

Classified by DAS, A/GIS, DoS on 02/13/2016 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL
~ Reason: 1.4(B), 1.4(D) ~ Declassify on: 07/13/2032

RELEASE IN PART B1,1.4(B),1.4(D),
B6

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, July 12, 2012 11:19 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Sawers / Telegraph articles

See the article down the string.

From: Sherman, Wendy R
Sent: Thursday, July 12, 2012 09:25 PM
To: Nuland, Victoria J; Murad, Eshel William; Hammer, Michael A; Ventrell, Patrick H; Sullivan, Jacob J; Einhorn, Robert J; 'Benjamin_J._Rhodes' <Benjamin_J._Rhodes>
Cc: Grantham, Chris W; Lakhdhir, Kamala S
Subject: Re: Sawers / Telegraph articles

B6

Yes, Chris Grantham on my staff sent me an Alert Iran that had this story. Most unfortunate on many levels to say the least. Where to begin...

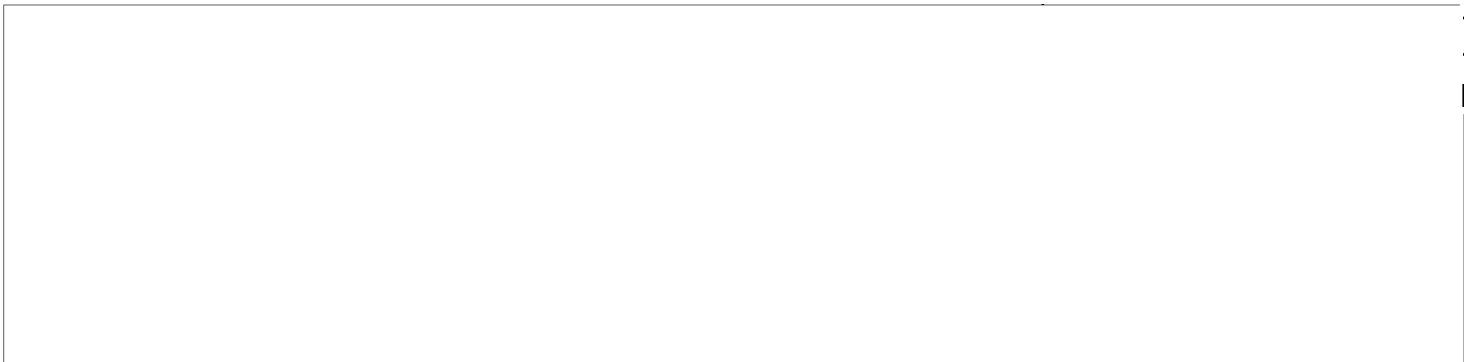
From: Nuland, Victoria J
Sent: Thursday, July 12, 2012 09:08 PM
To: Murad, Eshel William; Hammer, Michael A; Ventrell, Patrick H; Sullivan, Jacob J; Sherman, Wendy R; Einhorn, Robert J; 'Benjamin_J._Rhodes' <Benjamin_J._Rhodes>
Subject: Fw: Sawers / Telegraph articles

Fysa - this from my UK embassy contact. Sawers heads MI6.

From: James.Barbour <mailto:>
Sent: Thursday, July 12, 2012 06:21 PM
To: Nuland, Victoria J
Cc: Toner, Mark C
Subject: FW: Sawers / Telegraph articles

B6

Toria,



1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

Best

James

James Barbour | Press Secretary and Head of Communications
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B6

MI6 chief Sir John Sawers: 'We foiled Iranian nuclear weapons bid'

MI6 agents have foiled Iran's attempts to obtain nuclear weapons but the Middle Eastern state will succeed in arming itself within the next two years, the head of the Secret Intelligence Service has warned.

By Christopher Hope, Senior Political Correspondent

10:00PM BST 12 Jul 2012

MI6 agents have foiled Iran's attempts to obtain nuclear weapons but the Middle Eastern state will succeed in arming itself within the next two years, the head of the Secret Intelligence Service has warned.

Sir John Sawers said that covert operations by British spies had prevented the Iranians from developing nuclear weapons as early as 2008.

However, the MI6 chief said it was now likely they would achieve their goal by 2014, making a military strike from the US and Israel increasingly likely.

Sir John gave a secret briefing to the Cabinet in March about Iran's growing military threat but this is the first time his views on the issue have been made public.

It is extremely rare for the head of MI6 to disclose details of operations by the intelligence service.

Sir John made the remarks at a meeting of around 100 senior civil servants in London last week in only his second public speech since he was appointed to the post in 2009.

Speaking at the *Civil Service Live* event in Olympia he said that Iran was now "two years away" from becoming a "nuclear weapons state".

He said that "when that moment came" Israel or the United States would have to decide whether to launch a military strike.

"The Iranians are determinedly going down a path to master all aspects of nuclear weapons; all the technologies they need," he said. "It's equally clear that Israel and the United States would face huge dangers if Iran were to become a nuclear weapons state."

Sir John said that without MI6's work dealing with the threat, "you'd have Iran as a nuclear weapons state in 2008 rather than still being two years away in 2012."

Sir John said it was up to MI6 to “delay that awful moment when the politicians may have to take a decision between accepting a nuclear-armed Iran or launching a military strike against Iran.”

When that moment came, he said: “I think it will be very tough for any prime minister of Israel or president of the United States to accept a nuclear-armed Iran.”

Iran has previously accused Israel and the US of trying to disrupt its nuclear programme through covert operations by Mossad, MI6 and the CIA.

Several Iranian nuclear scientists have been apparently assassinated in recent years while a powerful computer virus known as Stuxnet attacked the computer systems of their nuclear facilities.

Britain and America denied the allegations but Israel has remained silent on the issue.

Sir John disclosed that MI6 has “run a series of operations to ensure that the sanctions introduced internationally are implemented, and that we do everything we can within the Middle East to slow down these remaining problems.

“I take great pride in the fact that, in the last ten years, over a number of jobs, I’ve been involved in an issue of global concern, and I feel that I as an individual [have made] an impact in the outcome of events.”

The session – which was open to visitors to the event – was titled “Unclassified chat: Sir John Sawers CMG” and was reported in *Civil Service World*, a publication which is dedicated to senior Whitehall officials.

Disclosure of his remarks came as the US stepped up their sanctions against front companies suspected of supplying apparent nuclear materials to Iran after an international oil embargo started earlier this month.

His warning of a nuclear Iran in 2014 could throw the Coalition into turmoil just before the next general election.

The Liberal Democrats have ruled out supporting any military action against the regime but David Cameron has repeatedly said that “all options” are on the table.

Senior Conservatives believe that the issue could finally cause the Coalition to split as Britain would be forced to support any American action.

In March, Sir John spoke to more than 20 ministers about the latest intelligence on the growing fear that Israel is poised to launch a pre-emptive strike against Tehran.

The secrecy around the briefing was so high that ministers were ordered to leave their mobile phones outside the Cabinet room.

There are claims that basic mobile phones, without specialist anti-eavesdropping security, can be converted into “listening devices” by foreign intelligence agencies.

The highly unusual briefing was thought to have raised questions about Israel’s military capacity to destroy Iranian nuclear sites, which are buried deep underground.

The MI6 chief was also understood to have warned about the potential threat to Britain from a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

That came after Foreign secretary William Hague warned that Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons threatened to trigger a "new Cold War" that posed an even greater threat of nuclear conflict than the stand-off between the USSR and the West.

In an interview with *The Daily Telegraph*, Mr Hague said that Iran was threatening to spark a nuclear arms race in the Middle East which could be more dangerous than the original East-West Cold War as there are not the same "safety mechanisms" in place.

"It is a crisis coming down the tracks," he said. "Because they are clearly continuing their nuclear weapons programme..."

"If they obtain nuclear weapons capability, then I think other nations across the Middle East will want to develop nuclear weapons.

"And so, the most serious round of nuclear proliferation since nuclear weapons were invented would have begun with all the destabilizing effects in the Middle East.

"And the threat of a new cold war in the Middle East without necessarily all the safety mechanisms ... That would be a disaster in world affairs."

Sir John Sawers: US spies 'got so obsessed' with right answer they resorted to torture

American spies "got so obsessed with getting a right answer" during the war on terror that they resorted to torture, Sir John Sawers said.

By Christopher Hope, Senior Political Correspondent

10:00PM BST 12 Jul 2012

The head of the Secret Intelligence Service also admitted that some of the activity of British agents when questioning alleged terrorists was "close to the line".

Sir John's comments come at a sensitive time for Britain's intelligence service, which is being investigated by the Metropolitan Police over the alleged rendition of two Libyans. Sir John described the cases as "chilling".

The Daily Telegraph understands that ministers have now received a copy of the evidence about British complicity in torture gathered by high court judge Sir Peter Gibson.

Ministers will tell MPs next week that they are combing through the evidence to ensure that its publication will not damage national security.

Sir John, who is known in Whitehall as "C", described his agents as "secret squirrels" and said that there was "always a danger" that agents could go too far when questioning suspects.

Sir John, who is paid £170,000 a year, said: “There’s always a danger that, as a bunch of secret squirrels, you can get involved in something that takes you down a pathway where you end up in the wrong place.

“The Americans have done that over their interrogation techniques after 9/11. They got so obsessed with getting a right answer that they drifted into an area that kind of amounted to torture.

“We’ve never been there, we’ve never been involved in that, and I think our accountability, our disciplines, have helped us keep on the right side of these lines.

“It’s not always been easy. There are investigations going on about things which are close to the line.”

In January, Justice Secretary Ken Clarke said Scotland Yard detectives had taken three years to decide there was insufficient evidence to bring charges in relation to claims by Guantánamo Bay detainees.

The Crown Prosecution Service and the Metropolitan police said they would look into claims that MI5 and MI6 were involved in the secret rendition of two Libyans back to Muammar Gaddafi’s regime in 2004.

Sir John told an audience of senior civil servants at Civil Service Live, an event in Olympia, west London, it was important “to address the genuine challenges about the legality of the work we were doing immediately after 9/11”.

He added: “Countries were facing a huge new threat and all our people were out there trying to deal with that, but were they as well-prepared as they should have been?”

“There are one or two chilling cases that are involved in a criminal investigation. We have to front up and say ‘yeah okay the police think this is sufficiently serious for them to investigate it and we have to co-operate 100 per cent’.”

Sir John also commented on the death in 2010 of Gareth Williams, the GCHQ official whose body was found in a holdall in the bath of his flat in London when he was on secondment to MI6 at its Vauxhall headquarters.

In comments reported by *Civil Service World* magazine, he said: “We admit our weaknesses in SIS and one of the first things you have to do when a management failure [occurs] is face up to that, not give a series of explanatory reasons. There is always an explanation.”

Sir John also said in the wake of Mr Williams’ death he had instructed his senior staff to spend up to a quarter of their time managing other people.

He said: “Sometimes there’s an attitude – and I find it in parts of my service – where management is seen as something for your spare time, not the day job.

“The day job is operations, or delivering intelligence, or whatever it is. But actually I tell people: ‘management is the core of your job, and you can deliver a whole lot more through other people than you can through yourself on your own’.”

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