



All Party Parliamentary Group on Extraordinary Rendition
House of Commons

Press release: Immediate, Thursday 15th July 2010

Andrew Tyrie responds to the publication of documents from the FCO and British Security Services which reveal details of the former government's involvement in extraordinary rendition. These include a telegram apparently from then Foreign Secretary Jack Straw to the embassy in Washington which stated he had "no objection" to the American plans to render UK detainees from Afghanistan to Guantanamo Bay, and viewed it as "the best way to meet our counter-terrorism needs".

Andrew Tyrie MP said: "I am appalled but not entirely surprised by the extent of British involvement in extraordinary rendition which these documents appear to reveal."

"I was extremely concerned to read the telegram attributed to Jack Straw. If it is from him, it reveals that as Foreign Secretary in 2002 he stated that the transfer of UK detainees to Guantanamo Bay was the 'best way' and should take place 'as soon as possible' after the detainees had been interviewed by a British team."

"Yet Jack Straw subsequently claimed that he had no knowledge of any British involvement in rendition. Worse, he dismissed the concerns of those of us who had raised this issue over many years as 'conspiracy theories'. For example, he said:

"Unless we all start to believe in conspiracy theories and that the officials are lying, that I am lying, that behind this there is some kind of secret state which is in league with some dark forces in the United States, and also let me say, we believe that Secretary Rice is lying, there simply is no truth in the claims that the United Kingdom has been involved in rendition"¹

"I hope there is a good explanation. In the absence of one, for a Foreign Secretary to have issued such denials, after having apparently endorsed the rendition of UK detainees three years earlier, would further erode the public's trust in politics. That has already been badly damaged by the Iraq war."

¹ Jack Straw, then Foreign Secretary, 13 December 2005, evidence to Foreign Affairs Committee

“If ever there was evidence of the need for a full and thorough inquiry, it is these revelations. Public concern about this issue will only grow unless the inquiry announced by the Prime Minister last week is given the necessary independence and authority to carry out a rigorous investigation to clear up this mess. The sooner the inquiry is up and running the better.”

Ends.

Notes to editors

Jack Straw, then Foreign Secretary, 13 December 2005, evidence to Foreign Affairs Committee:

“Unless we all start to believe in conspiracy theories and that the officials are lying, that I am lying, that behind this there is some kind of secret state which is in league with some dark forces in the United States, and also let me say, we believe that Secretary Rice is lying, there simply is no truth in the claims that the United Kingdom has been involved in rendition”

Extract from the telegram from Jack Straw (The full document can be found here: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/law/interactive/2010/jul/14/torture-files-downing-street-role>):

“SUMMARY

1. No Objection to American plans to transfer UK detainees from Afghanistan to Guantanamo Bay. We hope that UK nationals will not be included in the first group of transfers. We should also insist on consular access and full information on future handling.

DETAIL

2. The UK approach on the repatriation and prosecution of UK nationals is still being considered. Nevertheless, we accept that the transfer of UK nationals held by US forces in Afghanistan to the US base in Guantanamo is the best way to meet our counter-terrorism objective by ensuring that they are securely held. However, a specialist team is currently in Afghanistan seeking to interview any detainees with a UK connection to obtain information on their terrorist activities and connections. We therefore hope that all those detainees they wish to

interview will remain in Afghanistan and will not be among the first group to be transferred to Guantanamo. A week's delay should suffice. UK nationals should be transferred as soon as possible thereafter.”

Andrew Tyrie is Conservative MP for Chichester and Chairman and founder of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Extraordinary Rendition. Mr Tyrie can be contacted on 0207 219 6371. His office email is tyriea@parliament.uk. The website of the All Party Group is www.extraordinaryrendition.org.