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BBC

From Director News

June 29th 2003

Dear Ben

Thank you for your letter yesterday asking for a correction to our assertion that the MOD were forewarned of the WMD story we broadcast on May 29th. My understanding, from contemporaneous programme notes is as follows

- At 5pm on May 28th the Today programme put in a bid to the MOD for an interview on cluster bombs
- At 6.30pm Andrew Gilligan spoke to Kate O'Connor, the MOD press officer, about the Cluster bomb interview and added there would be another story running on WMD
- Between 6.30pm and 7pm producer Martha Findlay spoke to MOD press officer Richard Walley and confirms the bid has widened from cluster bombs to include WMD
- Between 8 and 8.30pm the MOD calls the Today programme and confirms an interview with Adam Ingram on Cluster bombs but does not confirm that he will speak about WMD
- At 9.45 pm the MOD press office rings the Today programme to confirm Mr Ingram will speak about WMD as well.

As the transcript of his interview shows (see attached) Mr Ingram was well briefed in advance on the item and able to respond to questions with some detail. In light of this we see no need to correct John Humphrys assertion to you that the MOD was forewarned. Downing St's denial was also given prominence in the programme

You also asserted yesterday that Andrew Gilligan's report in some way flouted the BBC's Producer Guidelines It did not I attach the relevant sections An entirely proper editorial process was followed in advance of broadcast

Given the prominence of your views yesterday I am releasing this letter to the press

Best wishes

Richard

Richard Sambrook
Director, BBC News

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