

**Mr Richard Sambrook**  
**Director of News**  
**BBC**

**June 30th 2003**

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter. It has done absolutely nothing to re-assure me about the standards of journalism on this story or your knowledge of the procedures followed.

There are, of course, serious worries about the use of a single anonymous source for such an important story. What I find most worrying, however, is your admission that no attempt whatsoever was made to give No 10 or the Government any chance to comment or deny the very serious allegations made before they were broadcast. This is indefensible.

Your letter makes clear that Andrew Gilligan had not, as John Humphrys claimed to me on Saturday, 'called the Ministry of Defence and told them the story was being run so they had an opportunity to rebut it'. All that Andrew Gilligan did was mention in passing that the programme was also running another story about Weapons of Mass Destruction.

No advance warning was given about the nature of the story, nor the specifics or seriousness of the allegations, let alone any chance to deny them before they were broadcast. No opportunity was given to rebut them as you suggest.

The only reason Adam Ingram was able to be briefed before his appearance after 8am was because your false allegations had been running since 6am. Neither Adam Ingram nor the MOD press officer had any knowledge of the allegations before the Today programme broadcast them.

Would you not agree that it is standard journalistic practice that the person or organisation against whom such grave allegations are being made should be given the chance to comment on or deny them prior to broadcast? Could you tell me why this did not happen?

As we are entering the second month of this controversy, could you also tell me whether you believe it is true that No 10 inserted the 45 minute intelligence against the wishes of the intelligence services and in the knowledge that this was probably wrong – the allegation broadcast on the Today programme on May 29<sup>th</sup>.

With very best wishes,

Ben Bradshaw MP

CAB/1/0391