

Fresh arrests of police, journalists, public officials in UK hacking/bribery scandal

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There were further arrests last week in connection to the illegal payments and phone hacking scandal that has rocked the British political establishment.

To date police operations had mainly revolved around the News International media empire of Rupert Murdoch. The arrest of an employee from rival Trinity group of newspapers signals a widening of police investigations.

On Wednesday morning former *Daily Mirror* journalist Greig Box-Turnbull, 37, who worked for *Trinity Mirror* until taking voluntary redundancy in March, was arrested. Also arrested were a 46-year-old prison worker and a 50-year-old woman, on suspicion of corruption, conspiracy to commit bribery and conspiracy to cause misconduct in a public office.

All three have been released on bail. The prison officer was bailed to return to a London police station on Thursday. Box-Turnbull and the unnamed woman are due to answer bail at separate London police stations in October.

This has brought the number arrested as part of Operation Elveden, an investigation into inappropriate payments to the police, so far to 39.

The *Independent* newspaper reports that the arrests of Box-Turnbull comes at a “particularly turbulent difficult time for *Trinity Mirror*, which, like most newspaper groups, is suffering from falling circulations and advertising revenue at its 130 regional and national titles and in May, ousted its Chief Executive Sly Bailey and the Editors of the *Mirror* and *Sunday Mirror*, Richard Wallace and Tina Weaver”.

At the ongoing Leveson judicial inquiry into media ethics, the BBC’s Jeremy Paxman caused a stir when he claimed that Piers Morgan, former editor of the *Mirror*, instructed him how to hack a phone at a lunch in the *Mirror*’s boardroom in 2002. Until now, the £740

million a year publicly-quoted company has avoided direct connections to the law-breaking that closed Murdoch’s *News of the World* and undermined the reputation of *The Sun*—several of whose staff members have been arrested on suspicion of bribing police.

In yet another dawn raid, a female Scotland Yard officer was arrested Thursday on suspicion of receiving illegal payments from journalists. The woman, 52, who is understood to be a member of the Yard’s specialist operations branch, was held at home in Essex. She is the first police officer to be arrested under operation Elveden.

Scotland Yard said; “Officers from operation Elveden arrested, a serving Metropolitan Police Service officer on suspicion of misconduct in a public office and offences contrary to the prevention of corruption act, 1906”.

Also arrested Thursday morning were two former National Health Service employees by detectives in Somerset investigating allegations of inappropriate payments to public officials. The 46-year-old man and 42-year-old woman are being held on suspicion of conspiracy to cause misconduct in a public office and on suspicion of corruption. This brings to three the total number of ex-NHS staff to be detained as part of Elveden.

Separately, a 26-year-old man had earlier been arrested in Surrey by the police operational unit, Weeting, investigating phone hacking. Murdoch’s British arm, News International, said the man was an employee but not in any editorial team. He was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and taken into custody at a London police station.

The police said their arrests came as the result of information provided to them by News International’s

parent, News Corporation's management standards committee.

The arrest of the man in Surrey is the 24th arrest detectives have made as part of the Operation, Weeting, which is running in conjunction with the Elveden inquiry. It was launched in January 2011, following allegations that journalists at the *News of the World* had been accessing the voice mails of prominent people to find stories. News International closed the Sunday tabloid amid the scandal that followed.

Of 24 people arrested as part of Operation Weeting detectives have charged six people, including former NI chief executive Rebekah Brooks, with conspiracy to subvert the course of justice. Brooks denies the charges and is to go on trial in September. The Metropolitan Police said 14 people remained on bail pending further enquiries and four had been released with no further action.

In a related event the Supreme Court on Thursday effectively ordered private detective, Glenn Mulcaire, to name the person inside *News of the World*, who told him to access the voice mail of Nicola Phillips the former assistant of publicist Max Clifford. In January 2007, Mulcaire was found guilty of intercepting phone messages from royal residence Clarence House and imprisoned for six months. His co-conspirator, *News of the World* royal editor Clive Goodman, was sentenced to four months. Goodman's editor Andy Coulson was forced to resign on 26 January 2007 because of the arrest. In July that year he became director of communications chief for the Conservative Party and then, in May 2011, the communications director for Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron's new government.

Coulson was arrested 8 July 2011 in connection with the hacking and bribery scandal and again on 30 May 2012, charged with having committed perjury in 2010 during the perjury trial of former Scottish Socialist Party leader Tommy Sheridan.

The 60 individuals pursuing phone hacking claims against News International could now be told who ordered the private detective to access their voice mails. Five senior Law Lords unanimously rejected Mulcaire's claim for privilege against self-incrimination and gave him 42 days to comply.

Knowing who was involved in ordering the illegal practice might substantially affect the level of

compensation News Corp would be forced to pay out to those hacked. More importantly, it would provide the opportunity for the opening-up of the inner-workings of Murdoch's News International/News Corp multi-billion conglomerate and its intimate connections with the UK's political elite.



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