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PRESS RELEASES

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BBC NEWS

Gavyn Davies
Statement**Statement from Gavyn Davies, Chairman of the BBC**

"The BBC Board of Governors met this evening [Sunday 6 July 2003] to discuss the allegations made by Alastair Campbell against the BBC's overall coverage of the Iraq war, and its specific coverage of the September intelligence dossier by Andrew Gilligan in the Today programme.

"The Governors questioned Greg Dyke, the Director-General, and Richard Sambrook, the Director of News, about Mr Campbell's allegations. The Board reached the following conclusions.

"First, the Board reiterates that the BBC's overall coverage of the war, and the political issues surrounding it, has been entirely impartial, and it emphatically rejects Mr Campbell's claim that large parts of the BBC had an agenda against the war

"We call on Mr Campbell to withdraw these allegations of bias against the BBC and its journalists.

"Second, the Board considers that the Today programme properly followed the BBC's Producers' Guidelines in its handling of the Andrew Gilligan report about the September intelligence dossier, which was broadcast on 29 May.

"Although the Guidelines say that the BBC should be reluctant to broadcast stories based on a single source, and warn about the dangers of using anonymous sources, they clearly allow for this to be done in exceptional circumstances. Stories based on senior intelligence sources are a case in point.

"We note that an entirely separate story was broadcast by an unconnected BBC journalist on Newsnight on 2 June. This story reported very similar allegations to those reported by Andrew Gilligan on the Today programme, but the story has not been singled out for similar criticism by government spokesmen.

"Moreover, as these reports fitted in to a general pattern of concern, conveyed to a number of BBC journalists with good contacts in the security services, we consider that it was entirely proper to reflect some unease about the presentation of the Government's arguments in the disputed dossiers

"The Board is satisfied that it was in the public interest to broadcast Mr Gilligan's story, given the information which was available to BBC News at the time. We believe it would not have been in the public interest to have suppressed the stories on either the Today programme or Newsnight.

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