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HEADLINE: Alleged source of contested report named IRAQ DOSSIER ROW

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BODY:

David Kelly, a senior adviser to the proliferation and arms control secretariat at the Ministry of Defence, was the person who told the government he met BBC reporter Andrew Gilligan ahead of his controversial report on the dossier on weapons of mass destruction.

As Downing Street put pressure on the BBC to reveal the source for the story broadcast on May 29, it emerged last night that Mr Kelly met the reporter at a London hotel a week earlier.

The BBC refused to confirm last night whether Mr Kelly was the single source for the story, which stated that intelligence information was included in the September dossier on weapons of mass destruction "at the behest of Downing Street" and against the wishes of the intelligence community

Mr Gilligan quoted the official as saying that the "classic example of this" was the suggestion that Iraq could fire chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes of giving an order

Whitehall officials yesterday said that someone of Mr Kelly's rank would have access to secret intelligence, but would probably only have seen "sanitised" versions of reports that omitted the identity of sources.

Downing Street yesterday informed Gavyn Davies, the chairman of the BBC board of governors, that Mr Kelly had told senior officials that he had met Mr Gilligan.

Mr Kelly was last night unavailable for comment.

Downing Street is likely to argue that the BBC must now be able to say whether Mr Kelly is the source. Mr Gilligan told the Commons foreign affairs committee that he had "a specific source for this specific story, which is a single source". He has informed BBC chiefs of the source's identity.

Downing Street will also argue that, if Mr Kelly is the source, he does not have the status accorded him by the Today programme or BBC chiefs as he is an expert on WMD but not a member of the intelligence community.

In an interview on the Today programme on June 26, Richard Sambrook, head of BBC News and Current Affairs, said: "We've always said that we had one senior and credible source in the intelligence services "

The BBC governors implied last Monday that the single source was a figure in intelligence. They noted single sources could be used for stories "in

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exceptional circumstances ...Stories based on senior intelligence sources are a case in point."

In his May 29 report, Mr Gilligan described his source as "one of the senior officials in charge of drawing up the dossier" It is understood that Mr Kelly's role was to provide a historical section of the September dossier.

Mr Kelly, a former weapons inspector, is seconded from the Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down to the MoD. The Foreign Office pays his salary.

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