
MPS TO DEBATE TONY BLAIR IRAQ ROLE INVESTIGATION

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The SNP is calling for an investigation into "misleading information" presented by Tony Blair in the build-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

It will lead a Commons debate on Wednesday, which it says is designed "to prevent any repetition" of a "disastrous series of events".

It is not yet clear if Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn will be asking the party's MPs to oppose the motion.

The Iraq War remains controversial in the party, which Mr Blair led.

The Commons motion, to be introduced by SNP MP and former Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond, says the Iraq inquiry "provided substantial evidence of misleading information being presented by the then prime minister and others on the development of the then government's policy towards the invasion" in 2003.

The Iraq Inquiry, led by Sir John Chilcot, found Mr Blair had overstated the threat posed by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, had sent ill-prepared troops into battle and had "wholly inadequate" plans for the aftermath.

'Further action'

The SNP says the inquiry's release of a note from Mr Blair to US President George W Bush in 2002, saying "I'll be with you, whatever", proves that he misled MPs about his intentions.

The party's motion mentions a "contrast between private correspondence to the United States government and public statements to Parliament and people and also in the presentation of intelligence information".

The motion also urges the Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee of the House "to conduct a further specific examination of this contrast in public and private policy and of the presentation of intelligence".

It should then say what "further action they consider necessary and appropriate to help prevent any repetition of this disastrous series of events", it adds.

There were reportedly angry scenes at the meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party on Monday night over what to do in response to the SNP's motion.

It is understood that the leadership, under Jeremy Corbyn - a prominent opponent of the war - wanted to impose a single-line whip to vote against the motion. This is the least stringent sanction on MPs, effectively meaning they could back the SNP's call without punishment.

Some supporters of Mr Blair were opposed to this idea.

'Very, very clear'

It has since been reported that the shadow cabinet has rejected imposing a far stronger three-line whip, to the further annoyance of the Blair supporters.

BBC political correspondent Eleanor Garnier said there had been internal accusations of "total

confusion/shambles" and that the offices of Mr Corbyn and Labour chief whip Nick Brown were engaged in a "massive row".

MPs will debate and vote on the motion - which is also supported by Plaid Cymru, the Green Party's Caroline Lucas, Conservative Sir David Amess and Labour's Kate Hoey - on Wednesday afternoon.

One Labour MP said the view at the Parliamentary Labour Party meeting had been "very, very clear to have a three-line whip against the SNP". They added that "whether you were for or against the Iraq War is not what tomorrow is about. It's about whether [Mr Blair] lied, and Chilcot did not find he lied."

The US-led invasion of Iraq began in March 2003. The UK, which lost 179 military personnel in the conflict, ended its combat role in 2009.

After the Chilcot report was published in July, Mr Blair, who led Labour to three general election victories, apologised for intelligence assessments having been "wrong".

But he defended the decision to go to war, saying "there were no lies. Parliament and cabinet were not misled. There was no secret commitment to war. Intelligence was not falsified and the decision was made in good faith".

Kaynak/Source: