

concerned had been acquainted with Mr Gilligan. Questioned further by the BBC about the discrepancy, the PMOS said that as people disputed certain aspects of the information that had been put forward, it was inevitable for points to be clarified further. We had no problem in issuing factual corrections - and doing so immediately. Asked why the error had arisen in the first place, the PMOS said that as new information came to light, it was important to check existing facts again. That was the nature of a proper investigation. Pressed as to why we believed the person who had come forward might be the BBC's source when he didn't appear to fit any of the criteria, the PMOS said that he had met Mr Gilligan at a central London hotel on 22 May and had discussed the agenda which Mr Gilligan had said he had discussed with his source. Was this or was this not coincidence?

Asked if he would go so far as to say that Downing Street and the MoD believed that Mr Gilligan might have lied both to his employer and the listening public, the PMOS said that he was simply making the point that there appeared to be a discrepancy between the account given by the person who had come forward of his meeting with Mr Gilligan and what had actually transpired. If Mr Gilligan's source was not this person, then there were questions about the account Mr Gilligan had given the FAC and his assertion that he had only discussed the September dossier with one source. He had told the FAC, "I want to make a distinction between the specific source for this specific story, which is a single source, and the three other people who have spoken to me generally of their concern about Downing Street's use of intelligence material over the last six months". He had then gone on to define what it was that he had talked to those three other people about. One had been about the February dossier, another about the link between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaida. Another had been subsequent to 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

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