

M Townsend
12 July 2012
3rd
Exhibit: "MT3"

IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY

THIRD WITNESS STATEMENT OF MARTIN TOWNSEND

I, **MARTIN TOWNSEND**, of Express Newspapers, The Northern & Shell Building, Number 10 Lower Thames Street, London, EC3R 6EN, **WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:**

- A. I am the editor of The Sunday Express Newspaper ("the Newspaper"). I make this statement in response to a request of the Leveson Inquiry (the "Inquiry") pursuant to a letter dated 5 July 2012. A copy of this letter can be found at pages 1- 3 of Exhibit "MT3".
- B. I confirm that all matters in this statement are true and, unless I specify to the contrary, are based upon my own knowledge and a review of the relevant documents. Where matters are not within my own knowledge, I state the source and believe the same to be true.
- C. For convenience, I have reproduced as subheadings the questions asked of me in the 5 July letter.

Question 1: Who you are and your current job title?

1. I am the Editor of the Newspaper, a role I have held since 2001.

Question 2: Your publication contained the article below [attached at page 4 of Exhibit MT3], under the headline given. Please provide your comments on the article particularly, but not limited to, explaining why the story was chosen for publication; why the contents of the article were considered appropriate; and how you consider the article complies with the Editors' Code of Practice.

Background to the subject matter of the Article dated 17 June 2012 ("the Article")

2. I will start by providing a brief background to help the Inquiry appreciate the importance of the subject matter of the Article.
3. During the Second World War, Bomber Command lost 55,573 volunteer servicemen out of a total of 125,000. This was the highest casualty rate for any unit serving in the Second World War. In addition, 8,000 were wounded and 10,000 were shot down and captured.
4. While the operations over Dresden were controversial due to the civilian loss of life, the courage and sacrifice shown by our young servicemen cannot be overstated.
5. Due to the controversy, it has taken over 67 years and significant donations by individuals and companies to finally ensure that the courage and sacrifice of those in Bomber Command are not forgotten.
6. In 2007, The Sunday Express Newspaper started its 'Sunday Express Honour The Bomber Boys' campaign in order to fight for the recognition which Bomber Command deserved.

7. Between 2007 and 2011, thousands of readers backed the Newspaper's demands for a memorial and a medal for Bomber Command and we ran numerous stories detailing the progress of our campaign and providing details of celebrities who had pledged their support. In July 2008 we also took a petition signed by more than 10,000 readers to Downing Street to illustrate the strength of feeling about this issue. It was backed by MPs Denis McShane, Andrew Rosinyneil and Austin Mitchell.
Ed 01.
8. By 2011, sufficient funds had been raised to cover the £8 million cost of a memorial which would be unveiled in Green Park, London on 28 June 2012. The sums raised included donations totalling £500,000 from readers of Express Newspapers and a £500,000 donation from Richard Desmond.

The unveiling of the memorial

9. The unveiling of the memorial was to be attended by no fewer than 13 members of the Royal family, including The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh.
10. Also to be in attendance were a number of air attaches from around the world and over seven thousand veterans and their partners.
11. In such circumstances, it was expected by me, my staff, and certainly by the readers of the Sunday Express Newspaper, that the ceremony would be broadcast live on one of the two main channels of the country's taxpayer funded broadcaster. It was with disbelief that we found out that the BBC was to use its little viewed digital news channel to broadcast the unveiling live while BBC1 would not feature the unveiling until a documentary to be aired later that day.
12. The BBC news channel attracts relatively small viewing figures, particularly during the day. It is also the case that as tickets to the unveiling had been limited to survivors and their partners or carers, many relatives of those who died were not able to attend. These people had legitimate cause to expect that they could watch the unveiling of the memorial as it happened. However, the demographic of these people who are in the

main pensioners means that they are less likely to rely on digital broadcasting services and are more likely to limit themselves to the five 'terrestrial' channels.

13. What made it some how even worse was that during the time of the unveiling itself, BBC1 was going to show repeats of '*Cash in the Attic*' and '*Bargain Hunt*'. Since the BBC would have camera crews at the unveiling its decision not to broadcast the event live on BBC1 was not, to our minds, made for technical reasons but was simply a choice. We considered this decision particularly baffling bearing in mind that the BBC is a taxpayer-funded public service broadcaster and appeared, in this case, to have neglected its public duty.

The Article

14. In light of the above, when I was approached by Marco Giannangeli, a reporter at the newspaper, about this story I considered it entirely proper that we run an article about it. Indeed, I considered the story to be of sufficient importance that it should run as the main front page headline with further details contained within an article on page five.
15. The headline was "*BBC SNUBS OUR BOMBER BOYS*" and sub-deck read "*Corporation to screen repeats as the Queen unveils £6m memorial*". I wholeheartedly stand by what we said on the front page and in the Article. The Article was factually accurate and without bias. This was a story which was of immense importance to the Newspaper and to its readers, particularly after the part played by the Newspaper in running a successful campaign in support of the memorial.
16. By way of an indication of how strongly readers of the Sunday Express Newspaper feel about this matter, a phone-in poll received 2,644 calls with 2,611 of those polled voting in favour of the head of the BBC being sacked over the matter. A mere 33 callers voted that he should keep his job.

Request for information from the Inquiry ("the Request")

17. I hope the explanation I have provided above fully addresses any concerns the Inquiry may have in this regard.
18. I do not accept that the article was 'factually inaccurate'.
19. The Request seems to accept that the BBC was aware of the significance of the story for both veterans and the BBC audiences simply because a BBC spokesman said so. This self evidently flies in the face of the importance the BBC attached to the story in practice by its failure to show the ceremony live on one of its main channels.
20. The article reported that the same BBC spokesman stated "*.....The Bomber Command Association are happy with our plans and have been working closely with us.*". Mr Giannangeli had worked closely with the Bomber Command Association Memorial Appeal in the months leading up the unveiling of the memorial and he was left in no doubt, having spoken to Jim Dooley, the chief fundraiser, that he was deeply disappointed by the decision taken at the BBC. This view was shared by RJ Gibb, son of the late Robin Gibb who was also a chief fundraiser, and John Boyes, accountant for the association, though the latter was not quoted in the final article.
21. After publication, Mr Dooley expressed gratitude to Mr Giannangeli for the content of the Article.

The Editors' Code of Conduct ("the Code")

22. Notwithstanding the withdrawal of Northern & Shell's publications from remit of the PCC, as stated in my first witness statement, the Sunday Express, along with the other publications still adhere to the Code.
23. That said, I do not believe any aspect of the Code was been breached by the Article. I feel it is also worth noting that the BBC did not complain to us, either verbally or in writing, about this article upon publication.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true.



MARTIN TOWNSEND
Dated: 12 July 2012

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MARTIN TOWNSEND

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EXHIBIT "MT3"

This is the exhibit marked "MT3" referred to in the Third Witness Statement of
Martin Townsend
dated this 12th day of July 2012