

MOD STATEMENT

In its Report published yesterday, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee recommended that Andrew Gilligan's alleged contacts be thoroughly investigated.

In this context, it may be relevant that an individual working in the MoD has come forward to volunteer that he met Andrew Gilligan on 22 May to discuss Iraq in general. This was one week before Mr Gilligan's story ran on the Today Programme claiming that the Iraq September dossier had been "sexed up".

The official volunteered that he had known Mr Gilligan for some time. At the meeting in a hotel on 22 May, the preparation of the dossier, including the "45 minutes" issue, was discussed, together with some of the other elements of Mr Gilligan's claims, including the 30% likelihood figure.

However, this individual was not "one of the senior officials in charge of drawing up the dossier", nor is he in the intelligence services, unlike Mr Gilligan claimed in his evidence to the FAC. Moreover, the individual is clear that while Mr Gilligan raised the issue of Alastair Campbell, since he was not involved in the process, he was not able to comment. He says he made no allegations or accusations about any issue related to the dossier.

Mr Gilligan has made it clear that he had only one source for the specific "45 minute" story and the accusations related to it. From the account we have received from the MoD official, this leads us to conclude that either there was more than one source, or Mr Gilligan misled his employers about the information the MoD official discussed with him.

[This information has been passed to the BBC.]

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