

Rt. Hon. Geoffrey Hoon MP.,
Ministry of Defence,
Room 205,
Old War Office Building,
WHITEHALL,
London.
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7 July, 2003

Dear Geoff,

I am now in a position to respond to your letter of 2 July.

As you know, I asked Stephen Whittle, Controller, Editorial Policy, to look at what happened on the night of May 28th. The Today programme team again made clear to him that it is their belief that at least three calls were made to MOD press officers. They believe that between them those calls covered sufficiently both the allegations made by the source about WMD, as well as the extension of the bid for the interview with Adam Ingram. However, we acknowledge that it would have been better if our logs about this were more specific as there is a clear conflict over exactly what was said.

Your own account recognises that the bid was extended, but oddly does not include the confirmation at your end that the Minister would appear. In any event, it is clear from the programme that Adam Ingram was well briefed on the points. No one complained at the time that he had been bounced.

As you will know, the BBC Governors have taken the view "that the Today programme should have kept a clearer account of its dealings with the Ministry of Defence on this story and could have also asked the No 10 Press Office for a response prior to broadcasting the story. However, we note that firm government denials of the story were broadcast on the Today Programme within 90 minutes of the original broadcast by Andrew Gilligan, and these were followed soon after on the same programme by equally firm denials by a defence minister."

We can only apologise for any misunderstanding that may have occurred in the bidding process and have taken steps to tighten our procedures for the future.

We have always enjoyed excellent relations with the MOD press office and hope we will continue to do so.

Yours sincerely

Richard Sambrook

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