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for background info X

8th July 2003

MOD STATEMENT

An individual working in the MOD has come forward to volunteer that he met Andrew Gilligan of the BBC on May 22. It was an unauthorised meeting. It took place one week before Mr Gilligan broadcast allegations against the Government about the WMD dossier on the Today programme.

The person who has come forward has volunteered that he has known Mr Gilligan for some months. He says that he met Mr Gilligan in a central London hotel at Mr Gilligan's request. During the conversation Mr Gilligan raised the Iraqi WMD programme, including the "45 minutes" issue. The official says that Mr Gilligan also raised the issue of Alastair Campbell.

The individual is an expert on WMD who has advised ministers on WMD and whose contribution to the Dossier of September 2002 was to contribute towards drafts of historical counts of UN inspections. He is not "one of the senior officials in charge of drawing up the dossier". He is not a member of the Intelligence Services or the Defence Intelligence Staff.

He says that when Mr Gilligan asked about the role of Alastair Campbell with regard to the 45 minute issue, he made no comment and explained that he was not involved in the process of drawing up the intelligence parts of the Dossier.

He says he made no other comment about Mr Campbell. When Mr Gilligan asked him why the 45 minute point was in the Dossier, he says he commented that it was "probably for impact". He says he did not see the 45 minute intelligence report on which it was based.

He has said that, as an expert in the field, he believes Saddam Hussein possessed WMD.

We do not know whether this official is the single source quoted by Mr Gilligan. Mr Gilligan told the FAC he had only one source for his story, and that the other three sources he mentioned to the FAC did not talk to him about the September Dossier, or did so after the broadcast.

The MOD, with the individual's agreement, intend to give his name to the Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee, in confidence, should they wish to interview him as part of their inquiry.

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