

Iraq whistleblower Dr Kelly WAS murdered to silence him, says MP

By FIONA BARTON

Weapons expert Dr David Kelly was assassinated, an MP claims today.

Campaigning politician Norman Baker believes Dr Kelly, who exposed the Government's "sexed-up" Iraq dossier, was killed to stop him making further revelations about the lies that took Britain to war.

He says the murderers may have been anti-Saddam Iraqis, and suggests the crime was covered up by elements within the British establishment to prevent a diplomatic crisis.

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The LibDem MP, who gave up his front bench post to carry out his year-long investigation, makes his claims in a book serialised exclusively in the Daily Mail today and next week.

The official Hutton Inquiry into the death of Dr Kelly ruled in 2004 that he slashed one of his wrists with a garden knife and took an overdose after being "outed" as the mole who revealed the flawed argument for invading Iraq.

But Norman Baker is convinced the scientist was murdered.

He says he was told by a secret informant that British police knew about the plot but failed to act in time and that the death was later made to look like a suicide to prevent political and diplomatic turmoil.

The highly-respected MP's personal quest to uncover the truth about Dr Kelly's death was prompted by deep concerns over the circumstances surrounding the apparent suicide.

He - and a group of eminent doctors - were greatly troubled by the evidence presented to Lord Hutton.

They claimed medical evidence proved that the alleged method of suicide - the cutting of the ulnar artery in the wrist and an overdose of co-proxamol painkillers - could not have caused the scientist's death.

Mr Baker said: "The more I examined [Lord Hutton's verdict], the more it became clear to me that Hutton's judgment was faulty and suspect in virtually all important respects."

His findings are today revealed in the first extract from his book *The Strange Death of David Kelly*. In it, he claims:

No fingerprints were found on the gardening knife allegedly used by the scientist to cut one of his wrists;

Only one other person in the whole of the British Isles committed suicide in the same way as the scientist allegedly did in 2003;

There was an astonishing lack of blood at the scene despite death being officially recorded as due to a severed artery;

The level of painkillers found in Dr Kelly's stomach was "less than a third" of a normal fatal overdose.

The Lewes MP also suggests that the knife and packs of painkillers found beside Dr Kelly's body were taken from his home in Southmoor, Oxfordshire, during a police search after his death and later planted at the scene.

He tells in his book how he was contacted by "informants" during his "journey into the unknown".

One is alleged to have told him Dr Kelly's death had been "a wet operation, a wet disposal".

Mr Baker explains: "Essentially, it seems to refer to an assassination, perhaps carried out in a hurry."

Another secret contact told him that a group of UK-based Iraqis had "named people who claimed involvement in Dr Kelly's death".

The informant was later the victim of "an horrific attack by an unknown assailant".

The MP, who has repeatedly called for the police to re-open the case, alleges that the scientist had "powerful enemies" because of his work on biological weapons. A colleague of Dr Kelly, Dick Spertzel, America's most senior biological weapons inspector, confirmed to Mr Baker that the scientist was "on an Iraqi hit list".

Mr Baker alleges that opponents of Saddam Hussein feared Dr Kelly would "discredit" them by revealing "misinformation" they had deliberately planted to bolster the case for Britain and America's intervention in Iraq.

The MP claims Kelly's integrity might have "signed his own death warrant".

The book also alleges that British police "had got wind of a possible plan to assassinate Dr Kelly but were too late to prevent his murder taking place".

The MP suggests that the police may have tried to make the killing appear to be a suicide "in the interests of Queen and country" and to prevent any destabilisation of the sensitive relationship between the Allies and Iraq.

Mr Baker adds: "It is all too easy to dismiss so-called conspiracy theories. But history shows us that conspiracies do happen - and that suicide can be staged to cover murderers' tracks.

"All the evidence leads me to believe that this is what happened in the case of Dr Kelly."