

**BBC****PRESS RELEASES****BBC** Press Release07.07.03BBC NEWS**BBC says FAC report justifies BBC journalism**

The BBC believes today's report from the Foreign Affairs Committee justifies its decision to broadcast the Today programme story of 29 May and the Newsnight story of 2 June and shows that both were in the public interest.

In particular, we believe the decision to highlight the circumstances surrounding the 45 minute claim has been vindicated.

We would point to the unanimous conclusion of the Foreign Affairs Committee in paragraphs 70 and 71, which says:

"We conclude that the 45 minute claim did not warrant the prominence given to it in the dossier, because it was based on intelligence based on a single uncorroborated source. We recommend that the Government explain why the claim was given such prominence."

The committee continues: "We further recommend that in its response to this report, the Government set out whether it still considers the September dossier to be accurate in what it states about the 45 minute claim, in the light of subsequent events."

It is because of BBC journalism that the problems surrounding the 45 minute claim have come to light and been given proper public attention.

We note that the committee was deeply divided on the role Alastair Campbell played in the compilation of the September dossier and only reached a decision which supported his position on the casting vote of the Labour chairman. We also note that not all the Labour MPs on the committee supported this decision.

We also consider it important, in the context of our reporting, that in paragraph 100 the committee says unanimously:

"The language used in the September dossier was more assertive than that traditionally used in intelligence documents."

And in paragraph 107, the committee says: "We conclude that the continuing disquiet and unease about the claims made in the September dossier are unlikely to be dispelled unless more evidence of Iraq's WMD programmes come to light."

BBC/3/0021

We are pleased that Alastair Campbell said this morning that his complaint is about one story only and was no longer an attack on the whole of the BBC's journalism or coverage of the war.

On whether or not it was right for the BBC to broadcast the Today programme story on 29 May, the BBC will have to agree to disagree with Mr Campbell. The Foreign Affairs Select Committee makes no comment on this.

### **Notes to Editors**

[Statement from Gavyn Davies, Chairman of the BBC](#) (06.07.03)

[Letter from Stephen Whittle, Controller, Editorial Policy, BBC to Ben Bradshaw MP](#) (03.07.03)

[Letter from Richard Sambrook, Director BBC News, to Ben Bradshaw MP](#) (29.06.03)

[Letter from Andrew Gilligan, Today programme Defence and Diplomatic Correspondent, to Phil Woolas, Deputy Leader of the House of Commons](#) (28.06.03)

[Letter from Richard Sambrook, Director, BBC News to Alastair Campbell](#) (27.06.03)

**[BACK TO THE TOP](#)**

[HOME](#) | [AUDIENCE FIGURES](#) | [BIOGRAPHIES](#) | [KEY FACTS](#) | [PRESS RELEASES](#)  
[PROGRAMME INFO](#) | [SPEECHES](#) | [COMMERCIAL](#)

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BBC/3/0022