

Britain: James Murdoch to be quizzed again over phone hacking

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News Corp. executive James Murdoch is to be recalled to answer more questions before the UK House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee.

The decision follows a hearing in which the former *News of the World* legal manager, Tom Crone, told members of parliament that Murdoch had not told the truth about an e-mail indicating phone hacking at the paper involved more than one reporter. Crone was backed up by Colin Myler, former editor of the *News of the World*, who also told the committee that the e-mail was discussed with Murdoch.

In July, James Murdoch and his father and News Corp. founder Rupert, told the committee they were not aware of such an e-mail.

Despite the two most senior figures in the News International phone-hacking scandal now being accused of perjury, committee chairman John Whittingdale gave no details as to when Murdoch will face further questioning. There are “a lot of loose ends” to tie up regarding “conflicting accounts”, he said, but the committee would first hear evidence from former senior News Corp. executive Les Hinton and Mark Lewis, the lawyer representing phone-hacking victims. When asked whether the select committee would use any powers it had to force Murdoch to appear, if he refused to do so voluntarily, Whittingdale replied, “I honestly don’t think that will be necessary.”

Even more damning evidence is emerging, pointing to criminal practise rife throughout News International. Lawyers acting for phone-hacking claimants this week said they had received a 68-page document from police, listing the names of those at News International who asked Glenn Mulcaire, the private investigator, to engage in hacking. The document is based on notes seized from his home during a police raid in 2006. In

January 2007, Mulcaire and then-*News of the World* royal editor Clive Goodman were jailed for six months and four months respectively, after being found guilty of hacking voice mail messages of members of the royal family.

In July, James Murdoch told the select committee that he was “surprised” when told News International was continuing to pay Mulcaire’s legal fees. Murdoch said, if true, this would cease with “immediate effect”. But this week, the *Independent* newspaper obtained a previously protected High Court document revealing that News International is still set to pay any damages awarded against Mulcaire in dozens of civil phone-hacking claims. According to the newspaper, “News International has set aside a fund of at least £20 million to settle the damages claims against it.”

The document’s existence was revealed as part of a high court case being presided over by Mr. Justice Vos.

Vos had previously ordered that any names in the document remain confidential on the basis of ensuring an ongoing police inquiry into allegation of phone hacking at the *News of the World* between 2005 and 2006 would not be compromised. He has been considering applications before the High Court from a number of phone-hacking victims who are pursuing civil cases. The judge has decided that the test cases, to be heard in the new year, will include the actor Jude Law, Labour Member of Parliament Chris Bryant, interior designer Kelly Hoppen, sports agent Sky Andrew and former soccer player Paul Gascoigne. The outcomes of these cases will determine the scale of damages for other alleged victims of phone hacking.

Vos also added the name of Sheila Henry to the list of cases. Henry is the mother of Christian Small, a 28-year-old victim of the July 2005 terrorist attacks in London.

Henry filed a writ at the High Court this week after being told by police that it was likely that her son's mobile phone was targeted by the *News of the World*. Small was among 52 people who died in the attacks, and his mother, desperate to make contact with her missing son, left in excess of 100 messages on his phone in the eight days following July 7, when she did not know if he was alive or dead.

An indication of the thousands who have allegedly been the victims of phone hacking by the *News of the World* can be gleaned from the fact that Justice Vos has been informed by the *Daily Star* that his own phone may have been hacked.

The Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes has also issued legal proceedings against the *News of the World*.

The High Court was also told by Michael Silverleaf QC, the barrister for News International subsidiary News Group Newspapers (NGN), that "Two very large new caches of documents have been [discovered] which the current management were unaware of". The documents are understood to contain "many tens of thousands" of new documents and e-mails.

Justice Vos said, "There's some important material in what has already been disclosed.... I'm sure there's a lot more to come."

If more evidence comes to light, it will be despite the extraordinary decision earlier this year to order NGN to search its own internal e-mail system for any evidence of phone hacking. This came amid claims that millions of News International's internal e-mails had been deleted.

Only last week, parliament's home affairs select committee was informed by HCL, a firm that looked after the IT systems of News Corp., that on 13 occasions between April 2010 and July this year, its client had asked HCL to delete hundreds of thousands of e-mails.

Last year, NGN claimed that it had lost some e-mails from the period when Mulcaire's hacking was at its most active. Then, NGN said these e-mails had been found.

Yet this week, the high court judge extended until September 30 the time that NGN has to comply with the order requiring the company to hand over potential evidence to phone-hacking litigants.

The entire computer records of News

International/NGN should have been seized; their offices sealed off and declared as crime scenes. Instead, the Murdoch media empire is being allowed to do as it pleases. So far, just 16 people have been arrested in relation to the phone-hacking crisis, and all have been released without charge. Crone and Myler have not been apprehended, let alone the Murdochs.

This week, the terms of an inquiry into the Australian print media were announced, with a government minister of the ruling Labor Party declaring that there would be no moves to break up or limit Murdoch's monopoly. Via its News Ltd. Subsidiary, News Corp. owns 70 percent of Australia's newspapers. Communications Minister Stephen Conroy told reporters, "In terms of a witch hunt to demand that we break up News Ltd or to attack News Ltd, I'm not interested."

Politicians of all stripes have courted the favour of the News Corp. media empire for decades, maintaining the closest relations in the process as they carried through policies of privatisation, deregulation, and rampant speculation that helped spawn today's parasitic financial oligarchy.

The Murdoch press is also not above dishing the "dirt" on high-profile individuals when it suits. On Monday, a former prostitute, Natalie Rowe, told ABC Australia that she believed her phone had been hacked by the *News of the World* in 2005. She said this was around the time she sold a story to a rival Sunday title, the *Sunday Mirror*, which including claims that George Osborne, now Britain's chancellor of the exchequer, took cocaine with her 11 years earlier.

The details in Rowe's story appeared simultaneously in the *News of the World*, then edited by Andy Coulson.

Coulson is a central figure in the phone-hacking scandal. Following his resignation from the *News of the World* in 2007, he was employed for three-and-a-half years by David Cameron as his director of communications, both when he was the leader of the Conservative opposition and for a period when Cameron became prime minister.



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