

The BBC's statement in full

We note that today, the Ministry of Defence has issued a statement saying that an individual working in the Ministry of Defence has come forward to volunteer information about an unauthorised meeting he says he had with Andrew Gilligan on May 22.

The description of the individual contained in the statement does not match Mr Gilligan's source in some important ways.

The person who has come forward has volunteered that he has known Mr Gilligan for some months.

Mr Gilligan's source does not work in the Ministry of Defence and he has known the source for a number of years not months.

As we have said before, Mr Gilligan met several people in the period before the story was broadcast and discussed Weapons of Mass Destruction in various ways with a number of them.

His Today programme story was based on only one of those conversations.

'Comprehensive notes'

For the single conversation which led to the Today story, Mr Gilligan took comprehensive notes during the meeting with his source which do not correspond with the account given in the MoD statement.

These notes have already been deposited with the BBC legal department.

We note that the MoD statement says that "we do not know whether this official is Mr Gilligan's source".

Neither do we.

What we do know is that Mr Gilligan's notes and account of what he was told are very similar to the notes of a conversation Susan Watts, Science Editor of Newsnight, had with her source which led to the Newsnight reports of June 2 and 4.

These reports contained allegations consistent with the Gilligan report and she described her source as "a senior official intimately involved with process of pulling together the September dossier".

Sources

We reiterate the point we made last week that Susan Watts and Andrew Gilligan have never met, spoken or corresponded about any issues let alone this particular matter.

FAC/1/0025

We do not know whether their respective sources are the same person, as Susan Watts and George Entwistle, the Editor of Newsnight, are unwilling to reveal her source.

However, if it is the same source, it is quite clear that the information he is now giving to the Ministry of Defence is not a full and frank account of the conversation with Mr Gilligan and that he has failed to mention the conversation with Susan Watts.

If it is a different source, it means that the original Gilligan story was separately corroborated by a second source - the person who spoke to Susan Watts.

Either way, we stand by Mr Gilligan's reporting of his source.

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