

**BBC** News

Head of Radio News

Ms Anne Shevas  
Prime Minister's Press Office  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

Fax.: 020 7930 2831

30 May 2003

Dear Anne Shevas,

Thank you for your fax of May 29<sup>th</sup> to Mark Damazer regarding coverage of the Iraq dossier published last year. Mr Damazer is out of the office today and has asked me to reply. You raise a series of issues which I will address in turn.

Firstly you complain that we failed to contact Downing Street for a response. In fact we set out the main aspects of the piece to Adam Ingrams assistant on the evening before transmission. No specific Government comment was made at that time and when your office contacted the programme at 0715 their comments were included verbatim in John Humphrys introduction to the main item shortly after 0730. And of course later in the programme Mr Ingram had the opportunity to outline the Governments case.

Secondly you complain that we "continued to run these allegations at the top of every news bulletin without any reference to the firm denial." In the bulletin at 8.00am the lead story was in fact a report on the Prime Ministers arrival in Iraq with only a brief mention of the intelligence dossier in the introduction, the Downing Street denial did feature in the news bulletins on Radio Four at 0900, 1000, 1100 and 1200.

Turning to The World at One, the headline at the top of the programme started with the words "*Downing Street has dismissed a claim that the Governments dossier on Saddam Husseins weapons of mass destruction was rewritten to make the threat appear more urgent.*" This denial was repeated in the introduction to the report on the subject by Shaun Ley, as it was when the story was carried on other BBC networks during the day.

As to the general approach of The World at One, the programme was seeking to move forwards and explore the process by which intelligence reports are written rather than going over the original issue again. Hence there were interviews with Dame Pauline Neville Jones

BBC/4/0264

262

and Mr Tom King They did seek a Cabinet Minister to join this discussion and declined to interview Adam Ingram again as he had already appeared on Radio Four that morning. Instead they used a clip from his Today appearance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Mitchell', with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end.

STEPHEN MITCHELL

~~cc: Mark Damazer~~

BBC/4/0265 <sup>263</sup>