



From Director, News

Alastair Campbell, Esq.,
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10 Downing Street,
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11 June, 2003

Dear Alastair,

Thank you for your fax of 6 June regarding Andrew Gilligan and the reporting of WMD. I see no likelihood of us agreeing on this matter but I will briefly set out why I think your allegations about our journalism are misguided.

Much of what you write focuses on the question of sources. You are wrong to suggest that our journalism is being driven by a single source. Andrew Gilligan has made it clear that one *specific* concern about the September dossier's presentation of the Government's case derived from a single source - the claim that Saddam Hussein could launch a WMD within 45 minutes of the order being given. But the judgements that were made on the quality of the source and its usefulness were informed by a wider context. 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. And, for that matter, to non-BBC journalists. That is why we know there has been tension about the presentation of intelligence.

Further, if we had thought the single source incredible we would not have reported the allegation at all. You would not expect me to reveal the source (and I am gratified that you have not asked) but I can assure you that I am satisfied that the source knew what he/she was talking about. It is fanciful to imply that Andrew - or anyone

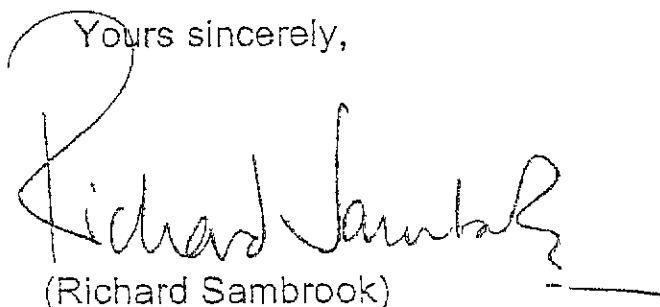
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else for that matter - can simply put stories on air without discussion with his editorial management. Of course we would have preferred the source to have gone on the record - but neither you nor I can be surprised that he/she chose not to do so. In sum - neither the source's anonymity nor the fact that *for one particular piece of information* there was only one source made it wrong for us to use the information in the way we did. There was no breach of the producer guidelines.

You talk about a right of reply. I agree. Our programmes did give the Government a right of reply and will continue to do so. By 0730 on the morning that Andrew Gilligan broadcast his first report on the drafting of the dossier the Government reply was broadcast. It was inadvertently missed at 0800 (though not by Radio 5) and was then used throughout the day and across the piece. Ministers have gone in and out of studios to say there was no disagreement about the dossier, that Andrew (and the many others who have published similar stories) have got it wrong - and so on. They will be able to continue to say this - but that does not mean we do not stand by the story. We do.

On which point it is worth going back to stage 1. We have not suggested that the 45 minute point was invented by anyone in Downing Street against the wishes of anyone in the intelligence community. We have suggested that there are pertinent and serious questions to be asked about the *presentation* of the intelligence material - a rather different point and one which I am not convinced your letter recognises.

Yours sincerely,



(Richard Sambrook)

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