



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

Director of Communications and Strategy

26 June 2003

See R. Reid

As you know, I have been engaged in private correspondence with you in recent weeks about the allegations on the BBC on the conduct of the Government, and of me, in relation to the WMD dossier of September 2002.

I heard your interview on the Today programme this morning and would like now, in view of the continuing interest in this, to ask a number of questions. You said that the BBC had never alleged that we took the country into conflict on a false basis. I disagree. Indeed, could I point you to the introduction by John Humphreys before he spoke to your correspondent on the Today programme prior to my appearance at the FAC. He said:

"Mr Campbell will answer questions about allegations made on this programme by Andrew Gilligan that the case for going to war was exaggerated, specifically that one of the dossiers presented by Mr. Blair had been sexed up to make it appear that Saddam was a greater threat to the West than the intelligence justified."

That is one of many statements on the BBC by reporters and presenters making clear that Mr. Gilligan made these allegations, and that they amount to charges that the Government, from the Prime Minister down, misled Parliament and public about the case on which he had led the country into conflict.

I think you will agree that this was certainly the allegation as MP's, press and public understood it at the time, as the voluminous coverage and the Parliamentary concern have shown. Could I have a response by the end of the day; given that is the time scale I am seeking to meet in relation to the issues the FAC has asked me further to address I think it is fair and reasonable. And of course, like me you will already be immersed in the detail as a result of our previous, thus far private exchanges.

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The questions are these:

- Does the BBC still stand by the allegation it made on 29th May that Number Ten added in the 45 minute claim to the dossier? Yes or no?
- Does it still stand by the allegation made on the same day that we did so against the wishes of the intelligence agencies? Yes or no?
- Does it still stand by the allegation made on that day that both we and the intelligence agencies knew the 45 minute claim to be wrong and inserted it despite knowing that? Yes or no?
- Does it still stand by the allegation, again on the same day, that we ordered the September dossier to be "sexed up" in the period leading up to its publication - and that Gilligan had found what Humphreys called "evidence" that it was "cobbled together at the last minute with some unconfirmed material that had not been approved by the security services"? Yes or no?
- Does it still stand by the statement made on 6th June by Gilligan that the JIC is not part of the intelligence community, but a Number 10 Committee which exists to arbitrate between government and the intelligence agencies?
- Does it stand by the claim on the 3rd of June that the chairman of the JIC only "kind of bureaucratically signed off his report"? Yes or no?

Could I also ask:

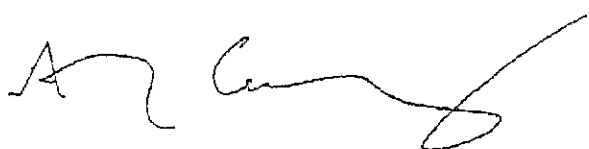
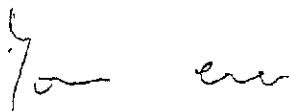
- How many sources was the original "45 minute" allegation being added in based on? Was it one source or more than one source? You will be aware of the BBC Guidelines on this.
- Is that source on the JIC, and do you agree that any source not on the JIC did not have the full picture?
- Was the source, as Gilligan has said, "a senior official involved in drawing up the dossier", or is he, as you said today, a source, "in the intelligence services"? I'm sure you at least understand the significance of the difference to which I am alluding.
- Is it now normal BBC practice not to seek to corroborate single source stories?
- Finally do you believe that Gilligan's statement to the FAC that all he had ever alleged was that we gave "undue prominence" to the 45 minute point, or do you share my views that this is utterly inconsistent with what he and others or the BBC have said and what Gilligan has said, writing as a BBC journalist in the Mail on Sunday, the Sunday Telegraph, and The Spectator.
- Finally, have you seen today's Spectator, in which Mr. Gilligan, writing not in a personal capacity but as a BBC correspondent, writes an article concluding that the Prime Minister is a "push over" in his relations with President Putin. Is that

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the BBC's view? If it is a personal view, could you tell me what rule governs what BBC correspondents may or may not write in a freelance capacity to boost their BBC earnings? What are the procedures and were they followed in relation to this article? I am interested too, in respect of the many BBC journalists who boost their incomes by writing for national newspapers, what procedures govern their conduct and this writings? You will be aware that MP's have also expressed concern on this.

As our previous correspondence has achieved little on this subject, other than further exposing the BBC's refusal ever to apologise, even on a story that is potentially so damaging to the integrity of the Prime Minister, the Government and the political process, I am releasing this to the press. I look forward to your reply later today.



ALASTAIR CAMPBELL

Mr. Richard Sambrook

BBC/5/0096 ³⁷³

BBC backing away from its original story

This morning the BBC's Director of News denied the BBC ever alleged anything other than that there was simply 'disquiet' within the intelligence services about 'one piece' of information.

"What we have said quite simply is that a senior and credible source said there was disquiet within the intelligence services about one piece, that one forty five minute claim." Richard Sambrook, 26 June 2003

In his evidence to the FAC last week Gilligan said he had 'reported his source as saying' there was disquiet because the 45 minute claim had been given 'undue prominence'.

"I reported the source as saying there was unhappiness within the intelligence services, disquiet within the intelligence services... my source's complaint was that its [45 minute claim] importance was given undue prominence."

Andrew Gilligan, evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, 18 June 2003

This is not true, and he therefor misled the Foreign Affairs Committee.

He reported a number of allegations including:

"most people in the intelligence weren't happy with the dossier."

Andrew Gilligan, Breakfast Radio 5 Live, Thursday 29th May 2003 0750

He reported that the Government knew the 45 minute fact was wrong:

"we've been told by one of the senior officials in charge of drawing up that dossier was that actually the Government probably knew that that forty-five minute figure was wrong, even before it decided to put it in."

Gilligan, Today Programme 29 May 2003

"what I have been told is that the Government knew that claim was questionable even before the war, even before they wrote it in their dossier."

Gilligan, Today Programme, 29th May 2003 0732

He reported that the intelligence agencies also knew it was wrong:

"the intelligence agencies say they don't really believe it [45 minute claim] was necessarily true."

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Gilligan, Today Programme 29 May 2003

He reported that the Downing Street had ordered the dossier to be 'sexed up':

"this official told us that the transformation of the dossier took place at the behest of Downing Street"

Gilligan, Today Programme, 29th May 2003 0732

"What this person says is that a week before the publication date of the dossier it was actually rather a bland production. ...the draft prepared for Mr Blair by the intelligence agencies actually didn't say very much more than was public knowledge already and Downing Street, our source says, ordered a week before publication, ordered it to be sexed up, to be made more exciting and, and, ordered more facts to be, to be discovered."

Gilligan, Today Programme 29 May 2003

And in the Mail on Sunday he reported that Alastair Campbell had been personally responsible for adding in the 45 minute fact:

"I asked him how this transformation happened. The answer was a single word, 'Campbell.' What? Campbell made it up? 'No, it was real information. But it was included against our wishes because it wasn't reliable.' " (Andrew Gilligan - Mail on Sunday - 1/06/03)

John Humphrys exaggerated this further when he said Gilligan had found 'evidence':

"Andrew Gilligan has found evidence that the Government's dossier on Iraq, that was produced last September, was cobbled together at the last minute with some unconfirmed material that had not been approved by the security services."

John Humphrys, Today Programme, 29th May 2003 0732

When the dossier was first published Andrew Gilligan described it as:

"rather sensibly cautious and measured in tone on the whole"
(Today, 24th September 2002)

But after he broke his 'sexing up' story he subsequently described it in the Mail on Sunday as:

"bold and assertive" Andrew Gilligan, June 1 2003, Mail on Sunday

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BBC confusion over its 'source'

The BBC's Director of News said this morning that the source is in the intelligence services:

"We've always said that we had one senior and credible source in the intelligence services who had told us that some of those involved in compiling the September dossier were unhappy at how it was finally presented.."

Richard Sambrook, 26 June 2003

But Gilligan has said he is a senior official:

"And what we've been told by one of the senior officials in charge of drawing up that dossier..."

Gilligan, Today Programme 29 May 2003

He has confirmed he is not a member of the Joint Intelligence Committee:

Mr Gilligan: As I have said, the JIC did not enter into my report..."

Andrew Gilligan, evidence to the Foreign Affairs Ctee, 18 June 2003

In a letter to Alastair Campbell of 11 June 2003, the BBC's Director of News said that a 'variety' of sources had voiced concern over the September WMD dossier.

"The fact is that a variety of sources, over a period of time, have indicated their concern about the way intelligence was used and presented in September and they have voiced this concern both to Andrew and also to other BBC journalists."

But Andrew Gilligan told the Foreign Affairs Committee last week that in fact only one source had spoken to him about the September WMD dossier.

Mr Maples: Two of the other three, so to speak, talked to you about the al-Qaeda links and the "dodgy dossier" but not about the weapons of mass destruction dossier.

Mr Gilligan: That is right. (Foreign Affairs Ctee, 18/6/03)

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