

easier to identify him given the fact that there were only a few people who were paid a salary by this particular Department but who worked for other Departments. Asked if he was paid by the FCO, the PMOS declined to answer the question on the grounds that he did not want to do anything which might identify who the person was.

Asked if the person would be identified and go public with his claims if the BBC refused to respond to our question, the PMOS said he was not aware of any such plan. However, it would be strange if the BBC did not take the opportunity to say if we were wrong or set the record straight if what they had reported was in any way misleading about the status of their source. It was up to them. It was not every day that we invited the BBC to tell us we were wrong. They usually did that of their own accord anyway - as, of course, was their right and constitutional duty (some would say that they took advantage of that on a frequent basis). Equally, if a mistake had been made in elevating the status of someone who had made such a serious allegation, then most people in public life would regard it as incumbent on them to set the record straight.

Asked what we would do if the BBC admitted that the person who had come forward was their source given the clear discrepancies in the way we and Mr Gilligan had presented his status, the PMOS said that the status of the source and the question as to whether they had been in the loop or not was the vital factor. The clear assertion by the BBC was that their story had been based on the comments of a senior intelligence source. This was not a description that could be attributed to the person who had come forward. He was not a member of the Senior Civil Service or of the Security and Intelligence Service. Nor was he involved in military intelligence. This therefore called into question both the claims that had been made on his behalf and the BBC Governors' view as expressed in their meeting on Sunday that the normal rules about single sourcing did not apply in this case because it was a senior intelligence source. Asked if it was right to say that the person involved was an acknowledged expert on WMD who had worked for several Government Departments, the PMOS said that he was a technical expert. Put to him that if the person was an expert on WMD, which was an intelligence-led field, he could easily be described as a senior intelligence source, the PMOS said he would disagree. Asked for his definition of a 'senior intelligence source', the PMOS said that there was a difference between someone who was a technical expert on machinery and equipment and someone who had intelligence information about what was happening in a particular country in relation to that equipment. The person in question was a technician - a technical expert - not an intelligence official, and that was not in any way to demean or under-estimate his role.

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