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*De J. Scarlett
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From The Chairman

8th July 2003

Rt Hon Geoffrey Hoon, MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
Room 205
Old War Office Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2EU

Dear Geoff

Thank you for today's letter, which I believe you have now released to the press.

I have to say that the offer in your letter seems to be an attempt to force the BBC News Division to reveal the name or names of the source(s) used by Andrew Gilligan on Today and Susan Watts on Newsnight. You will recognise that it is a cardinal principle of good journalism that sources should never be revealed, no matter how intense the pressure may be. As Chairman of the BBC, I support this principle.

In line with this principle, I do not myself know the identity the source(s) mentioned above, so I am unable to accept your offer of confirming whether their name(s) match the person who has come forward at the Ministry of Defence

I will be releasing this letter to the press

Yours sincerely

Gavyn Davies

cc
ps/rms
Personal Director
DCB
BNews
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A. Campbell
Cab office - S. D. G.

CAB/1/0082