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Director of Communications and Strategy

26 June 2003

*Dear R. ...*

As you know, I have been engaged in private correspondence with you in recent weeks about the allegations on the BBC on the conduct of the Government, and of me, in relation to the WMD dossier of September 2002.

I heard your interview on the Today programme this morning and would like now, in view of the continuing interest in this, to ask a number of questions. You said that the BBC had never alleged that we took the country into conflict on a false basis. I disagree. Indeed, could I point you to the introduction by John Humphreys before he spoke to your correspondent on the Today programme prior to my appearance at the FAC. He said:

“Mr Campbell will answer questions about allegations made on this programme by Andrew Gilligan that the case for going to war was exaggerated, specifically that one of the dossiers presented by Mr. Blair had been sexed up to make it appear that Saddam was a greater threat to the West than the intelligence justified.”

That is one of many statements on the BBC by reporters and presenters making clear that Mr. Gilligan made these allegations, and that they amount to charges that the Government, from the Prime Minister down, misled Parliament and public about the case on which he had led the country into conflict.

I think you will agree that this was certainly the allegation as MP's, press and public understood it at the time, as the voluminous coverage and the Parliamentary concern have shown. Could I have a response by the end of the day; given that is the time scale I am seeking to meet in relation to the issues the FAC has asked me further to address I think it is fair and reasonable. And of course, like me you will already be immersed in the detail as a result of our previous, thus far private exchanges.

CAB/1/0352

The questions are these:

- Does the BBC still stand by the allegation it made on 29<sup>th</sup> May that Number Ten added in the 45 minute claim to the dossier? Yes or no?
- Does it still stand by the allegation made on the same day that we did so against the wishes of the intelligence agencies? Yes or no?
- Does it still stand by the allegation made on that day that both we and the intelligence agencies knew the 45 minute claim to be wrong and inserted it despite knowing that? Yes or no?
- Does it still stand by the allegation, again on the same day, that we ordered the September dossier to be "sexed up" in the period leading up to its publication and that Gilligan had found what Humphreys called "evidence" that it was "cobbled together at the last minute with some unconfirmed material that had not been approved by the security services"? Yes or no?
- Does it still stand by the statement made on 6<sup>th</sup> June by Gilligan that the JIC is not part of the intelligence community, but a Number 10 Committee which exists to arbitrate between government and the intelligence agencies?
- Does it stand by the claim on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June that the chairman of the JIC only "kind of bureaucratically signed off his report"? Yes or no?

Could I also ask:

- How many sources was the original "45 minute" allegation being added in based on? Was it one source or more than one source? You will be aware of the BBC Guidelines on this.
- Is that source on the JIC, and do you agree that any source not on the JIC did not have the full picture?
- Was the source, as Gilligan has said, "a senior official involved in drawing up the dossier", or is he, as you said today, a source, "in the intelligence services I'm sure you at least understand the significance of the difference to which I'm alluding.
- Is it now normal BBC practice not to seek to corroborate single source stories?
- Finally do you believe that Gilligan's statement to the FAC that all he had ever alleged was that we gave "undue prominence" to the 45 minute point, or do you share my views that this is utterly inconsistent with what he and others or the BBC have said and what Gilligan has said, writing as a BBC journalist in the Mail on Sunday, the Sunday Telegraph, and The Spectator.

CAB/1/0353

the BBC's view? If it is a personal view, could you tell me what rule governs what BBC correspondents may or may not write in a freelance capacity to boost their BBC earnings? What are the procedures and were they followed in relation to this article? I am interested too, in respect of the many BBC journalists who boost their incomes by writing for national newspapers, what procedures govern their conduct and this writings? You will be aware that MP's have also expressed concern on this.

As our previous correspondence has achieved little on this subject, other than further exposing the BBC's refusal ever to apologise, even on a story that is potentially so damaging to the integrity of the Prime Minister, the Government and the political process, I am releasing this to the press. I look forward to your reply later today.

*Yours ever*  


ALASTAIR CAMPBELL

Mr. Richard Sambrook

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