

Alastair Campbell  
 letter to BBC Board  
 of Governors  
 (copied to each governor)



10 DOWNING STREET  
 LONDON SW1A 2AA

Director of Communications and Strategy

5 July 2003

Dear Gavyn

In advance of your meeting to discuss the allegations that were made against the Government on the Today programme on May 29, and subsequent events, I thought it would be helpful to send you the enclosed.

It sets out, as fully as possible, how the Government has sought to deal with this issue since the allegations were first broadcast. I have included all the correspondence between myself and the BBC, and between colleagues in Government and the BBC. You will see from this that these serious allegations were not put to us in advance. You will see the swift denial, made with the backing of the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, which had little or no effect upon subsequent reporting. You will see also that we did strive to resolve this privately. You will also see, from the exchanges the BBC has had both in correspondence and on air with Geoff Hoon and Ben Bradshaw, that we strongly dispute the BBC claims that the allegations were put to us before broadcast.

I am assuming that you will have been provided with all the relevant transcripts of evidence through the Foreign Affairs Committee. You will find in this file documentation referred to in the paragraph above and a transcript of the Thursday May 29 broadcast. I have also attached the text of Mr Gilligan's Mail on Sunday article of Sunday 1 June.

I am sorry to have sent you so much material, but I think it important, particularly in light of the way recent BBC reporting following Mr Gilligan's evidence to the FAC has sought to redefine the allegations, that you have all this material to hand.

I note from press cuttings that the BBC views my complaint as an attack upon the independence of the BBC. I want to assure you that is not the case. I respect the BBC's independence. I believe the BBC is one of the country's

greatest assets and I have long been an admirer of its ethos. much of its journalism and many of its journalists.

It is also being said that I intend to use this issue as the basis of a broader attack upon the BBC. Let me assure you that whatever concerns we have expressed about coverage of Iraq, or about what we see as the agenda-driven journalism of some journalists and some parts of the BBC, they are not the issue here.

At issue here is one specific set of allegations, profoundly damaging to the Prime Minister, the Government and our Intelligence Agencies, which we know to be false and which we have sought, first privately and then publicly, to have corrected. It is about one story, the procedures that were or were not followed, pre and post broadcast, and the difficulties we have had in seeking redress for the broadcast of such a serious and false allegation, which has since been repeated, because of the BBC's reach and deserved reputation, in hundreds of media outlets in dozens of countries around the world - some examples of which are attached.

I hope this is helpful. I do not intend to inform the press that we have sent this to you.

Yours sincerely

ALASTAIR CAMPBELL

Mr Gavyn Davies OBE