



The Today Programme

Donald Anderson
Chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

11 July 2003

Dear Mr Anderson,

Thank you for your letter.

I regret that, as I said to the Committee when I gave evidence, I can provide no further information about my source, or the circumstances surrounding my contact with him, because I have a professional and legal duty of confidence to him. Committee members appeared to accept and even support this stance when I came before you last month. Not discussing confidential sources is general BBC policy and universal journalistic practice.

The Ministry of Defence has suggested that someone it describes as a middle-ranking official, tangentially involved in the dossier, may be my source, though it does not know he is. Can I remind the Committee of two of my source's claims which your proceedings confirmed to be true - that the 45-minute point derived from one, uncorroborated informant; and that it arrived late in the process. Such facts could only have been known to someone closely involved in compiling the dossier until a late stage.

On your second question, I am happy to confirm that my evidence was truthful and accurate. The transcript (Q405-6) makes clear that when I spoke of four different sources I was enumerating the number of people *within the intelligence community* who had *expressed disquiet to me over the Government's handling of intelligence on Iraq*. I should probably also have repeated this in my response to Q417.

I have also discussed the issue of Iraq, the dossier and WMD with many of my other contacts within Government. Some of those conversations were attempts to corroborate elements of the story provided to me by my original source. As a defence correspondent I hold many meetings, authorised and unauthorised, with people who work for the Ministry of Defence.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,


Andrew Gilligan