

or not it was the same person. Only the BBC could answer this question.

Asked which Department paid for our man's salary, the PMOS said that providing such information would make it easy to identify the person which was something we were not prepared to do. Asked whether it was the Foreign Office, the PMOS said that he had no intention of getting drawn into a discussion about this matter. Asked why the MoD was refusing to name the individual, the PMOS said that it was important for the MoD to deal with personnel issues in the appropriate way, according to its own rules and procedures. Asked if the individual had been assured that no disciplinary action would be taken against him, the PMOS again declined to provide further detail because he did not feel it would be appropriate to do so.

Questioned as to why journalists should take seriously a corrected 'second-hand account' of a man who had admitted to his bosses that he had broken the rules and who might be disciplined as a result, the PMOS said that it was important to keep in mind the original source of the story and the allegations that had been made. Challenged that the original source of the story was Downing Street who had pursued an 'absurd vendetta' day after day when we ought to have been talking about hospitals, education and transport, the PMOS pointed to the two-ways which had been done on the day that Mr Gilligan had first made his allegations. These had said that the claims went right to the heart of Government because if we had been guilty of inserting the intelligence material into the dossier against the wishes of the intelligence agencies and knowing it to be wrong, it would undermine the Government's integrity. Consequently, since the Government's integrity was at stake, we believed we were perfectly entitled to bring into the public domain information which we had carefully investigated and which raised questions about the status of the BBC's source. It was the BBC who had built so much on one single anonymous source, not us. Pressed as to why journalists should consider the account of the person at the MoD who had come forward to be credible when he had broken the rules and we had changed his story, the PMOS said that all we had done was to develop our understanding of the individual's background rather than change his story. The MoD had been careful yesterday to say that they did not know definitively whether this person was Mr Gilligan's source. Given the information that this individual had given us, in addition to Mr Gilligan's on-the-record evidence to the FAC, it was clear that there were genuine issues, away from the rhetoric, which it was correct for us to address and ask others to do so as well. This was not an assault on journalistic sources. It was not an assault on the BBC. It was not a vendetta. It was a genuine attempt to get at the truth behind one of the most serious allegations that could be made against any Government. The PMOS said he understood that people were bored with this story and that the BBC wanted to move on. We all did. However, given the seriousness of the allegations and the

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