

**The Times (London)
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**HEADLINE: Why a meal has been made of a lunchtime chat
BYLINE: Tom Baldwin, Michael Evans and Andrew Pierce**

The BBC defence correspondent was carrying neither pen nor paper when he turned up at a London hotel for lunch with a "source of long standing". Andrew Gilligan had not expected to get a story and his notes of the conversation were made on a PalmPilot, a gadget not often associated with ground-breaking journalism

The reports that he has filed on the basis of this single meeting have dominated the headlines for more than a month. Mr Gilligan quoted his source saying that Downing Street "sexed up" last September's dossier on Iraq. He alleged that Alastair Campbell forced the intelligence services to include claims that Saddam Hussein could deploy weapons of mass destruction (WMD) within 45 minutes, despite the Government's knowing that this information was probably wrong.

The ensuing row will have baffled and bored large sections of the public. Mr Campbell is, of course, terribly cross because the BBC refuses to back down despite its story's being denied by just about everyone -including the intelligence services -involved in writing that dossier. But voters probably trust the BBC before any politician, spin-doctor or spy -and this makes Mr Campbell even crosser.

So what really happened when Mr Gilligan entered that Central London hotel? He says that his lunch guest was a credible, senior figure in the intelligence community who helped to write the September dossier.

Richard Sambrook, the director of news, has been told the name, while the post held by this source is known also to Greg Dyke, the corporation's Director-General, and Kevin Marsh, the Editor of the Today programme on BBC Radio 4. They are said to have been reassured by this knowledge, with one executive boasting that disclosure of his identity would "transform the debate".

But No 10 is "99 per cent convinced" that Mr Gilligan's source was David Kelly, a government adviser who has come forward to admit that he had lunch with the BBC journalist in the Charing Cross Hotel on May 22, a week before the story was first broadcast.

Mr Gilligan has admitted relying on a single source for his report, whom he describes as someone he has known for years, an expert on weapons of mass destruction who helped to draft the September dossier.

Dr Kelly, who has been interviewed by Ministry of Defence officials for several days, did indeed help to draft part of the dossier, but only a section dealing with the history of UN inspections in Iraq. He is not a member of the intelligence services but a technical expert, having worked as a weapons inspector before moving to Whitehall three years ago.

Crucially, Dr Kelly says that he did not see material on the "45 minutes" claim and was not involved in writing the intelligence sections of the dossier. And, he says, it was Mr Gilligan who asked him about why this information was included and replied only that it was "probably for impact".

The BBC claims that this is all a Downing Street "trick" to root out their source.

It says that the Government's description of Dr Kelly as working for the MoD and knowing Mr Gilligan for months does not match their source, who is employed elsewhere and has known the

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