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but in-hand**RESTRICTED - STAFF  
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PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE

D/PUS/12/3 (279)

5 July 2003

Dear David,

**ANDREW GILLIGAN AND THE SINGLE SOURCE**

Since my letter to you yesterday afternoon, there has been a further development which points more strongly to our official as being the "source" for the Gilligan allegation about the dossier (albeit with plenty of room still for the possibility of embellishment from other sources and misrepresentation by the Journalist).

Today's Times carries an article by Tom Baldwin which contains further hints as to Gilligan's informant. There are three new pointers, specifically:

- "BBC journalists have been told that Mr Gilligan's anonymous source is among the 100 British intelligence and weapons specialists currently in Iraq as part of the ISG"
- "Attempts to contact...source in the past month to ask supplementary questions has proved unsuccessful because of the nature of his position"
- Asked if now based abroad the executive replied "Something like that".

Although the official is not in Iraq at present I understand that he was there recently, after his conversation with Gilligan on 22 May and was planning to visit again later this month as an expert helping with the work of the Iraq Survey Group searching for WMD. The fact that the BBC are uncertain of his precise whereabouts, is consistent with the official's statement at the MOD's interviews yesterday that he has had no contact with the BBC since 22 May. Gilligan will have been aware of his general plans to visit - the official states that this was the reason why he agreed to meet Gilligan in the first place - but the cutting of contact since then would explain the BBC's lack of precision in their knowledge about the exact timings of his presence in Iraq itself.

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There remain many discrepancies between Gilligan's account of what he claims to have been told by the official and the official's own version of what transpired. We still cannot exclude the possibility that the main source, or other sources, are elsewhere. But it may be possible to explain and reconcile at least some of the mismatches. An official who denies having had access to the intelligence reporting or a hand in the production of the intelligence part of the dossier, as the official does, may nevertheless have said enough based on his expert knowledge of the earlier Iraqi programme, for someone of Gilligan's methods to claim that the official discredited the "45 minutes" intelligence eg by stating that such a high level of readiness did not correspond to the Iraqi systems of which he was aware.

Records of the MOD's interview with the official are still being prepared. I have asked that they be forwarded to us as soon as possible. But I wanted you and colleagues to be aware of this development immediately. The Times story today, whether accurate or not, will increase the likelihood that over the weekend other journalists will indeed identify and name the BBC's source as our official. (He is as I indicated in my earlier letter well known in media/academic circles).

There are also considerations, as we discussed yesterday, whether the Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman should be informed of what we now know, however inconclusive, before their report is published on Monday. And there is the question of whether this plays into the continuing impasse between the Government and the BBC.

I am copying this letter to Andrew Turnbull, David Manning (No.10), Michael Jay (FCO), Eliza Manningham-Buller (Security Service) and John Scarlett (JIC).

Yours ever,

Kw:

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Sir David Omand KCB  
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CAB/1/0018

The Times (London)

July 5, 2003, Saturday

HEADLINE: BBC dossier source believed to be in Iraq

BYLINE: Tom Baldwin

THE source for bitterly contested allegations that Downing Street "sexed up" its dossier on Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction is a military expert who is now based in Iraq, BBC insiders are claiming.

The revelation came as the BBC confirmed last night that its governors would meet Mr Dyke tomorrow to discuss the corporation's position before publication of a report by MPs on Monday.

Although the BBC has refused to name the informant, its executives have suggested that disclosure of his identity would transform a debate which has shifted decisively in the Government's favour over recent days.

Andrew Gilligan, the Radio 4 Today programme defence correspondent at the centre of the row, has revealed the name of his source only to Richard Sambrook, the BBC's head of news. The position held -but not the name - of this official is also known to Greg Dyke, the corporation's Director General, and Kevin Marsh, the Editor of Today.

BBC journalists have been told that Mr Gilligan's anonymous source is among the 100 British intelligence and weapons specialists currently in Iraq as part of the American-led survey group searching for Saddam's missing weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

This information is in line with a briefing to The Times from a senior BBC executive this week, who said that attempts to contact Mr Gilligan's source in the past month to ask supplementary questions had proved unsuccessful because of the nature of his position. Asked if he was now based abroad, the executive replied: "Something like that."

The head of the British contingent, Brigadier John Deverell, is unlikely to have been the BBC's source because he has no background in military intelligence and was previously based in Saudi Arabia.

MPs are expected to clear Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's communications director, of charges that he forced Intelligence chiefs to include in last year's dossier "unreliable" information about Iraq's capacity to deploy WMD within 45 minutes.

The report by the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, which is due out on Monday, will criticise Mr Campbell over his handling of intelligence information in general and, in particular, the use of plagiarised material in the later February briefing paper -the so-called dodgy dossier.

However, the BBC is preparing to admit defeat on the 45-minute claims, which have been denied by the heads of all relevant intelligence services.

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The corporation has already begun internal inquiries into whether it gave Downing Street sufficient time to respond to the allegations. It will also tighten rules on its journalists writing for newspapers after acknowledging that its case has been damaged by Mr Gilligan's article for a tabloid newspaper blaming Mr Campbell specifically for "sexing up" the dossier.

At the same time the BBC's Board of Governors is said to be investigating the "chain of command" which led to Mr Gilligan's report being broadcast on May 29.

The role of Mr Marsh, Mr Sambrook and Mr Dyke, as well as Steve Mitchell, the head of Radio 4, and Mark Damazar, the deputy director of news, are all coming under scrutiny.

Mr Sambrook and Mr Damazar yesterday toured the Today programme's newsroom in an apparent attempt to boost morale after reports in The Times that "heads will roll" over the row with Downing Street.

Mr Campbell yesterday insisted that he respected the BBC as an institution, indicating that his problem was with a minority of its journalists and executives.

He will press on with his attack against the corporation unless he receives an apology next week.

No 10 does not want a clash with the intelligence services, with Mr Campbell pointing out that their integrity has also been put on the line by the BBC's allegations.

In a sign of the Establishment closing ranks in recent days, Downing Street has highlighted the support that it has received during this row from senior Tory MPs.

They include Nicholas Soames, a former Armed Forces Minister, Sir Patrick Cormack, who resigned from the Foreign Affairs Committee last month partly because he thought an inquiry into intelligence material was inappropriate, and Robert Jackson, another former minister.

However, earlier comments by John Reid, the Health Secretary, suggesting that there are "rogue elements" within the intelligence services trying to undermine the Government are widely supported within the Labour Party.

In evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr Gilligan stated that his anonymous source was "one of the senior officials in charge of drafting up the dossier", and was "closely connected with the question of Iraq's WMD, easily sufficiently senior and credible to be worth reporting".

He also suggested that the source was an "expert in the field" who had a precise analysis of Iraq's chemical or biological weapons capability in the build-up to war.

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c. P.S.  
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5 July 2003

we discussed this  
weekend, after Sir KT  
had rung me about this  
on Saturday. On x/1, you &  
my witness was that  
we should wait until this  
was more certain before approaching the  
FAZ

Dear David,

ANDREW GILLIGAN AND THE SINGLE SOURCE

Am 4/7/03

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