

the story being broadcast. If Mr Gilligan had spoken to somebody else other than this person, you would have thought he would have mentioned it at the FAC and said that he had spoken to a variety of sources about the 45-minute claim.

Put to him that the person who had come forward at the MoD had claimed that it was Andrew Gilligan who had raised the 45-minute issue and had told him about Alastair Campbell's role, the PMOS pointed out that the individual himself had admitted that when he had been asked why the 45-minute claim had been included, he had replied 'probably for impact'. Given that was the case, one would think that Mr Gilligan would have referred to the person in his evidence. This whole matter could be cleared up very easily if the BBC stated categorically whether our name was the wrong one or not. Any discrepancies in Mr Gilligan's evidence to the FAC was a different matter. Asked to give one good reason why the BBC should accede to Downing Street's request when doing so would mean revealing its source, the PMOS said that all we were asking the BBC to do was confirm whether our name was the wrong one or not. If it was the right man, there would be no problem about revealing the identity of a source because he had already come forward voluntarily. Questioned as to whether the man had been pressurised into coming forward, the PMOS said that he did not recognise the scenario being presented.

Questioned as to whether Downing Street was disappointed that the intelligence services had been unable to identify who the source was, the PMOS said that we never commented on intelligence matters. Asked if he accepted it was right for journalists to protect their sources, the PMOS repeated that we were not asking anyone to reveal their sources. We were simply asking the BBC to tell us whether our name was right or wrong. It was not something the organisation was usually shy about doing.

Asked if Downing Street had a problem with Susan Watts' report of the same story on Newsnight, the PMOS said that the report on which we had been focussing from the outset was Andrew Gilligan's because he was the one who had made the original allegations. The fact that Susan Watts had repeated them did not make them any truer and we would dispute her claims as well. Both Mr Gilligan and BBC senior management had insisted that the story had been based on the comments of a senior intelligence source - not a description that could be ascribed to the man who had come forward. He was not a member of the Senior Civil Service or of the Security and Intelligence Service. Nor was he involved in military intelligence. He was a technical expert who had worked in a number of different areas and Departments. He was currently working with the MoD, though his salary was being paid by another Department. Once the BBC received Mr Hoon's letter identifying who he was, it would be easy for them to compare his name to the name that had been supplied by Mr Gilligan and confirm whether

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