

*production of the dossier, which was assembled by the Assessments Staff, endorsed by the JIC and issued by the Prime Minister. The Committee supports the responsible use of intelligence and material collected by the Agencies to inform the public on matters such as these."*

(Intelligence and Security Committee Annual Report 2002/03 para 81)

For your information, this report is available at:

<http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/reports/intelligence/pdf/annualir0203.pdf>

I was disappointed, though not surprised, to note that the BBC's coverage of this report focused primarily on the February dossier with very little mention, and in some broadcasts no mention at all, of the Committee's conclusions on the September dossier (para 81 as above). When the September dossier was mentioned, the report's conclusion that none of the allegations made were true was dismissed, as if of no significance. I find this peculiar, given questions over the reliability of the information in the September dossier and the process in which it was produced had led BBC output for over a week. In fact, I think the lack of prominence given to the September dossier this week compared to the huge amount of coverage last week, has created confusion as to which dossier was the subject of the ISC's concerns. I'm left wondering if there has been a deliberate lack of clarity in reporting as the report's conclusions on the September dossier make uncomfortable reading for the BBC, calling into question the reliability of much of your recent output.

Given the conclusions of this report, and the questions it raises about Andrew Gilligan's source, will the BBC be conducting an internal inquiry into how one of its journalists could get it so wrong and be left unchallenged by his colleagues and bosses?

You say in your letter that you have not made any allegations, but instead merely suggested that there are pertinent and serious questions to be asked. I disagree. You have made very serious allegations which, if true, would amount to serious wrongdoing by me and my staff. Furthermore, you have continued to repeat them with little reference to denials by the Chairman of the JIC and vindication by the ISC.

Finally, the BBC gave considerable time on Sunday, including leading some bulletins, to the Sunday Telegraph story that I had written a letter of apology to the head of the SIS. Some of your reports stated this was a confirmation that we had abused intelligence. I know I am just a single source so your guidelines may prevent you from reporting my testimony, but the head of the SIS has also

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