

MD

Melissa Johnson

From: Andrew Gilligan-INTERNET
Sent: 27 June 2003 06:41 AM
To: Kevin Marsh, Mark Damazer; Richard Sambrook and PA
Subject: campbell rebuttal

Everyone,

As well as responding to the Government's questions today it is perhaps worth considering being slightly more pro-active and also putting some questions of our own to the Government, with the aim of turning the focus back on the central issue rather than on the processes of the BBC. Here is a possible template:

Does the Government still stand by its claim that Iraq had an "active, detailed and growing" programme of weapons of mass destruction, deployable at 45 minutes' notice?

We note that the Foreign Secretary distanced himself from the 45-minute claim in his evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee this week (QUOTE). We note also that no WMD have so far been found in Iraq.

Does the Government still stand by its claim that Iraq "sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa?"

We note that on June 4th the Prime Minister told Parliament: "I stand entirely by the dossier and the intelligence contained in it." Yet in the same debate Mr Blair also said that he was "not in a position to say" whether the uranium-from-Africa claim, part of the dossier, was in fact true. "Until we investigate properly, we are simply not in a position to say whether that is so," he added. What exactly is the Government's position on this claim?

Why did the Government retreat from the 45-minute claim and the uranium claim after the publication of the dossier?

The 45-minute and uranium claims were the most newsworthy aspects of the Government's case on 24 September. Both received saturation coverage in all the next day's newspapers. However, after that week, ministers almost never mentioned them again. In the nearly six months between October 1st 2002 and the outbreak of war, we can trace no further mentions at all by ministers of the uranium claim and only two further mentions of the 45-minute claim. There was no mention of either claim by any minister in the (four CHK) House of Commons debates on Iraq over this period. The Prime Minister never mentioned either claim again.

Does the Government stand by its claim that the 45-minute point was not inserted into the dossier at a late stage?

In his evidence to the Select Committee, Alastair Campbell said that the 45-minute point was included in the dossier from the first draft onwards (CHK EXACT QUOTE). The first draft of the dossier was produced in March. However, on June 5th, based on briefings from two Whitehall departments, the political and security editors of the Financial Times reported that the 45-minute point was not even supplied by the Government's Iraqi source until the end of August, three weeks before the publication of the dossier. Is this correct? If it is, how could the 45-minute claim have been in the first draft of the dossier?

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