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- on the role of Alistair Campbell, he said he was unable to comment (not being involved in the process).

My immediate reaction was that this must be the "single source" to whom Gilligan referred to in his testimony to the FAC as the origin of the story that the Government exaggerated intelligence contained in the September dossier. Certainly, his comments to Gilligan could have been incorporated into Gilligan's 29 May story. However, closer examination, following today's interview suggests that this would not necessarily be a reliable conclusion. A significant element of the information that Gilligan attributes to this source in his FAC testimony would not have been known to this individual: he was not, for example, involved in, or claims to have been involved in, the intelligence component of the dossier or the process of the dossier's compilation. There are also discrepancies, over the circumstances of the meeting, the length of their relationship, and, indeed, about the nature of the individual: Gilligan claims that this source was a senior official in charge of drawing up the dossier. This official – although an acknowledged expert on Iraqi WMD – patently was not so involved; nor does he subscribe to views attributed to Gilligan's source.

So, there are three possibilities:

- (a) that Gilligan has embellished this official's meeting with him, but that he is the 'single anonymous source';
- (b) that Gilligan's source is someone else;
- (c) that no one 'source' exists and is in fact a hotchpotch of comments from numerous individuals and articles.

In the case of (a), we would have the strongest possible reason for publicly correcting the misrepresentation made by Gilligan in the interests of factual accuracy. However, we do not have sufficient evidence to reach such a conclusion with any degree of safety. The official himself is adamant that he is not the single source. Were we to accuse Gilligan and the BBC of misrepresenting the official's remarks, it would be easy for Gilligan to claim that his source was someone else and that the Government was pursuing a vendetta.

For these reasons, I do not recommend that we use what the official has told us to seek to correct the public record further.

I do, however, believe it necessary to have defensive material available should the story leak. Of this there must be a possibility. The official himself says he came forward, not because he considered that he was the source of Gilligan's information, but because a contact in RUSI suggested that Gilligan's evidence to the FAC looked as if it drew on the sort of comments he might make about Iraq's CW and BW capability. In general, there must, therefore, be some speculation already. Contingent lines have, therefore, been prepared by officials here. These are enclosed.

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