



**Sir Gus O'Donnell KCB**

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Francis Maude MP  
House of Commons  
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21 April 2009

*Dear Francis,*

Thank you for your letter of 15 April. I am replying taking each of your questions in turn.

You asked about the assurances provided to the Prime Minister. As my last letter pointed out, the Prime Minister has been assured that there is no Ministerial or wider political adviser involvement in these events. However, he asked me to establish that this was the case. I have now investigated the emails in question. Having done so I can confirm to you that no member of No10 staff or Ministers, other than Mr McBride, were involved either as an author or copy recipient.

You then asked whether any members of the media were copied in on the email exchanges. Having undertaken this review of the relevant emails I can confirm to you that no one in the media was copied in.

You also asked what action I was taking to find out if the emails sent by Mr McBride were part of a broader pattern of activity, including through examination of his emails and computer. As well as examining the emails relating to the specific events reported over the Easter weekend, I have extended the search to include other email exchanges between the main correspondents. Having done so, I did not find that the emails were part of a broader pattern of activity of propagation of unfounded personal allegations.

As I have said, I am continuing to work with Permanent Secretaries and other senior colleagues to make sure that official resources are not, and will not, be misused in a similar way. As I said in my letter of 14 May, what happened constituted a clear and serious breach of the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers. It cannot and has not been tolerated.

To this end, Permanent Secretaries are reminding Ministers and special advisers of the enhanced requirements of the Special Advisers' Code of Conduct. The Code is



clear about the standards of conduct expected of special advisers. There can be no place in Government for this type of behaviour. The fact that special advisers now have to sign an undertaking to confirm they have read and understood the strengthened Code will also help ensure this issue is uppermost in people's minds.

*Yours sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gus', with a diagonal slash at the end.

**Gus O'Donnell**

