

All Party Parliamentary Group on Extraordinary Rendition
House of Commons

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Tyrie calls for investigation into Libya rendition leaks

Letter to Foreign Secretary raises questions about MI6 role

Foreign Secretary William Hague should investigate whether MI6 officers have been briefing the press over allegations concerning the role of former Foreign Secretary Jack Straw in a rendition to Libya, Andrew Tyrie, Chairman of the All-Party Group (APG) on Extraordinary Rendition said in a letter released today.

In his letter, Mr Tyrie refers to newspaper reports, citing 'well-placed sources', claiming that intelligence officers had confronted Mr Straw with evidence that he had approved the rendition of a terrorist suspect to Libya. Mr Tyrie writes, "The context suggests that these sources may well be from within MI6."

Mr Tyrie urges the Foreign Secretary to investigate this apparent briefing of the press by intelligence officers, which would be in breach of the Official Secrets Act and probably of MI6 contracts of employment. He also argues that such briefing sits oddly with the government's proposals in its recent Justice and Security Green Paper for greater use of Closed Material Proceedings in civil cases to protect sensitive intelligence information.

Speaking today, Andrew Tyrie said: "We are constantly told that intelligence material must be protected in the interests of national security, and this argument continues to be used to prevent information relevant to Britain's alleged role in extraordinary rendition from being brought into the public domain. Yet in this case there appears to be briefing by members of the intelligence agencies, or by the Foreign Office on their behalf, against a former Foreign Secretary that would contravene agency and Foreign Office employees' duty of confidentiality.

The allegations about Britain's role in rendition to Libya also raise serious questions about the government's proposals for the expansion of secret court proceedings in civil cases where intelligence material is involved. If such provisions had been in place, it would have been much more difficult, if not impossible to get the degree of disclosure we have had so far on rendition. The government needs to re-examine its proposals."

Ends.

Notes to editors

Andrew Tyrie's letter to the Foreign Secretary is attached.

Documents discovered in Libya in September 2011 provided the basis for

allegations that MI6 played an active role in the arrest of Abdel Hakim Belhaj, a Libyan opposition activist and his wife, in Bangkok in March 2004 and their subsequent rendition to Libya. Mr Belhaj and his wife were allegedly tortured during their detention in Libya.

The Crown Prosecution Service has begun an investigation into the allegations; it was this investigation that led the government to discontinue the work of the Gibson Inquiry.

Press reports in April stated that officers from MI6 had presented the former Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, with evidence that he had authorised the rendition operation. Subsequent to this, Mr Belhaj's legal representatives have begun proceedings against Mr Straw, alleging his complicity in the mistreatment of Mr Belhaj and his wife. Mr Belhaj has also begun legal proceedings against the British government.

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.