In July 2001, Sir David also appears to have played a major role in setting up a sympathetic little agency called the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, which last month conducted a large-scale simulation of a terrorist attack. This Secretariat reports to Ministers through—surprise!—Sir David Omand.

One person who seems already to have been branded with a Scarlett letter of sorts, is John Morrison, former deputy chief of the Defence Intelligence Staff, and until late July, a parliamentary official advising the Commons Intelligence and Security Committee. Mr. Morrison recently appeared on BBC's "Panorama" program, to claim that intelligence officials had reacted in disbelief to the Prime Minister's claim that Saddam Hussein was a threat.

"When I heard him [Tony Blair] using those words, I could almost hear the collective raspberry going up around Whitehall," Morrison said. He also said that political pressure had been brought to bear on Defence Ministry staff, and he expressed views critical of the 2002 WMD Report.

Sir David Omand was "furious about Mr Morrison's appearance on Panorama . . . and Mr. Morrison was given notice to leave his job later this year," according to a report in the *Glasgow Herald*, July 26. It is something of a small miracle that Mr. Morrison was interviewed on the BBC at all. After Dr. David Kelly's disclosures to Andrew Gilligan of the BBC last year, the BBC itself has been the subject of a witch-hunt, and is currently being revamped, reorganized, restructured, or, in a word, muzzled.

Not everyone is playing the Great Game, though.

In a series of fire-brand articles in the *Guardian* newspaper (including a remarkable exposé this past March on how the Thatcher and Blair governments have witch-hunted—that Scarlett letter again!—civil servants opposed to cost-benefit accountancy in the public service), John Chapman, former Assistant Secretary in the civil service, reflects a public-interest view among official circles who oppose the Blair/Cheney axis:

"Should we now look at Bush and Blair as brilliant strategists whose actions will improve the security of our oil supplies, or as international conmen? Should we support them if they sweep into Iran and perhaps Saudi Arabia, or should there be a regime change in the U.K. and U.S. instead? . . ."

"If the latter, we should follow that up by adopting the pious aims of UN oversight of world oil exploitation within a world energy plan, and the replacement of the dollar with a new reserve currency based on a basket of national currencies."