

# UK inquiry into murder of Daniel Morgan sheds light on police criminality

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The Independent Panel Investigation into the murder of private investigator Daniel Morgan finally reported last week. It has taken almost 35 years, an inquest, a failed trial and four previous investigations/inquiries to get anywhere near the truth of his killing.

The panel was tasked with investigating explosive questions: if police were involved in Morgan's killing and how; whether police corruption protected those responsible; and if there were corrupt relations between private investigators, police and journalists.

The report answered "yes" to all of these questions, making its finding of "institutional corruption" an understatement. The report points to systemic criminality—from murder, drug dealing, fencing stolen property and concealing evidence, to stealing and selling information on individuals to the media. It shows that, far from the Metropolitan Police simply being "not honest in their dealings with [Morgan's family] and the public," it has been the single greatest obstacle to truth and justice.

The Met's criminality involves not only Morgan's murder and a series of botched investigations into it but extends to other high-profile cases, including the racist killing of black teenager Stephen Lawrence, and corrupt relations between police and journalists, particularly at Rupert Murdoch's now defunct *News of the World*.

Morgan was found dead, with an axe embedded in his head, on March 10, 1987, in a pub car park in Sydenham, London. He had founded Southern Investigations with Jonathan Rees. Detective Sergeant Sid Fillery, based at the local Catford, southeast London police station was assigned to the murder case. But Fillery concealed that he had been working unofficially for Southern Investigations.

In April, Rees and brothers Glenn and Garry Vian were arrested on suspicion of murder, and Fillery and two other Catford officers on suspicion of perverting the course of justice. All six were released without charge. That summer, detective constable Alan "Taffy" Holmes, who was said to be working with Morgan to uncover police corruption, was deemed to have committed suicide, in mysterious

circumstances.

An inquest into Morgan's death in April 1988 heard allegations that Rees and Morgan had argued, and Rees had told others that friends of his at Catford police station were going to murder Morgan, or help arrange his killing, with Fillery replacing him as partner. Rees denied the allegation, but Fillery later retired from the Met on medical grounds and joined Southern Investigations as business partner.

A covert police inquiry in 1998 uncovered Rees conspiring to plant Class A drugs on a mother in a child custody case and liaising with a *Sunday Mirror* journalist to access the bank accounts of several members of the Royal family. Rees was jailed for seven years for perverting the course of justice. In 2003, Fillery, who was running the firm during his business partner's incarceration, was arrested for possession of child pornography, and jailed.

Only due to the persistent efforts of Morgan's family did Rees, the Vians and Fillery stand trial in 2009. But after almost two years of pre-trial arguments the case collapsed in 2011 when "supergrass" evidence was ruled inadmissible and police claimed to be unable to find relevant files.

In 2011, the Met admitted police corruption was a "factor" in the failed first investigation but nothing more was forthcoming. Public campaigning saw then Home Secretary Theresa May agree to an Independent Panel Investigation into the Morgan case in 2013 but without any statutory powers, including the power to compel witnesses to testify.

What was originally intended to complete in 12 months has taken seven years due to police obstruction. The final documents were only released to the panel in March.

The panel's investigations also shed further light on the racist murder by up to six white youths of 18-year-old Stephen Lawrence in Plumstead, southeast London on April 22, 1993. Yet again, the police investigation in this instance amounted to deliberate sabotage. Two of his killers remained at large until 2012, while four others remain free.

The Lawrence killing and police "failures" were the subject of a public inquiry in 1998, headed by Sir William Macpherson, which found that these were the result of

“institutional racism”. Recommendations on “diversity” training and increasing the recruitment of black and Asian officers concealed police criminality—specifically, allegations that several officers were involved with notorious south London gangster and drug runner, Clifford Norris, father of one of the accused.

A review of “Possible corruption and the role of undercover policing in the Stephen Lawrence case” in 2014 found that intelligence relating to police corruption in the original investigation was not disclosed to the Macpherson inquiry. That report raised potential links between police corruption on the Lawrence and Morgan investigations.

The Lawrence review determined that, from the “limited sources available”, there was “a strong inference that Clifford Norris was a corruptor of police officers and an intimidator of witnesses”. Detective Sergeant John Davidson, who worked on the Lawrence investigation, had a “possible link” with Norris, it suggested, and there was “an enhanced level of suspicion that DS Davidson was corrupt both before and after” his involvement in the case. The corruption included recycling drugs and stolen property.

It concluded that, had this corruption been known, the Macpherson inquiry “might have been driven to the conclusion” that there was more to police failings in the Lawrence investigation “than simply an inappropriate manner and unfortunate unconscious racism.”

The Morgan panel cited Southern Investigations as “a hub of corruption” between serving and retired police officers and the media. Police officers were paid up to £2,000 a time for “sensitive intelligence” regarding celebrities, politicians and royals.

Murdoch’s *News of the World* was among the most invoiced, reportedly up to “500 times [a] month” between April 1987 and 1989. Rees was prominent in supplying this illegally obtained information to the newspaper, using his police connections.

The rot goes to the top of the Met. The panel criticised former Met commissioner Lord Stevens for taking up employment with Murdoch’s tabloid following his departure from the police. It stated that “the demonstrated links between personnel at the highest levels of the Metropolitan Police and people working for a news organisation linked to criminality associated with the murder of Daniel Morgan, are of serious and legitimate public concern. For senior police officers to take up employment with media outlets or other organisations, whose record involves criminal activity, is profoundly damaging for the reputation of the police service.”

The *News of the World*, part of Murdoch’s News International group, was closed in 2011 following an outcry over its involvement in phone hacking.

Most damning, panel member Professor Rodney Morgan said the finding of institutional corruption was not used in a historic sense but “in the present tense”.

Met Commissioner Cressida Dick was personally censured by the panel for the years of delays in its receiving requested information, including gaining access to the police national database, Holmes. The panel states that they have “never received any reasonable explanation ... by [then] assistant commissioner Dick and her successors” for this obstruction.

It was Dick who, as Gold Commander, oversaw the operation that led to the brutal police killing of innocent Brazilian worker, Jean Charles de Menezes on July 22, 2005. Menezes was shot 11 times by plain clothes police using hollow-point bullets on a London underground train. No police officers were ever charged for his murder, and Dick was promoted to Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Security and Protection shortly after before becoming Commissioner.

Daniel Morgan’s brother, Alastair, who has led the fight for justice, denounced “police and successive governments” for their failure “to deal effectively with serious police criminality”, and called for Dick’s immediate resignation.

Instead, the government and media have closed ranks around the Met. Home Secretary Priti Patel sought to delay publication of the report, demanding it be reviewed by her office prior to release on national security grounds. The Met rejected the panel’s key findings and dismissed calls for Dick’s resignation, while Patel and London’s Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan signalled their “full confidence” in the Commissioner.



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