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Director of Communications and Strategy

12 June 2003

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Thank you for your reply of 11 June 2003. There are several outstanding issues you have failed to address, to which I would like responses.

Firstly, you have not answered my questions about Andrew Gilligan's obvious ignorance about intelligence issues. So I repeat - do you accept that what Andrew Gilligan said last week about the composition and role of the JIC was inaccurate? What, if anything do you intend to do about it?

Secondly, on the '45 minute' claim, you acknowledge it was indeed from a single source, for which I am grateful. I therefore believe it does conflict with your guideline that "*programmes should be reluctant to rely on only one source*". Given this acknowledgement please can you explain to me how you can reach the conclusion that this guideline has been upheld? As I know that the source of this specific piece of information is not a member of the JIC, nor was directly involved in the publication of the dossier, would you accept that an emphatic denial from the Chairman of the JIC carries more weight than Mr Gilligan's single uncorroborated anonymous source?

Furthermore, the Intelligence and Security Committee report, published this week, also confirms Mr Gilligan's story was wrong.

"In September 2002 some intelligence was declassified and used to produce a dossier on the Iraqi WMD programme. The Agencies were fully consulted in the

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production of the dossier, which was assembled by the Assessments Staff, endorsed by the JIC and issued by the Prime Minister. The Committee supports the responsible use of intelligence and material collected by the Agencies to inform the public on matters such as these."

(Intelligence and Security Committee Annual Report 2002/03 para 81)

For your information, this report is available at:

<http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/reports/intelligence/pdf/annualir0203.pdf>

I was disappointed, though not surprised, to note that the BBC's coverage of this report focused primarily on the February dossier with very little mention, and in some broadcasts no mention at all, of the Committee's conclusions on the September dossier (para 81 as above). When the September dossier was mentioned, the report's conclusion that none of the allegations made were true was dismissed, as if of no significance. I find this peculiar, given questions over the reliability of the information in the September dossier and the process in which it was produced had led BBC output for over a week. In fact, I think the lack of prominence given to the September dossier this week compared to the huge amount of coverage last week, has created confusion as to which dossier was the subject of the ISC's concerns. I'm left wondering if there has been a deliberate lack of clarity in reporting as the report's conclusions on the September dossier make uncomfortable reading for the BBC, calling into question the reliability of much of your recent output.

Given the conclusions of this report, and the questions it raises about Andrew Gilligan's source, will the BBC be conducting an internal inquiry into how one of its journalists could get it so wrong and be left unchallenged by his colleagues and bosses?

You say in your letter that you have not made any allegations, but instead merely suggested that there are pertinent and serious questions to be asked. I disagree. You have made very serious allegations which, if true, would amount to serious wrongdoing by me and my staff. Furthermore, you have continued to repeat them with little reference to denials by the Chairman of the JIC and vindication by the ISC.

Finally, the BBC gave considerable time on Sunday, including leading some bulletins, to the Sunday Telegraph story that I had written a letter of apology to the head of the SIS. Some of your reports stated this was a confirmation that we had abused intelligence. I know I am just a single source so your guidelines may prevent you from reporting my testimony, but the head of the SIS has also

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confirmed the story is untrue. I am currently seeking an apology from the Sunday Telegraph.

You are

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