

Alastair Campbell Statement 27th June

Richard Sambrook's reply has been read to me. It confirms that the BBC broadcast a story that was hugely damaging to the integrity of the Government and the Prime Minister without knowing that story to be true and without any effort to check whether the story was true or not.

It confirms our central charge that they do not have a shred of evidence to justify their lie. broadcast many times on many BBC outlets, that we deliberately exaggerated and abused British intelligence and so misled Parliament and public.

The allegations were outrageous. So is Mr Sambrook's reply.

If the BBC are now saying that their journalism is based upon the principle that they can report what any source says, then BBC standards are now debased beyond belief. It means the BBC can broadcast anything and take responsibility for nothing.

I asked Mr Sambrook some very straightforward questions. He has not provided straightforward answers because he knows that this story is not true and that his journalist made no effort to check its veracity.

I do not want 12 pages of weasel words, sophistry and a defence of unethical journalism. Far better would be a 12 word apology that says "The BBC allegations were wholly false and we apologise sincerely for them".

The story was a lie. It is a lie. Every day the BBC continues in its defence of the indefensible, it damages itself even more.

I am a huge admirer of the BBC which is responsible for some of the finest journalism and journalists in the world. Their reputation is being undermined by its institutional failure ever to admit it is wrong.

I will reply in detail to Mr Sambrook's letter after the weekend. In the meantime, I urge him to understand that the Government will not let this matter drop until an apology is delivered.

I have been encouraged by the response we have had, from journalists in the BBC and elsewhere, and from members of the public, at our determination to ensure that such a grave and false charge against the Government, the Prime Minister, the intelligence agencies and the political process does not go unchallenged.

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