

THE IRAQ WAR FILES

A number of people have been linking to the Guardian and now the AP story on the British Iraq War files that show that preparation of British forces was “appalling,” largely because Tony Blair kept the decision to go into Iraq—which he made as early as February 2002—on such a close hold.

But I wanted to point to the Telegraph version of this story for two reasons.

On the eve of the Chilcot inquiry into Britain’s involvement in the 2003 invasion and its aftermath, The Sunday Telegraph has obtained hundreds of pages of secret Government reports on “lessons learnt” which shed new light on “significant shortcomings” at all levels.

[snip]

The reports disclose that:

Tony Blair, the former prime minister, misled MPs and the public throughout 2002 when he claimed that Britain’s objective was “disarmament, not regime change” and that there had been no planning for military action. In fact, British military planning for a full invasion and regime change began in February 2002.

The need to conceal this from Parliament and all but “very small numbers” of officials “constrained” the planning process. The result was a “rushed” operation “lacking in coherence and resources” which caused “significant risk” to troops and “critical failure” in the post-war period.

Operations were so under-resourced that some troops went into action with only five bullets each. Others had to deploy

to war on civilian airlines, taking their equipment as hand luggage. Some troops had weapons confiscated by airport security.

Commanders reported that the Army's main radio system "tended to drop out at around noon each day because of the heat". One described the supply chain as "absolutely appalling", saying: "I know for a fact that there was one container full of skis in the desert."

First, note the reporter: Andrew Gilligan. He's the guy who reported that the case for war against Iraq had been "sexed up" to justify war when no real cause existed. In other words, there is some continuity between that story and this one.

Also, the Telegraph posted many of these documents on its website, including the full report.

Gilligan seems poised to get some well-earned vindication as the Iraq War inquiry begins this week. So it probably pays to keep an eye on the Telegraph's coverage.