

**BBC**

**PRESS RELEASES**



**BBC** Press Release

09.07.03

**BBC response to MoD statement**

We note that today the Ministry of Defence has issued a statement saying that an individual working in the Ministry of Defence has come forward to volunteer information about an unauthorised meeting he says he had with Andrew Gilligan on May 22nd.

The description of the individual contained in the statement does not match Mr Gilligan's source in some important ways. Mr Gilligan's source does not work in the Ministry of Defence and he has known the source for a number of years not months.

As we have said before Mr Gilligan met several people in the period before the story was broadcast and discussed Weapons of Mass Destruction in various ways with a number of them. His Today programme story was based on only one of those conversations.

For the single conversation which led to the Today story Mr Gilligan took comprehensive notes during the meeting with his source which do not correspond with the account given in the MOD statement. These notes have already been deposited with the BBC legal department.

We note that the MoD statement says that; "we do not know whether this official is Mr Gilligan's source." Neither do we.

What we do know is that Mr Gilligan's notes and account of what he was told are very similar to the notes of a conversation Susan Watts, Science Editor of Newsnight, had with her source which led to the Newsnight reports of June 2nd and 4th.

These reports contained allegations consistent with the Gilligan report and she described her source as; "a senior official intimately involved with process of pulling together the September dossier."

We reiterate the point we made last week that Susan Watts and Andrew Gilligan have never met, spoken or corresponded about any issues let alone this particular matter.

We do not know whether their respective sources are the same person, as Susan Watts and George Entwistle, the Editor of Newsnight, are unwilling to reveal her source.

However if it is the same source it is quite clear that the information he is now giving to the Ministry of Defence is not a

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full and frank account of the conversation with Mr Gilligan and that he has failed to mention the conversation with Susan Watts.

If it is a different source it means that the original Gilligan story was separately corroborated by a second source – the person who spoke to Susan Watts. Either way we stand by Mr Gilligan's reporting of his source.

### **Notes to Editors**

[Latest BBC statement regarding the source of the Today programme report on the Iraq dossier \(09.07 03\)](#)

[Letter from Gavyn Davies, Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors to Geoff Hoon, Secretary of Defence \(09.07 03\)](#)

[BBC says FAC report justifies BBC journalism \(07 07 03\)](#)

[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 \(27.06 03\)](#)

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