

Dame Pauline added that she did not believe such contacts happened as a general rule: "this is a loyal and professional culture and very important it stays like that"²¹⁴

149. On the other hand, BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan told us that such contacts do occur, although

There is nothing as formal as the lobby. There are no regular meetings. There are, to my knowledge, few, if any, group meetings. The agencies do have officers whose particular job is to talk to journalists, and certain journalists have those people's contact numbers.²¹⁵

150. Mr Gilligan painted a picture of frequent contacts, both official and unofficial.²¹⁶ He alleged that one of his four unofficial contacts showed him a Defence Intelligence Staff paper classified *Top Secret*,²¹⁷ and that another showed him a JIC paper.²¹⁸ Others briefed him about specific or general concerns in the agencies. Mr Gilligan says he has four sources. We assume that his sources are being investigated and that, if intelligence officers have been speaking to journalists without permission, they will be dealt with appropriately.

151. It is quite clear that specified officers from the intelligence and security agencies are licensed to talk to journalists. Alastair Campbell confirmed that "there are systems that allow the press to make inquiries of the intelligence community."²¹⁹ The Foreign Secretary told us that "because of the intense interest that the public and the media have in intelligence agencies, they have some arrangements which are entirely official for ... the briefing of the press."²²⁰ We find it particularly odd that there are not similar arrangements for the briefing of Members of Parliament.

152. We accept the need for the agencies on occasion to brief the press within very strict guidelines, to correct inaccurate stories or speculation, but unauthorised contacts and the leaking of information and breaches of security which they entail should not be permitted. **We recommend that Andrew Gilligan's alleged contacts be thoroughly investigated. We further recommend that the Government review links between the security and intelligence agencies, the media and Parliament and the rules which apply to them.**

Role of the JIC

153. The role and importance of the JIC were summed up by Jack Straw:

The reason why we have a Joint Intelligence Committee which is separate from the intelligence agencies is precisely so that those who are obtaining the intelligence are not then directly making the assessment upon it. That is one of the very important strengths of our system compared with most other systems around the world.²²¹

²¹⁴ Q 383

²¹⁵ Q 389

²¹⁶ Qq 395, 396, 411, 412, 490

²¹⁷ Qq 425, 498

²¹⁸ Q 514

²¹⁹ Q 1059

²²⁰ Qq 814, 815

²²¹ Q 772

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