

A Man Who Didn't 'Go Along To Get Along'

by Allen Douglas

Axis of Deceit: The Story of the Intelligence Officer Who Risked All To Tell the Truth About WMD and Iraq

by Andrew Wilkie

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This is an usual, riveting book. It provides a rare glimpse into intelligence processes and policymaking at the top of the "Four Eyes" intelligence alliance of the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. It further chronicles the story of one man's courage to defy his country's Establishment, to expose the farrago of lies concocted by the Cheney-dominated Bush Administration, Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair, and Australia's Prime Minister John Howard, to justify a baseless war against Iraq.

Andrew Wilkie was a senior analyst in Australia's premier intelligence agency, the Office of National Assessments (ONA), until March 11, 2003. His conscience would not allow him to sign onto a needless war, one which his studies showed could well become a genocidal nightmare; thus, he walked out the door of the ONA that day, and into the glare of a world media spotlight, and ferocious, lying attacks from his own government. At the personal direction of Prime Minister Howard, the Australian government set out to destroy Wilkie, precisely as Tony Blair and his government had destroyed whistleblower Dr. David Kelly, one of the world's top experts on weapons of mass destruction (WMD), who had debunked the Blair government's lies in statements to the BBC, and who apparently committed suicide in the aftermath of those events; and as Vice President Dick Cheney and his friends tried to destroy Amb. Joe Wilson for refuting the myth of Iraq securing "yellow-cake" uranium from Niger for an alleged nuclear weapons program.

Wilkie has not only survived, he has continued to fight, and is presently running for the Australian Parliament against John Howard, in Howard's seat of Bennelong in suburban Sydney.

Wilkie was the only senior intelligence official in the Three Musketeers of the war against Iraq (the United States, Britain, and Australia), to quit in the lead-up to that war; his

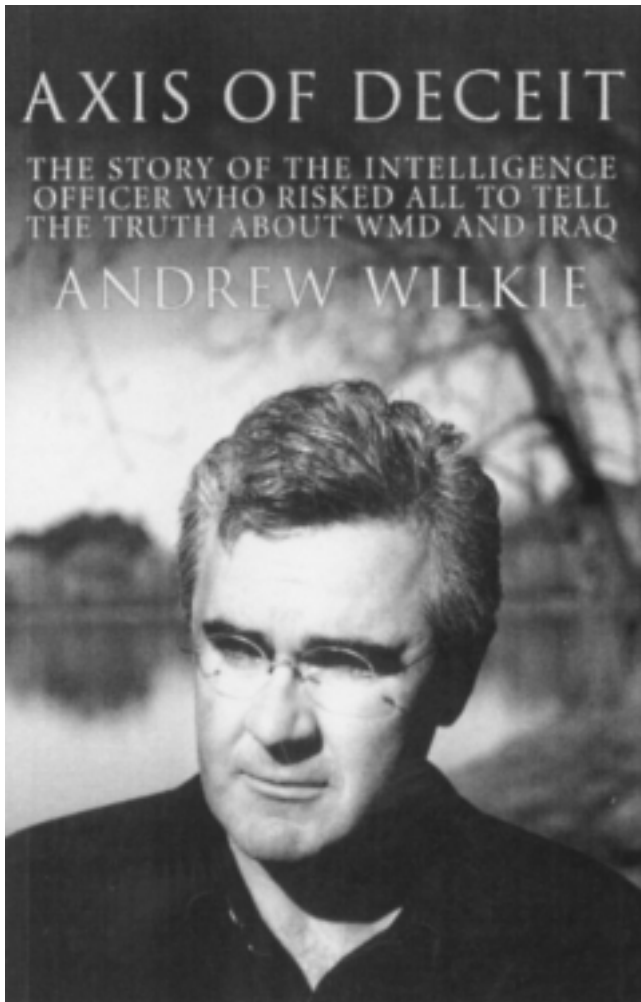
intent in so doing, was to try to stop it. Within an hour after he quit, the Howard government unleashed the first of a torrent of lies to attempt to discredit him. The head of ONA—Australia's senior intelligence official—lied that Wilkie normally only worked on "illegal immigration issues," and therefore had no idea what he was talking about on Iraq. Following a dramatic appearance on Australian TV the night he quit, the government leaked to the media that he was psychologically unstable due to a breakdown of his marriage. Then, in a move reminiscent of the "outing" of Joe Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, as a CIA agent, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) leaked to their neo-conservative hatchetman at Rupert Murdoch's Melbourne *Herald-Sun*, Andrew Bolt, an "above-Top Secret" report which Wilkie had written before the war. As Wilkie observed, the super-security clearance of his report, meant that its release could easily have compromised operatives and sources: "These people truly can end up dead if their cover is blown, and such a thing can occur more easily than people who are unfamiliar with the world of intelligence may realise. . . ."

Bolt cited Wilkie's evaluations from the report, including the likelihood of "huge casualties," and claimed that everything Wilkie had said was wrong. "Yet he wanted us to trust his judgement on something he was not expert in—Iraq's weapons of mass destruction," Bolt ranted.

When Wilkie did not collapse under its initial assault, his government escalated. Foreign Minister Downer in August 2003 branded Wilkie "an increasingly hysterical malcontent," while Liberal Party Sen. David Johnston, speaking on behalf of Howard's Liberal Government, in September unleashed a volley against Wilkie in Parliament. Under the protection of "parliamentary privilege" against lawsuits for slander and defamation, Johnston charged that Wilkie was "a fourth-grade operative," "reprehensible," "flagrant," "extravagant," "outrageous," "grandiose," "contradictory," "incongruous," "inconsistent," and "unreliable."

Who is this individual, who provoked all this vituperation, and what were his qualifications to make the charges he did?

Born to a conservative Catholic family in rural Australia, Wilkie graduated from Duntroon Royal Military College, Australia's equivalent of West Point. He attained the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Australian Defence Force before leaving with a medical discharge. His wife, Simone, was the first female commander of Duntroon, a post she held at the time Wilkie decided to quit the ONA. In 1999 and 2000, precisely because the ONA badly needed experts with a military background, he worked as a Senior Strategic Analyst on a wide range of issues, including Kosovo, terrorism, WMD, and border protection. After a stint in private industry, he returned to the ONA shortly after 9/11, to become the ONA's Senior Transnational Issues Analyst. He was one of only a dozen or so Senior Analysts at ONA, and held the Top Secret Positive Vet clearance which went with the post.



Andrew Wilkie, formerly a top Australian intelligence analyst, resigned in opposition to his government's lies, during the build-up to the Iraq War.

As he recorded, “My access to intelligence included all the normal flow of material plus the additional Gamma and Echo category material, two of the most sensitive and closely held forms of intelligence. I’d been awarded a Superior rating in my last performance appraisal—only a handful (if that) in ONA had scored a higher rating. Not long before I resigned I’d been informed by the Deputy Director-General that thought was being given to my being promoted.

“Because of my military background I was required to be familiar with war-related issues; hence I’d covered Kosovo and Afghanistan and was on standby to work in the National Intelligence Watch Office once the Iraq war began. I’d also worked on WMD, including the preparation of relevant Current Assessments on the issue, and I had represented ONA at a number of WMD-related forums. Furthermore, I was also involved in covering global terrorism issues. In fact, my task on literally my first day back at ONA in late

2001 was to work with ASIO [Australian Security Intelligence Organization—Australia’s FBI] on a project to develop a list of innovative terrorist attack scenarios. My competence in global terrorism issues was reflected from time to time as the ONA briefing officer on the federal and federal-state anti-terrorism co-ordination committees. . . . And finally, as the Senior Transnational Issues Analyst at ONA, I was involved routinely in matters relating to Iraq. This provided me with almost unrestricted access to intelligence on that country. In particular, my December 2002 assessment on the possible humanitarian implications of a war required me to research in detail the threat posed by Saddam Hussein.”

Thus the government lied its head off about his qualifications, and about his knowledge of Iraq. Wilkie concluded: “I have no doubt that Howard was in on the attempt to discredit me. It’s well known to insiders that his office—and for that matter, his government’s entire parliamentary machinery—is controlled too tightly by him personally for something so reckless to take place independently. The whole incident speaks volumes about the type of man Howard is.”

Others Speak Out

After Wilkie spoke out, others followed. Lt. Col. Lance Collins, a highly respected Army analyst and the Australian military’s top intelligence officer in Timor, charged that Australia’s intelligence system had not only failed in the Iraq debacle, but in several other cases going back a decade. The government’s response was to charge him with leaking sensitive material. In Collins’ resulting Redress of Grievance claim conducted by Capt. Martin Toohey, Toohey found that Collins’ charges had “considerable veracity,” and brought to mind “shades of the recent Dr. Kelly scandal in the United Kingdom and the Wilkie departure from the ONA.” Toohey charged that the Defence Intelligence Organization “distorts intelligence estimates to the extent those estimates are heavily driven by government policy. In other words, DIO reports what the government wants to hear.”

The government then released another report which attempted to discredit Toohey, which the latter called “despicable and duplicitous,” and he joined Collins in his call for a Royal Commission inquiry (the highest form of inquiry) into the “putrefaction” of Australian intelligence. Howard flatly rejected the call.

Others supported Collins’ claims. Maj. Gen. Mike Smith, Australia’s former deputy force commander in East Timor, said that “the spy agencies had been influenced by Government pressure, and that military personnel feared their careers would suffer if they gave frank and fearless advice.” Jane Errey, a senior advisor to former Chief Defence Scientist Dr. Ian Chessell, the head of the Australian contingent in Hans Blix’s UN Iraq WMD inspection team, charged that she was sacked because she, too, disagreed with cooking

the intelligence. An engineer and analyst at the Department of Defence for nine years, Errey had refused to write briefings that claimed that Iraq had WMD. "I felt like I was part of the propaganda machine. As a public servant, I shouldn't be expected to write propaganda. Anything that I was doing with respect to the war was making me uncomfortable. Then to have to brief the minister and fundamentally give him—even though I didn't write it—lines of propaganda that I didn't believe with respect to the war, was beyond what I was prepared to do. I wouldn't lie or mislead the public," she said.

The 'Four Eyes' Alliance

Wilkie had a catbird seat in the world's most effective intelligence apparatus, the "Four Eyes" relationship of the United States, Britain, Australia, and Canada. Almost all of this intelligence is computerized, and is available to senior analysts in all four nations: "No other country or alliance comes close to its power and reach," writes Wilkie, "not even the elaborate intelligence machine that reached out from the Soviet Union during the Cold War. That's not to say that the US-centred behemoth is perfect, of course. Far from it. But it is pretty good and much better than is suggested by some critics who claim the monitoring of Iraq to have been a monumental intelligence failure."

One example is the infamous "Niger yellow-cake" story. "How the Niger story ever got into the case for war beggars belief," Wilkie recounts. "The bundle of very badly forged documents that made up the 'intelligence' on the matter was so dubious as to make any claim to the contrary quite preposterous." After describing why, including the findings of Joe Wilson's visit to Niger in 2002, Wilkie continued, "Wilson's findings were widely distributed, both throughout the U.S. government and to close allies the UK and Australia. . . . I remember very well that ONA in Australia was aware in 2002 that the Niger story was fraudulent, and that on that basis alone half of the nuclear case against Iraq had collapsed. In spite of this, almost every significant pro-war official speech in the US, the UK and Australia in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war ran the line that Iraq had tried to purchase uranium from Africa. The only exception to this was Powell's 5 February 2003 address to the UN Security Council—at least he had the good sense to leave the matter alone."

Like Dick Cheney, however, Howard pursued the political goal of launching the war, by pushing the Niger story well after it had been discredited. As Wilkie notes, "Equally preposterous is the way in which the Australian government has stuck with its line that the Prime Minister, Defence Minister, and Foreign Minister were all unaware that the Niger story was fraudulent when the Prime Minister used the claim during his 4 February 2003 address to the parliament. This apparent 'unawareness' is clearly inconsistent with official statements from ONA, the Department of Defence and the Department

of Foreign Affairs, all of which have acknowledged that they knew in January 2003 that the Niger story was simply wrong. No satisfactory official explanation has ever been provided for this alarming disconnection."

However, while U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell did, indeed, have the good sense to dump the Niger story, along with many other lies that the neo-conservatives tried to cram into his UN speech, he did include other absurd hair-raisers, including photos of Iraq's supposed "WMD decontamination trucks." Says Wilkie, "These shots were good enough for me and others at ONA to identify easily and quickly Powell's supposed WMD decontamination trucks as mere water tankers, possibly fire trucks."

The Neo-Cons

Though he does not develop the point, Wilkie makes clear that the neo-conservative cabal in Washington organized the Iraq War, under the cover of the "war on terror." After 9/11, Wilkie reports, "America's virtue was ripe for the plucking by the neo-conservatives associated with the Bush administration, people such as Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, men and women with no compunction about hijacking the September 11 outrages for their own ideological agenda. Their stroke of genius was the so-called 'War on Terror'—a war with no end, no boundaries, and no rules." Here, Wilkie cites the Bush Administration document, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*—"the grand strategy of the US to reign supreme permanently," as Wilkie summarizes the neo-cons' aims following the collapse of the Soviet Union. "In this quest," Wilkie states, Iraq was to be "an almost theatrical performance" to demonstrate "a crushing demonstration of U.S. military muscle."

He also nails Cheney for his brutal pressure on CIA analysts. "Occasionally the pressure on the agencies is direct and unambiguous, most often in the US. The US Vice-President, Dick Cheney, travelled out to the CIA headquarters on a number of occasions before the start of the Iraq war, in what my former CIA colleagues told me was an unprecedented practice. Imagine the scene—one of the most powerful people in the world sitting down at Langley with the spooks as they worked up their assessments on Iraq. Even before the Vice-President opened his mouth, the pressure on the CIA would have been overwhelming. There would have been no doubt about the purpose of the visit or the professional dangers that lurked for anyone courageous enough to challenge or disappoint him."

Israeli intelligence, Wilkie charged, was "invariably skewed heavily to encourage the US to think the worst. ONA was aware of the bias, as was presumably the Joint Intelligence Committee [of the U.K.]. Even so, such misleading reports were manna from heaven for those in the US, the UK, and Australia who were cherry-picking the Iraq intelligence database for suitable findings."

New Terrorist Attacks?

Documents leaked by the U.S. intelligence community, along with the testimony of former U.S. National Security Council terrorism specialist Richard Clarke, clearly established that Cheney ignored the intelligence services' pre-9/11 warnings of a massive strike against the United States, although he chaired the committee Bush charged with dealing with those warnings, and did nothing at all, apparently due to his overwhelming fixation on Iraq. Something similar happened with Australia's own 9/11, the terrorist bombing in Bali, Indonesia on Oct. 12, 2002, in which 202 people died, 88 of them Australians. Charges Wilkie, Foreign Minister Downer "was warned clearly and repeatedly about the risks to Australians in Bali, yet he took no action to ensure the travel advisory was upgraded," and "vociferously denied afterwards that he had received any actionable warning from Australia's intelligence agencies beforehand."

Wilkie makes it clear that the world is in much worse shape to deal with terrorism because of the war against Iraq, not only because "the invasion and occupation have fuelled hatred of the US and its close allies," but that "the problem is compounded because the Iraq war has fundamentally diminished the capacity of all three countries to combat terrorism. Intelligence resources have been redirected from counter-terrorism to Iraq-related targets and issues. The significance of this cannot be underestimated, because intelligence capabilities are scarce—there is little 'excess' capacity—and any unnecessary tasking almost invariably results in a reduction of efforts on other critical tasks."

And what of the never-ending warnings from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, as echoed in Australia, of terrorists acquiring "suitcase nukes" or chemical or biological weapons capable of wiping out whole cities? Wilkie documents why the "rarity of WMD terrorism" until now is no accident. "Serious technical hurdles also help to explain the very limited terrorist interest in WMD. Although simulations and contingency planning understandably tend to focus on worst-case scenarios, the reality is that obtaining, manufacturing, storing, weaponising and dispersing WMD is extremely difficult." As for "suitcase nukes," "The likelihood of terrorists obtaining a nuclear bomb remains so small as not to warrant much comment. Building an effective nuclear weapon—as opposed to a very low-yield 'fizzer'—is too difficult a task for most countries to accomplish, let alone a terrorist organization." Nor have any Soviet-era weapons "gone missing," as media reports would have it.

Wilkie reveals that Australian and British agencies expended considerable efforts before the Iraq War, in spying on the United States, to determine its intentions. Since "Washington was not always frank with its allies, UK and Australian intelligence agencies sometimes needed to treat the US more as a focus of intelligence interest than as a close ally. It is no accident that the National Security Committee of Cabinet in Australia included the US in its National Foreign

Intelligence Assessment Priorities. . . . Thanks to such efforts, John Howard (and by his own means Tony Blair) knew that the US was intent on invading Iraq for many reasons, not only those involving WMD and terrorism. I recall numerous ONA assessments that explored the machinations in Washington and the thinking of George W. Bush and his circle. If this knowledge is juxtaposed with the public case for war that was made in London and Canberra, something very interesting is revealed: Blair's and Howard's oft-repeated justifications for going to war were quite hollow. Their statements about WMD and terrorism were made in the full knowledge that such justifications were not the central reasons for the US's actions."

Another key aspect of the fraudulent "war on terrorism," which Wilkie does not address in his book, is the excuse it provides the international banking cartel which controls Cheney and the neo-cons, for implementing fascist police-states. LaRouche's associates in the Citizens Electoral Council in Australia have documented that trend there, and have led the fight against it. Asked by a member of the Australian LaRouche Youth Movement (ALYM) at an address he gave in Melbourne on April 22, about the police-state implications of the Howard government's actions, Wilkie replied, "Slowly but surely, we are going into a police-state. A little law here, a little change there; before you know it, you've arrived at a police-state; and I don't think Australians see it coming. But it is coming slowly but surely." Howard's leading Australia rapidly into a police-state is no big surprise, given that his father was an activist in the fascist New Guard of the early 1930s in Australia, and that he himself has been a pawn of the London-centered financial establishment for his entire career.

As Lyndon LaRouche has often discussed, the major political problem in the world today, is the attitude of citizens in all nations (particularly of the Baby-Boomer generation), from government officials down to the man in the street, to "go along to get along." Whether or not to do that is exactly the agonized debate Wilkie had with himself, before deciding, as he put it, to "betray my government. Others conform," he observed, "play the game and get ahead, on course for the higher levels of intelligence agency management. Being rewarded for not rocking the boat has become so entrenched now for it to be regarded as normal." He had numerous reasons not to speak out: He had a good job which he liked very much, and this would mean the end of his career; though not poor, he was by no means wealthy, and had no other job lined up; the decision would certainly put a strain on his marriage, if for no other reason than his wife's job as commanding officer at Duntroon (and they did live apart during some of the saga Wilkie chronicles); he would be castigated as a liar or worse; he might wind up in jail.

Nonetheless, Andrew Wilkie decided to act. The world, and particularly the citizens of the United States, United Kingdom, and his own Australia, owe him a debt of gratitude.