

Murdoch scandal spreads

Britain's police chief resigns over relations with News International

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Britain's senior police officer, Sir Paul Stephenson, has been forced to resign in the latest turn in the expanding scandal over phone hacking and other illegal acts by British media outlets owned by Rupert Murdoch. Stephenson stepped down after the arrest of Neil Wallis further exposed the corrupt relations between Murdoch's media empire and the London Metropolitan Police.

Wallis was the deputy editor of Murdoch's *News of the World* under Andy Coulson (the former press spokesman for Prime Minister David Cameron) and the newspaper's executive editor after 2007. Stephenson said in resigning that his links to Wallis could hamper investigations.

In 2009, Wallis left News International, the umbrella company controlling Murdoch's media operations in Britain. He joined the PR firm Outside Organisation and became its managing director in 2010. But Wallis also maintained his own PR company, Chamy Media, which was retained by the Metropolitan Police from October 2009 until September 2010 to "provide strategic communication advice and support." He was paid £24,000 for two days work a month, equivalent to £1,000 a day.

As part of the contract, Wallis advised the commissioner's office, the Directorate of Public Affairs and Specialist Operations. He worked closely with Assistant Commissioner John Yates "at a time when [Commissioner Paul] Stephenson and Yates were trying to persuade the *Guardian* that its coverage of the phone-hacking scandal was exaggerated and unwarranted," the *Observer* writes.

The *New York Times* in a front-page article published Sunday alleges that Wallis was "reporting back" to News International during this period. The newspaper asserts that he was "hired by Scotland Yard [the Metropolitan Police] to provide strategic media advice on phone-hacking matters to the police commissioner, among others."

Wallis' contract as police adviser was cancelled less than six months before the launch of Operation Weeting, the name of the second investigation into phone hacking at News International. Chamy Media now appears to be defunct.

It was Yates who made the decision, reportedly after carrying

out a review in July 2009 lasting just eight hours, not to reopen the initial 2006 inquiry into phone hacking by *News of the World*. He famously stated that less than a dozen people had been subjected to hacking, despite being in possession of evidence of a list of possibly 4,000 victims, described during the initial investigation as "a vast number."

Yates repeatedly played down the scale of the crimes, contrasting hundreds of "potential targets" with a supposedly "far smaller number of individuals" actually targeted. He stated publicly that former deputy prime minister John Prescott's phone had not been hacked, when there was clear evidence that it had, and claimed that all victims had been contacted, when most had not.

The *Guardian* noted that during this time the former assistant commissioner who had headed the original inquiry, Andy Hayman, was working for News International as a columnist for the *Times*. In one of his columns, Hayman wrote that while there may have been hundreds of potential victims, "there was a small number—perhaps only a handful—where there was evidence they had actually been tampered with."

The *Observer* reports that Wallis first met Yates around the time he became editor of the *People*, in 1998. Working under Wallis at the time was James Weatherup, the *News of the World* journalist arrested in April this year, and Ian Edmondson, the *News of the World*'s former head of news, who was also arrested that same month.

Wallis is believed to have set up the Police Bravery Awards alongside the Police Federation during his time working for Murdoch's *Sun*. The *Daily Mirror* also states that he may have been "instrumental in hiring former Met [Metropolitan Police] chief Lord Stephens on a retainer for *News of the World* as guest columnist, The Chief."

There is a mountain of evidence on the long history of Wallis' connections with the Met and those of the *News of the World* as a whole.

News of the World royal reporter Clive Goodman and private investigator Glenn Mulcaire were arrested on August 8, 2006 for hacking the phones of members of the royal family. There was supposedly an ongoing investigation as to whether anyone

else was involved. But Wallis, the deputy editor of the newspaper, shared a meal with Stephenson and Scotland Yard's PR man, Dick Fedorcio, less than a month after Goodman and Mulcaire were jailed.

Stephenson has acknowledged 24 meetings with representatives of News International, 18 of which were lunches or other meals. The *Observer* also reports that Stephenson admitted to having dined with Wallis eight times between 2006 and 2009, but "also, crucially, met him up to five times privately in the last two years."

Stephenson was provided a free five-week stay at Champneys health spa in Tring, Hertfordshire by managing director Stephen Purdew. Wallis was in charge of the company that promoted Champneys. The holiday is estimated to have been worth £12,000.

Yates' own relations with Wallis have been described as a "12-year friendship." Yet he has formally admitted to just five meals with News International representatives in the last few years, including when Operation Weeting was ongoing. In November 2009, shortly after his decision not to reopen the investigation, Yates dined with *News of the World* editor Colin Myler and crime editor Lucy Panton.

Neither Stephenson nor Yates revealed the fact that Wallis had been employed by the Met when they testified at a hearing of the home affairs select committee last week, leading an unnamed MP to tell the *Observer*, "We were assured that Yates and Stephenson weren't taking money from the journalists. What we didn't know was that the journalists were taking money from the cops."

The Met has been accused of using its relations with News International to leak information and to champion its demands for greater repressive powers.

Hayman was the former head of counterterrorism at the Met and led the demand for police to be able to detain people for 90 days without trial on "anti-terror" grounds. It was on his watch that the innocent young Brazilian worker Jean Charles de Menezes was executed by police in July 2005, and another innocent man was shot during an "anti-terror" raid in June 2006.

The de Menezes family have said there is evidence they were targeted for hacking by *News of the World*. The phone number of Jean Charles' cousin, Alex Pereira, was amongst documents belonging to Mulcaire.

The family has written to Prime Minister Cameron, asking him to extend the remit of the phone hacking inquiry to establish whether police officers involved in the de Menezes investigation were leaking information to the press—either for financial benefit or to prop up the reputation of Scotland Yard.

The letter notes that the Stockwell 2 investigation of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) into the de Menezes killing had scrutinised "the practice of police off-the-record briefings to the media." It states that the IPCC "found that Andy Hayman had deliberately 'misled the public' over

claims the person who had been shot dead by the police on 22 July 2005 was one of the four men who were being sought in connection with the attempted bombings of the previous day."

The letter continues: "Recent coverage of the police's role in investigating allegations of phone hacking, including Mr. Hayman's evidence to the home affairs select committee, has highlighted his close relationship with News International, including potential financial links. We are conscious that the newspapers owned by News International provided some of the most virulent and often misleading coverage around Jean's death and its aftermath."

The *New York Times* has noted regarding Hayman's initial investigation into Goodman and Mulcaire in 2006 that on August 8, 2006, Scotland Yard officers arrived with a search warrant at *News of the World*, but limited their search to Goodman's desk. Mulcaire and Goodman were arrested that same day, with no attempt made to probe further into the *News of the World*.

In December 2009, Met Commander Ali Dizaei—the Metropolitan Police's most senior Muslim officer and an Iranian—accepted compensation and an apology from *News of the World* for running false allegations on March 15 of that year that he "employed an illegal immigrant as his right-hand man and took him to the heart of the British establishment."

From 2000, Dizaei had been investigated by the Met for taking bribes and spying for Iran. The most expensive operation ever mounted against a single officer in the history of Scotland Yard was also overseen by Hayman.

Dizaei was suspended on January 28, 2001 and charged with perverting the course of justice and misconduct in public office. A jury cleared him on September 15, 2003.

An Investigatory Powers Tribunal, headed by Lord Morris, concluded that the operation against Dizaei was "disproportionate" and racially motivated—the first time in British legal history that the reasons used by the police or security services to justify phone tapping have been found to be unlawful.

Hayman was also accused in an inquiry by Chief Surveillance Commissioner Christopher Rose of responsibility for the illegal bugging in 2005 and 2006 of British Muslim MP Sadiq Khan during his meetings with constituency member Baber Ahmed, who was at the time under detention at Woodhill Prison while fighting extradition to the United States.



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