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Transcript of Andrew Gilligan  
interview on BBC Radio 4 Today  
programme 29 May which accused  
government of 'sexing up' intelligence  
dossier

TVP/3/0221

BBC TELEVISION  
SPECIAL TRANSCRIPTION  
TRANSCRIBED: JUNE 18 2003  
RECORDED. MAY 29TH 2003

TODAY PROGRAMME

JH: The government is facing more questions this morning over its claims about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Our defence correspondent is Andrew Gilligan, this in particular Andy is Tony Blair saying, they'd be ready to go within forty five minutes

AG That's right, that was the central claim in his dossier which he published in September, the main erm, case if you like against er, against Iraq and the main statement of the British government's belief of what it thought Iraq was up to and what we've been told by one of the senior officials in charge of drawing up that dossier was that, actually the government probably erm, knew that that forty five minute figure was wrong, even before it decided to put it in. What this person says, is that a week before the publication date of the dossier, it was actually rather erm, a bland production. It didn't, the, the draft prepared for Mr Blair by the Intelligence Agencies actually didn't say very much more than was public knowledge already and erm, Downing Street, our source says, ordered a week before publication, ordered it to be sexed up, to be made more exciting and ordered more facts to be er, to be discovered

JH: When you say 'more facts to be discovered', does that suggest that they may not have been facts.

AG: Well, erm, our source says that the dossier, as it was finally published, made the Intelligence Services unhappy, erm, because, to quote erm the source he said, there was basically, that there was, there was, there was unhappiness because it didn't reflect the considered view they were putting forward, that's a quote from our source and essentially, erm, the forty five minute point er, was, was probably the most important thing that was added. Erm, and the reason it hadn't been in the original draft was that it was, it was only erm, it only came from one source and most of the other claims were from two, and the intelligence agencies say they don't really believe it

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was necessarily true because they thought the person making the claim had actually made a mistake, it got, had got mixed up.

JH: Does any of this matter now, all this, all these months later. The war's been fought and won.

AG: Well the forty five minutes isn't just a detail, it did go to the heart of the government's case that Saddam was an imminent threat and it was repeated four times in the dossier, including by the Prime Minister himself, in the forward, so I think it probably does matter. Clearly, you know, if erm, if it, if it was, if it was wrong, things do, things are, got wrong in good faith but if they knew it was wrong before they actually made the claim, that's perhaps a bit more serious.

JH: Andrew, many thanks; more about that later.

#### END OF FIRST RECORDING

JH: Twenty eight minutes to eight Tony Blair had quite a job persuading the country and indeed his own MP's to support the invasion of Iraq; his main argument was that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction that threatened us all. None of those weapons has been found. Now our defence correspondent, Andrew Gilligan, has found evidence that the government's dossier on Iraq that was produced last September, was cobbled together at the last minute with some unconfirmed material that had not been approved by the Security Services. Now you told us about this earlier on the programme Andy, and we've had a statement from 10 Downing Street that says it's not true, and let me just quote what they said to you. 'Not one word of the dossier was not entirely the work of the intelligence agencies'. Sorry to submit you to this sort of English but there we are. I think we know what they mean. Are you suggesting, let's be very clear about this, that it was not the work of the intelligence agencies

AG: No, the information which I'm told was dubious did come from the agencies, but they were unhappy about it, because they didn't they think it should have been in there. They thought it was, it was not corroborated sufficiently, and they actually thought it was wrong, they thought the informant concerned erm, had got it wrong, they thought he'd misunderstood what was happening

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I mean let's, let's go through this. This is the dossier that was published in September last year, erm, probably the most substantial statement of the government's case against Iraq. You'll remember that the Commons was recalled to debate it, Tony Blair made the opening speech. It is not the same as the famous dodgy dossier, the one that was copied off the internet, that came later. This is quite a serious document. It dominated the news that day and you open up the dossier and the first thing you see is a preface written by Tony Blair that includes the following words, 'Saddam's military planning allows for some weapons of mass destruction to be ready within forty five minutes of an order to deploy them'. Now that claim has come back to haunt Mr Blair because if the weapons had been that readily to hand, they probably would have been found by now. But you know, it could have been an honest mistake, but what I have been told is that the government knew that claim was questionable, even before the war, even before they wrote it in their dossier

I have spoken to a British official who was involved in the preparation of the dossier, and he told me that until the week before it was published, the draft dossier produced by the Intelligence Services, added little to what was already publicly known. He said, 'It was transformed in the week before it was published, to make it sexier. The classic example was the statement that weapons of mass destruction were ready for use within forty five minutes. That information was not in the original draft. It was included in the dossier against our wishes, because it wasn't reliable. Most things in the dossier were double source, but that was single source, and we believed that the source was wrong'

Now this official told us that the transformation of the dossier took place at the behest of Downing Street, and he added, 'Most people in intelligence weren't happy with the dossier, because it didn't reflect the considered view they were putting forward'. Now I want to stress that this official and others I've spoken to, do still believe that Iraq did have some sort of weapons of mass destruction programme. 'I believe it is about 30% right, there was a chemical weapons programme in the six months before the war and considerably more likely, that there was a biological weapons programme. We think Hans Blix down-played a couple of potentially interesting pieces of evidence, but the weapons programmes were small. Sanctions did limit the programmes.

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The official also added quite an interesting note about what has happened as a result since the war, of the capture of some Iraqi WMD scientists. 'We don't have a great deal more information yet than we had before. We have not got very much out of the detainees yet.'

Now the forty five minutes really is, is not just a detail, it did go to the heart of the government's case that Saddam was an imminent threat, and it was repeated a further three times in the body of the dossier, and I understand that the parliamentary intelligence and security committee is going to conduct an enquiry in to the claims made by the British Government about Iraq, and it is obviously this kind of issue that will be at the heart of their investigation.

JH: Andrew Gilligan, many thanks.

END OF SECOND PIECE WITH ANDREW GILLIGAN

INTO ADAM INGRAM PIECE

JH: The Armed Forces Minister, Adam Ingram is on the line  
Good morning Mr Ingram

AI: Good morning

JH: Why were we using cluster bombs in built up areas when we specifically said we would not.

AI: Well I don't think that is, is er, an allegation that stands up to to full examination. Erm, what we have said from the outset has been consistent that cluster bombs are not illegal, they are effect weapons against er, the ...

JH: That's not the question I asked you.

AI: No. Well I'm giving you, I'm giving you the answer and then you maybe want to ask me another question. But er, they are not illegal weapons. They are used in specific circumstances where there is a threat to our troops. Now, clearly there were circumstances where there were a concentration of of er, military equipment, and and Iraqi troops, in and around built-up areas. Now how would we to, how would we to tackle those people er, were we to have close

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combat with them with more casualties on on our side, is that what people wanted to see. I would hope not.

JH: Right. Well let me ask you the question again in precisely the way I asked it to you before. You had told us we would not use cluster bombs in built-up areas, why did we do so

AI: Well I don't, I don't think if you examined what was said by Geoff Hoon, or indeed by the earlier statement by . .

BOTH TOGETHER

JH: Baroness Crawley.

AI: Well Baroness Crawley is not a defence spokesperson

JH: Ah.

AI: She was answering a question er, on behalf of the (interjection)

JH (interjects) Of the government.

AI On behalf of the government and of the Ministry of Defence

JH Quite so.

AI: In the House But she's not a defence spokesperson

JH: I see

AI She's not a Defence Minister.

JH: She was speaking for the government but she wasn't speaking for the Defence Ministry.

AI: Well, no, that's not the point I'm making John.

JH: Well I've lost you in that case.

AI No you've not lost me, you presented her as a defence spokesperson. Now the point I'm making is that that was said in February Er, in April you then said what er, you then recounted what Geoff Hoon had, had told your programme

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JH: Told me, in a long interview and I asked him about using weapons and he said they would be used in battle field areas, where there would be the minimum of casualties.

AI: And that's exactly what I have said that there...

BOTH TOGETHER

JH: Built-up areas.

AI: Well there were troops and equipment in those areas Now I make the point to you.

JH: Well yes they were all over the, Iraq, of course they were. Clearly, they were everywhere.

AI: Yes, and therefore they were posing a threat to our troops and therefore we had to take the appropriate action.

JH: With cluster bombs

AI: Well with a whole range of ammunition

JH: Including cluster bombs

AI: But Geoff Hoon al(fluffs), yes of course . . . cluster bombs and we've actually - and we don't ..

BOTH TOGETHER

JH: Well, so the allegation wasn't such a strange one was it. The one that you denied right at the beginning of the interview turns out to have been precisely accurate.

AI: No, no, if you let me answer the question rather than trying to hector and and and prove your case by shouting.

JH: No, I'm trying to make, to be very clear about it because you told me right at the beginning of the interview that it was the wrong allegation that I had made it turns out and that was made in that report - it turns out to have been precisely accurate doesn't it.

AI: Well it's not. Not, not, not in the way in which I interrupted your earlier statements What I am saying is that the way in which we've presented this argument, that they are used

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in targeted, in a targeted way, against specific and military targets, and they, the use of them is to minimise casualties on our side. Now all, all ammunitions, all weapons can create tragedies and it's not just cluster bombs, it's, it's, it's a tragedy of war that there are casualties. Fortunately we had very few casualties on our side, and would put it down to the, to the very careful use of the powerful weapons we have to take out the Iran ....

JH: (interjects) And you have no idea how many children will be blown to bits by the cluster bombs that did not explode and now are abandoned and left around built up areas.

AI: Well that's a ridiculous allegation.

JH: What, you have a - oh you can tell me can you

AI: That's a ridiculous allegation.

JH: Fine.

AI: have been abandoned and there is, there is ..

JH: Ah, you've found them all then have you

AI: No, of course we haven't found them all because, because it takes time to identify them. But we have two hundred personnel working in this particular area. We have weekly meetings with the NGOs who have the prime responsibility of the clearance. We provide the maps. There was an allegation in your programme there that we weren't providing maps, we do provide maps. We have a massive programme of education in Basra and those other areas where we have used such weapons and let me tell you ....

JH: Well sure, children are very good at following those education programmes aren't they.

AI: Well let me tell you, just let me tell you one salient fact. Our teams have already, have already destroyed one hundred thousand in a region of one hundred thousand unexploded ordnance. There weren't and they're not necessarily cluster bombs.

JH: Indeed

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AI: But, but, but unexploded ordinance that poses a threat to all of the citizens of Iraq and to our forces who remain there. So to say that we're doing nothing is absolute nonsense.

JH: I didn't say, I didn't say you were doing nothing.

BOTH TOGETHER

AI: You said we'd abandoned, we've abandoned the people of Iraq. That was your allegation.

JH: I did not say you had abandoned the people of Iraq, I said that these bomblets had been abandoned where they lay, which is precisely the case because ..

BOTH TOGETHER

JH .. can I just give you a ...

AI .. they have not been John, they have not been. And I am saying to you ..

JH: But they have been. We have just heard from three charities, each of them involved, three NGOs, each of them involved in this exercise. Each of them, giving us graphic detail about the way these things are lying around the country, and how children and other people are being blown to bits by them.

AI. Oh, John, John. We, we, we have, that, that could happen in terms of any unexploded ordinance.

JH: Well not if you hadn't dropped cluster bombs it couldn't.

AI: No, and if we hadn't used them, then we'd have probably more casualties on our side and then what you'd have ..

BOTH TOGETHER

JH. Do you know that. Can you be sure about that.

AI: Well that is, that is what we have to take in to consideration that we have ammunition and weapons on our side to try and minimise casualties to our own troops.

JH That were not going to be used in built-up areas but were used in built-up areas.

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AI: Well what we said was it would be, they would be targeted on specific military targets. There were troops, there was equipment in and around the built-up areas.

JH: Right.

AI: Therefore the bombs were used accordingly to take out that threat to our troops, is that, is - would you accept that is is, is a useful and effective way of protecting the lives of service personnel.

JH: It's not for me to accept or reject anything, it's for the audience to do that, and I'll leave it to them Mr Ingram. Let me put you another point if I may, and that is this whole question of weapons of mass destruction that Saddam Hussain was supposed to have. It is active, detailed and growing said Tony Blair. It is up and running now, it could be activated within forty five minutes

AI: Yeah.

JH: We are now forty five or more days since the war ended, none has been found

AI: Well what er, we've said is that er, this was a very difficult task to locate these and twelve years of, of effort on behalf of the United Nations of course didn't fully identify it, but let, let us put this in context. On the 7th March, Hans Blix, on behalf of the inspectors published a one hundred and seventy three page report, which damned completely what Saddam Hussein and his regime was doing in respect of the procurement, the development and production of weapons of mass destruction.

JH: Do you want me to tell you what Hans Blix said. He said ...

BOTH TOGETHER

AI: Well ...

JH: .. must not jump to the conclusion that they exist

AI: Have you read a hundred and seventy three page report. No (this first no could be John H) No, well no you haven't, and that ..

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JH: Do I need to. Do I need to when I've just told you the conclusion that he came to, 'one must not jump to the conclusion that they exist'. That possibility is also not excluded, so it was possible, but it wasn't proven.

AI: Well for twelve years, twelve years, the United Nations believed it was happening. Time after time, resolution after resolution, culminating in Resolution 1441, came to a different conclusion. The nations who make up the United Nations had a different perception and understanding of Saddam Hussein's regime. Now what, what we're now doing, extensive searching is going on. We have, we're interrogating a wide range of people who have a knowledge of all of this, a jig-saw is now beginning to come in to place. The Prime Minister has already said that there have been two examples of, of what could be construed as pointing to weapons of mass destruction, and biological, these are biological agents, that could have been procured and developed within these mobiles ..

JH (overlap) So why did Donald Rumsfeld tell us it is possible that they decided they would destroy them prior. they decided they would destroy them prior to a conflict. What did Donald Rumsfeld, the American Defence Secretary mean by that

AI: Well I think Donald Rumsfeld, if you read all of what he said

JH I have done that.

AI: Yeah, okay. He didn't just say that, he also went on to say that all the efforts were being made to find these weapons of mass destruction (interjection) and he was working on the firm assumption that there were such weapons of mass destruction. He postulated a possibility that they may, may not be found (interjects). And that is the only, only part of his statement you're now ..

BOTH TOGETHER

JH (overlaps) Right, well now given that that possibility has been postulated by no less a figure than the American Defence Secretary himself. Why was Tony Blair in a position back last year, last September to say that these weapons could be activated within forty five minutes

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AI: Well that was, that was said on the basis of security force er, information. Single sourced, it wasn't corroborated.

JH: Single source. So you concede that

AI. Well yes, I think that has already been conceded. In fact I think your earlier programme today was based upon a single source within the security services, an un-named anonymous source incidentally.

JH: It was, who told us that the .

BOTH TOGETHER

JH: ... the report that was initially . .

AI: . . corroborated on what he said, and said was, this report had been concocted under pressure from Number 10, that is not the case. There was no pressure from Number 10, that all the information that was contained . .

JH: No no. Can I tell you what the allegation was because I think you may have been a little misled on that. The allegation was not that it was concocted by Number 10, the allegation was that a report was produced. It went to Number 10. It was then sent back to be sexed up a little, I'm using not my own, but the words of our source, as you know. Now, given that, is it possible.

AI: No, it's not true that, that allegation

JH: That isn't true.

AI: No, it's not true. And you know Number 10 has denied that.

JH: Well I know that Number 10 has denied it and I'm asking you to deny it yourself

AI: So, whose word are you taking here

JH: Oh well I'll tell you. Again it isn't a question for me to take any words but if well hang on a minute er Mr Ingram if I may, you've asked me the question. What we have here is a source, within the intelligence service

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AI: Un-named.

JH: An un-named, naturally un-named. Do you want to give me the names of all those sources that you got your information from on this programme now. I think not. Probably.

AI: No but, but when we, when we present a dossier on behalf of the Security Services, it has their imprint on it, it has their authoritative of best assessment. Some of it will be corroborated information. Some of it will be single sourced, and what - the judgement call that was made was to play-out all of the information with which we could, without exposing er, the basis upon which that information was gar .... (?), to the wider public.

JH: And whose judgement was it to advise the Prime Minister to say these weapons are ready for use within forty five minutes.

AI: That was one element within a comprehensive report.

JH: I see. So, Tony Blair took that one element from a comprehensive report, and told the House of Commons that we were under threat.

AI: Yes.

JH: Within forty five minutes notice. That's why we went to war remember Mr Ingram.

AI: Because of that one statement.

JH: Because of the combination of things that Mr Blair said.

AI: No, we did not go to war because of that one statement.

JH: Well, well let me tell you what Geoff Hoon said, 'Our primary purpose is those weapons of mass destruction that present a real threat'.

AI: Now let me tell you why we went to war. We went to war.

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JH: Well I've just told you, Mr Hoon said, unless you want to tell me he said something else.

AI: We went to war because of all of the evidence, all of the information we had about Saddam Hussein's regime, which culminated in Resolution 14.41, which is set out in graphic detail in the 173 page report produced by Hans Blix. There was no question in the minds of even those who were opposed to war in the United Nations, of what Saddam Hussein was up to. They knew, they knew what he was capable of, they knew what he'd done and they knew that - where he was guilty. The judgement call was the best way of prosecuting that conclusion, and the judgement call of this country and of the parliament of this country was that we should take the appropriate action. Go to, go Iraq as I have been in the last in the last two weeks. I've been in the southern area of Iraq, I've spoken to Iraqis. I think they're beginning to sense freedom. They want freedom, the barbarism of that regime has been removed from them. The threat.

JH: I take that point

AI Well that's good, and now I hope.

JH But that is not what the war was fought for.

AI: Well what - the war, the war was fought for er, on the basis of all of those allegations, much of which was substantiated, not just in a security document produced by our security services, not concocted by by Number 10, or pressured, a pressure from Number 10 to produce it in a particular way, but their best knowledge, and their best assessment of what they could ....(?) in to the public domain, and based upon the knowledge which was out there the whole world know what Saddam Hussein was up to in terms of the weapons of mass destruction, that's why we prosecuted that war, that's why we have a right.

JH: Adam Ingram. Many thanks

END OF THIRD PIECE

WATO  
PAULINE NEVILLE-JONES SECTION

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PAULINE NEVILLE-JONES: The most obvious construction that you can put upon what we know in public is that a draft was put up by presumably somebody from the Intelligence Machine, which wasn't entirely to the liking of Number 10, and presumably that means the press machine, who then re-drafted. The issue of course is whether in the course of that happening, the content was changed, either as regard what actually went in, or the construction put upon, whatever was in there. And I think that's the issue that is under contention with, it would appear, you know the intelligence side being unhappy about the way in which some of the material was actually used an interpreted

NC: Well a minister this morning conceded that this crucial point about Saddam Hussein being able to use weapons of mass destruction within forty five minutes of the order to do so, that that was single sourced, and in intelligence sense, that's a risky business isn't it

PAULINE NEVILLE-JONES Well, certainly when you've got something which is obviously as significant as a piece of information of that kind, you would normally want I think to have some kind of corroboration. One of two things, either corroboration, that's ideal, or if you haven't got corroboration to have real confidence in the source that has given you that piece of information. So, the implication I think of what we're, you know what we're hearing is that this was a source that wasn't so, wasn't so, either well-known or trusted, and that therefore, you know the absence of corroboration put a big question mark over it.

NC: Why did the government get itself in the position where it found it had to, if it did use intelligence information in this way

PAULINE NEVILLE-JONES: The reason I think why this information, given the context of the, of the defence being used in international law, which was one of self defence, and imminent self defence, was, if was a, if it were the case that this capability, forty five minutes notice, was something that really existed, it was demonstrably a threat, because there was no way in which you know, you can intervene and stop something, if the figure is forty five minutes, so that was obviously the political significance of this piece of information

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It had great bolstered the and supported the case in international law for demonstrating this man was an imminent threat

NC: But uncomfortable as you pointed out for the British government which found itself thereby using, I put that word in heavy quotes, the intelligence material to make a case, and I mean how common is that. Have we seen a lot of that.

PAULINE NEVILLE-JONES: Well no. This is a, a new phenomenon, one I think that we shouldn't object to on the contrary, but it all leads er, this whole episode and the post mortum shows how extraordinarily careful and scrupulous and cautious you need to be with information of this kind.

NC: And the government may not have been quite cautious and scrupulous enough.

PAULINE NEVILLE-JONES I think that's you know, a conclusion that people may draw.

END OF RECORDING  
JH

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