



Many newspapers have so far either ignored or underplayed it, and the BBC has hitherto showed limited interest. And yet the new documents appear to establish more clearly than ever before that Tony Blair misled Parliament and the public about the legality of the war.

In secret evidence to the Chilcot Inquiry, declassified on Monday, Lord Goldsmith stated that Mr Blair based his case for invasion on grounds that 'did not have any -application in international law'. Coming from the man who was the Government's senior law officer, this is an extremely serious charge.

Lord Goldsmith told the inquiry that he felt 'uncomfortable' about the way Mr Blair ignored his official legal advice when making his case to Parliament. Asked whether 'the Prime Minister's words were compatible with the advice you had given him', he replied: 'No.'

A specific incident to which the former Attorney General referred was Mr Blair's statement to the Commons on January 15, 2003, when he asserted that 'there are circumstances in which a UN resolution is not necessary, because it is necessary to be able to say, in -circumstances where an -unreasonable veto was put down, that we would still act'.

In other words, in his view Britain could legally ignore a veto in the UN Security -Council by France or Russia, both of which were opposed to an -invasion, and declare war on Iraq. Yet Lord Goldsmith had advised the Prime Minister the previous day that Britain did not have the legal right to invade Iraq.

Mr Blair repeated the fiction on BBC2's Newsnight on -February 6, 2003 that Britain could disregard a UN veto. As when addressing MPs, he was suppressing the advice of the Government's senior law officer. He also ignored similar legal advice from Elizabeth Wilmshurst,

the Deputy Legal Adviser at the Foreign Office, who resigned on the eve of war.

Indeed, it is clear from Lord Goldsmith's testimony that the Attorney General was 'no longer actively consulted' for several months after warning Mr Blair in person on October 22, 2002, that an Anglo--American invasion of Iraq would be a breach of international law. He was frozen out.

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