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MO 22K

10 July 2003

John Richard,

Thank you for your letter of 9 July. I am grateful to you for changing your plans on Tuesday to come and meet me. I am afraid that, at that point, discussions with the individual in question were still continuing and therefore I could not be as open with you as I might otherwise have wished. I hoped that my comment about the article in Saturday's Times would have at least given you a clue

I note that your team continue to believe that they outlined some details of Andrew Gilligan's allegations to the MOD Press Office. As you saw from the extract from the MOD's log which I showed you on Tuesday, this is not supported by the details recorded by the Duty Press Officer. Mr Gilligan has himself said (in his call to the MOD immediately after the Ben Bradshaw interview on 28 June) that John Humphry's comments referred to a conversation with the Chief Press Officer, Kate Wilson. Kate told you herself that she was absolutely clear that Andrew Gilligan had not discussed his allegations with her. The conversation was about cluster bombs. Mr Gilligan mentioned WMD only when asked if he was running anything else on the

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programme and he made clear he did not regard the story as a matter for the MOD. Adam Ingram was well briefed because officials had heard Mr Gilligan's piece at 0607.

I am disappointed that you are not now prepared to broadcast an apology. In fairness to the individuals in the MOD Press Office, I think that you should put into the public domain the apology in your letter of 7 July, but that must ultimately be a decision for you.

As you will know, I have written to the Chairman of the BBC with the name of the person who came forward and admitted to meeting Andrew Gilligan on 22 May. I trust that the BBC is giving serious consideration to how it will respond. Once this is over, I hope that we can return to the more professional and constructive relationship between the Today programme and the MOD which we discussed in our meeting on Tuesday.

Yours sincerely



GEOFFREY HOON

I was sorry to take you away from your son's Sport Day. I hope that he did well and has enjoyed himself. I hope that we can meet again under more ^{circumstances} -

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