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Personal to:

Dr Bryan Wells,
Director Proliferation and Arms Control Secretariat,
Ministry of Defence,
Metropole Building,
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London WC2N 5BP

Dear *Bryan,*

Andrew Gilligan and his single anonymous source

Over the past month controversy has raged over the September 2002 Iraq WMD Dossier primarily because Andrew Gilligan of the BBC has claimed that the dossier was "sexed up" at the behest of Alastair Campbell the Prime Minister's press officer.

Andrew Gilligan is a journalist that I know and have met

As you know I have been involved in writing three "dossiers" concerning Iraq - the 1999 UNSCOM/Butler Status of Verification Report, the September 2002 International Institute of Strategic Studies "Iraq WMD" report, and the UK Government "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction". My contributions to the latter were in part 2 (History of UN Inspections) and part 1 chapter 2 (Iraq's programmes 1971-1998) at the behest of the FCO and I was not involved in the intelligence component in any way nor in the process of the dossier's compilation. I have not acknowledged to anyone outside FCO my contribution to any these reports although it is easy to assume and conclude that I made contributions because of my substantial role in elucidating Iraq's biological weapons programme. I am not a member of the intelligence community although I interact with that community and I am essentially, as an inspector, a consumer of intelligence not a generator of intelligence.

The contents of both IISS and UK Government dossiers, which both rely heavily on the 1999 Butler report, I have discussed with many individuals drawn from the UN, "Think Tanks" academia, the arms control community, together with the media. My discussions have been entirely technical and factual and although the "45 minute deployment" issue has obviously been raised I

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have always given the honest answer that I do not know what it refers to and that I am not familiar with an Iraqi weapons system that it matches. The latter is of significance to the UN since they had to take it into account in their work. The UK Dossier was of general interest for about ten days after publication and, with the exception of UNMOVIC, was not a topic later raised with me. After that my discussions about Iraq's WMD centred on UNMOVIC's re-engagement with Iraq, the "enhanced" inspection process and UNMOVIC's findings. Since the war I have discussed with some of those same individuals the failure to use chemical and biological weapons by Iraq and the apparent lack of success in finding such weapons after the war. It is natural to do so since I am one of the few who knows Iraq's programmes in detail and my information is derived from my United Nations work.

I have not had extensive dealings with Andrew Gilligan. As I recall I first met him at the IISS "Global Strategic Review" in September 2002 after the IISS dossier was published but before the UK Government dossier appeared. We would have discussed the IISS dossier since it was at the forefront of delegates discussions but the detail is now forgotten. I cannot recall meeting him before that although it is entirely possible that we have attended the same meetings at Chatham House or IISS. I next met with him in February 2003 at his request because he was about to depart to Iraq to cover the forthcoming war. I cannot recall any contact in the interim and do not believe that contact was made. It is some time since that meeting but I believe that we covered the topics of Hans Blix and UNMOVIC inspections, Iraqi individuals associated with the WMD programmes and sites associated with the programme. I also spoke separately with Linsey Hilsum (Channel 4), Carolyn Hawley and Jane Corbin (BBC) about the same issues before they went to Iraq. Gilligan said that he would informally tell me about his experiences in Iraq on his return (as did Jane Corbin). I have spoken to both since the war. I have had a number of telephone exchanges with Jane Corbin principally because she is keen to do a follow up to her UNMOVIC "fly on the wall" with the Iraq Survey Group (and my comments to her have been neutral) but none with Gilligan other than one made by him to arrange to meet to discuss his experience in Iraq. I also speak irregularly with Susan Watts the BBC Science Editor and Andrew Veitch the Channel Four Science Editor about scientific and technical aspects of Iraq's weapons and UN inspections.

I met with Gilligan in London on May 22nd for 45 minutes in the evening to privately discuss his Iraq experiences and definitely not to discuss the dossier (I would not have met with him had it been the case). As I recall, we discussed his ability to report before, during, and after the war in the presence of minders and freedom to move around Baghdad, accommodation at the Palestine Hotel; his impression of the coalition attacks, US military protection of journalists; the revelations likely to be made by Amer Al-Sa'adi, Huda Amash, Rihab Taha, Tariq Aziz and Ahmed Murtadda who are individuals associated with Iraq's "past" programme. He was particularly intrigued by Huda since he visited her home and met her husband but not Huda after the war and found her home guarded by "regime" Iraqis. We also discussed the failure of Iraq to use WMD and the inability to find them. I offered my usual and standard explanations (conditions early in the war not favourable to CB use and lack of command and control late in the war; that the small arsenal of weapons (or its destroyed remnants) compared to 1991 would be difficult to find without human information). The issue of 45 minutes arose in terms of the threat (aerial versus land launch) and I stated that I did not know what it refers to (which I do not). He asked why it should be in the dossier and I replied probably for impact. He raised the issue of Alistair Campbell and since I was not involved in the process (not stated by me) I was unable to comment. This issue was not discussed at any length and was essentially an aside. I made no allegations or accusations about any issue related to the dossier or the Government's case for war concentrating on his account of his stay in Iraq. I did not discuss the "immediacy" of the threat. The discussion was not about the dossier. Had it been so then I would have indicated that from my extensive and authoritative knowledge of Iraq's WMD programme, notably its biological programme, that the dossier was a fair reflection of open source information (ie UNSCOM/UNMOVIC) and appreciations.

I most certainly have never attempted to undermine Government policy in any way especially since I was personally sympathetic to the war because I recognised from a decade's work

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the menace of Iraq's ability to further develop its non conventional weapons programmes

I have had no further contact with Andrew Gilligan since May 22nd

I did not even consider that I was the 'source' of Gilligan's information until a friend in RUSI said that I should look at the "Oral Evidence provided to the Foreign Affairs Committee" on 19th June because she recognised that some comments were the sort that I would make about Iraq's chemical and biological capacity. The description of that meeting in small part matches my interaction with him especially my personal evaluation of Iraq's capability but the overall character is quite different. I can only conclude one of three things. Gilligan has considerably embellished my meeting with him; he has met with other individuals who truly were intimately associated with the dossier, or he has assembled comments from both multiple direct and indirect sources for his articles

I should explain my "unusual" interaction with the media. In August 1991 I led the first biological weapons inspection in Iraq. I had no media exposure before that although anticipating that it would be inevitable I attended at my request the MOD Senior Officers TV course at Wilton Park which served to make me aware of some of the pitfalls of journalism. During and after the first inspection as Chief Inspector I conducted a number of major press conferences including the internationally covered midday press briefing at the UN Head quarters in New York. That meant that the media were very much aware of me thereafter. Over the next ten years I undertook at the request of MOD, FCO, CBD Porton Down, and the especially the UN press office and UNSCOM/UNMOVIC press officer both attributable interviews and occasionally unattributable briefings. All such interactions were cleared by the appropriate authority. As my contact details became known it became inevitable that direct approaches were made and I used my discretion as to whether I provided information. My interaction with the media helped keep the issue of Iraq's WMD a live issue. I interact with the media on four issues - Iraq, Soviet/Russian biological warfare, smallpox and anthrax. If it was technical information available from open sources (and nearly all requests were such) then I provided details or more realistically a clarification and explanation of that information (I tend to be a human archive on Iraq's chemical and biological programmes). If it was about individuals (Iraqi or UN) I would comment only on their role and not their personality. Comment on other matters were declined although in the case of Iraq it is impossible to draw a clear distinction between the truly technical and Iraq's political concealment.

I have appeared on many British and foreign television programmes including Today, Panorama, Channel 4 News, Newsnight, ABC, CBS sixty minutes, CNN etc. and I continue to get requests to do so. Since September 11th I no longer talk to camera about Iraq and rarely on other issues. All media requests are referred to James Paver of the FCO Press Office and most are now discouraged from approaching him by my stating that I doubted that it would be possible.

I have never served as a designated spokesperson for any organisation, never initiated the release of information on behalf of any organisation, and never discussed a JIC report. I have never contacted any journalist to claim that a newspaper report was correct (or incorrect). I have never made a claim as to the timing of when any part of the dossier was included. I have never acted as a conduit to release or leak information. I have never discussed classified information with anyone other than those cleared so to do. I do not feel "deep unease" over the dossier because it is completely coincident with my personal views on Iraq's unconventional weapons capability.

With hindsight I of course deeply regret talking to Andrew Gilligan even though I am convinced that I am not his primary source of information. At the time of considerable disarray in Iraq I was eager to gain whatever first hand information I could about the circumstances in Iraq and individuals associated with Iraq's WMD programme. I anticipated, incorrectly, that I would shortly return to Iraq to debrief some of those individuals and this is why I have spoken to some journalists who have also interacted with them recently.

I hope this letter helps unravel at least a small part of the "45 minute story". It was a difficult decision to make to write to you because I realise that suspicion falls on me because of my long association with Iraq's WMD programme investigation and the acknowledgement that I know Andrew Gilligan. I can only repeat that I do not believe that I am the single source referred to and that much of the information attributed to that source I am completely unsighted on and would not be able to provide informed comment about.

Sincerely,

David