

NI Group Limited
S. O'Neill
First Statement
"SO1-SO7"
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IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY INTO THE CULTURE, PRACTICES AND
ETHICS OF THE PRESS

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SEAN O'NEILL

(1) Who are you and a brief summary of your career history

1 My name is Sean O'Neill and I am Crime Editor of The Times.

2 I started my career as a reporter on the Tyrone Democrat in Northern Ireland in 1986, moving to City Limits magazine in London in 1988 and then freelancing before starting in national newspapers as a Daily Telegraph reporter in 1992. I joined The Times in 2004 and became its Crime Editor in 2007.

Relations between the Media and the Metropolitan Police

(2) What have been your impressions, over the years, about the culture of relations between the Metropolitan Police Service and the media?

3 I have always found the Metropolitan Police (the "Met") a difficult organisation to deal with. Its institutional instinct is to be closed, defensive and secretive and that attitude is reflected in a tense relationship with the media.

4 The problems can be overcome, to a limited extent, by establishing personal contact and some degree of trust with individual staff and officers. But institutionally the Met is suspicious of the media and most officers share that suspicion.

(3) Describe the personal contact which you had with the Metropolitan Police at the various stages of your career. The Inquiry would like an overall picture of the type, frequency, duration and content of your contact with the Metropolitan Police.

5 As a general reporter, then a reporter who focused largely on terrorism issues in the years after 9/11 and now as a specialist crime reporter I have had increasing contact with the Met over my career.

- 6 As a general reporter I would call the press bureau regularly when working on crime stories (for example high profile murders) for statements and basic information. When focused on terror stories I regularly called the Specialist Operations Desk in the Directorate of Public Affairs (“DPA”) which handles press inquiries for Counter-terrorism Command.
- 7 Today my remit covers crime/terror stories and the politics of policing so I am probably in touch with the Met in one guise or another several times each week with inquiries ranging from new developments in ongoing operations (for example Operation Weeting) to breaking crime stories or questions about policy and resources (for example the Met’s plans for coping with cuts in police spending).
- (4) **Without prejudice to the generality of question (3) above, please set out the contact which you have had with the person occupying at any given time the following posts giving, as best you can remember, the dates and summarising the gist of the communications which you had with:**
- a. **The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.**
 - b. **The Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.**
 - c. **Assistant Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis.**
 - d. **Deputy Assistant Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis.**
 - e. **Head of Public Affairs.**
- In each case, who initiated the contact, and why?**
- 8 I do not have an appointments diary, so I will do my best to summarise these meetings, adopting categories a. to e. set out above:
- a. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis*
- 9 The Commissioner holds a monthly briefing for members of the Crime Reporters’ Association which I usually attend. It is on-the-record but off-camera. The Commissioner answers questions on current issues and usually brings along a senior officer with expertise in a particular field (for example, the Olympics, e-crime or public order) to talk about that issue. The new Commissioner has just cut the frequency of his appearances at these briefings to bi-monthly.
- 10 I have had two personal meetings at Scotland Yard with Sir Ian Blair and Sir Paul Stephenson when they were in post. On both occasions I initiated the meetings. I met Sir Ian to introduce myself after taking over as Crime Editor from Stewart Tandler who had been in the job for 20 years. I asked for a meeting with Sir Paul to see what his thoughts were on the changing policing landscape (i.e. police and crime commissioners, abolition of some police bodies).

11 I was also present when Sir Ian and Sir Paul had working lunches with the Editor of The Times at the newspaper's offices. On both occasions, it was the Commissioner's office that sought the meetings to discuss policing issues with senior editors and opinion writers on the paper. The discussions were off-the-record at the Yard's insistence.

12 There has also been ad hoc contact with commissioners when they attend Select Committees or conferences and social contact at a small number of events (for example, the Crime Reporters' Association Christmas Party).

b. The Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

13 I have had very limited contact with the person holding the office of Deputy Commissioner, largely due to the administrative nature of that post; however, I did pursue contact with Sir Paul Stephenson when he was in the post because he was firm favourite to be the next commissioner and I wanted to be able to profile him. I think only a small profile appeared in our online edition (attached as Exhibit SO1) but the biographical material was useful background when Sir Paul eventually became Commissioner in January 2009.

c. Assistant Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis

14 I sought and have had contact with several assistant commissioners over the years, particularly those in charge of the Specialist Operations Directorate (which covers terrorism and security) and the Specialist Crime Desk (which covers murder, organised crime etc.). The point of such meetings is to gain an understanding of what the Met's priorities are and to ask questions about ongoing investigations or forthcoming trials that are of interest. I have strong interests in the field of counter-terrorism and organised crime, and often come with specific questions, for example about gun crime, how street gangs were getting hold of guns, was legislation adequate for tackling the problem?

d. Deputy Assistant Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis

15 As with my answer to (c) above.

e. Head of Public Affairs

16 I have had relatively frequent contact with the Head of Public Affairs over the years; this could vary from phone calls two or three times a week at busy periods, to perhaps once a month or less. He was usually in attendance at any meeting or briefing where the Commissioner was present. I also made direct contact with him over particular running stories and tried to build a working relationship with him because of his oversight of the Met's media operation.

- (5) **Did you ever have the personal mobile number or home telephone number of the people listed at a-e above?**
- 17 Yes. I will not elaborate on this because I strongly believe that journalists have a moral duty to protect their sources.
- (6) **Describe what you were seeking to gain from the Metropolitan Police through your personal contacts with MPS personnel.**
- 18 In seeking personal contact with Met officers and staff, I wanted to build a working relationship based on trust and mutual respect. In my job I require an understanding of police thinking on crime and anti-terrorism, the view they take on major investigations and court cases and a sense of the morale at Scotland Yard and across the force generally. The Met is a huge organisation, with a massive public budget and 50,000 officers and staff; I consider it essential to have contact with people within it to understand how it works and to seek to hold it to account. It is no different to the approach taken by any specialist journalist covering politics, health or education. You have to understand what is going on in your specialism and have contact with influential people in the relevant public bodies.
- (7) **Describe in general terms and using illustrative examples what you consider the Metropolitan Police has been seeking from you in personal dealings with them during your career.**
- 19 The occasions when the Met seeks personal contact with me have been rare. When they do contact me it is either to put forward the Met's view on a story or, very rarely, to inquire how we might be approaching a particular story. Sometimes - and frankly not often enough - they want to promote positive stories about the work done by officers, or the bravery of individual officers.
- 20 When the Commissioner seeks to have lunch with my editor, this has been - I assume - to seek to keep him informed of the views of the country's most senior police officer on crime and justice issues.
- (8) **To what extent do you accept, and have you accepted, hospitality from the Metropolitan Police?**
- 21 To an extremely limited extent (see my answer to question 9 below). I do not think it is a healthy situation for reporters to accept hospitality from organisations they write about.

(9) Insofar as you accept, or have accepted, hospitality from the MPS, what is, or was, the nature of the hospitality that you accept, or have accepted?

22 On three or four occasions, I have attended New Year drinks functions hosted by the DPA and a summer drinks reception hosted by the Commissioner. The Met also often provides coffee at press conferences/briefings.

(10) To what extent do you, or have you, provided hospitality for the Metropolitan Police?

23 To a greater extent than it has been accepted but by no means excessively. If I take a contact for lunch, coffee or a pint then I tend to pay (however, some officers insist on splitting a bill). I tried to do this two or three times per month but in the current climate, with the chilling effect of this Inquiry and the Met's internal clampdown on media contact, there is virtually no social contact with officers.

(11) Insofar as you provide, or have provided hospitality to the Metropolitan Police, what is, or was, the nature of the hospitality that you provide, or have provided?

24 I have bought officers and staff cups of coffee, pints of beer, lunches and evening meals. In the case of restaurant meetings, this has sometimes been in the company of one or two other crime reporters from different media outlets.

(12) Have you ever attended a formal press conference called by the MPS? If so, for what purpose was it called and do you think that it was valuable?

25 I have attended far more Met press conferences than I could ever wish to remember, from crime reporters' briefings, to updates on running stories (for example, the summer riots, major investigations), to announcements on new policies and/or strategies for tackling crime, to strictly embargoed pre-verdict briefings on major trials.

26 They are often extremely valuable, but frequently deadly dull occasions riddled with terrible acronyms and impenetrable management speak.

Relations with Other Police Forces

(13) What have been your impressions, over the years, about the culture of relations between police forces other than the MPS and the media?

27 The smaller forces, naturally and properly, have good relationships with their local media outlets but tend to be very wary of the national media. I think this is understandable because national outlets usually only deal with them by descending en masse when a major story breaks.

- 28 The larger urban forces (for example, Greater Manchester Police, West Midlands Police) are much more adept at dealing with the national media and are often more open and co-operative with media requests than the Met.
- 29 Much depends, however, on the view of the chief constable of the individual force. If he or she is someone who is confident in dealing with the media, then the force tends to be more open and informative.
- (14) Have you had personal contact at Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable, or Assistant Chief Constable level? If so, as best you can remember, please state the dates and summarise the gist of such communications.**
- 30 I feel quite strongly that national crime reporters spend too much time reporting on the Met and events inside the M25. I have actively sought contact with chief officers outside London, either through the Association of Chief Police Officers (“**Acpo**”) or by direct contact with forces. Again I have not kept an appointments diary, but I try to visit forces outside London at least three or four times a year - to pursue particular projects, interview an individual officer or simply gauge an individual officer’s view on the policing world which is currently in flux over cuts, pay and major organisational reform.
- 31 I would also add that I frequently seek contact with a range of other organisations involved in policing and law enforcement including police authorities, Acpo, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Serious Organised Crime Agency (“**SOCA**”), the National Police Improvement Agency, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, the Police Federation and others.
- (15) Describe the personal contact which you had with other police forces at the various stages of your career. The Inquiry would like an overall picture of the type, frequency, duration and content of your contact with other police forces.**
- 32 As I have said at paragraph 30 above I try to initiate contact with forces outside London several times per year.
- 33 Over my career I have probably had reason to contact or deal with every force in the country. Most frequently this will revolve around particular stories (for example, daily contact with Cambridgeshire Police during the Soham murders in 2002 and the subsequent trial of Ian Huntley, or with Suffolk Police during the hunt for the killer who was murdering prostitutes in Ipswich in 2006). There have been other stories (for example, an investigation into chief officers’ secret bonus payments) which require contact with every force and features on particular types of crime which have been well served by focusing on a particular force’s work (for example, I have worked with Merseyside Police on a number of stories about organised crime).

(16) Describe what you were seeking to gain from these contacts with other police forces.

34 Answers to questions; stories; information; an idea of the challenges facing police forces around the country. Sometimes the meeting is introductory and exploratory; the police don't always realise when they are sitting on a newsworthy subject.

(17) Describe in general terms and using illustrative examples what you consider that other police forces have been seeking from you in personal dealings with them during your career.

35 The sharper ones are seeking to promote the good work that they have been doing. Contact with individual chief officers is usually around national issues, most often on the subject for which the individual officer holds the Acpo portfolio.

(18) To what extent do you accept, and have you accepted, hospitality from other police forces?

36 Apart from the odd coffee or drink, I have not accepted any hospitality.

(19) Insofar as you accept, or have accepted, hospitality from the other police forces, what is, or was, the nature of the hospitality that you accept, or have accepted?

37 See my answer to question 18 above

(20) To what extent do you, or have you, provided hospitality for other police forces or any of their personnel?

38 To a very limited extent.

(21) Insofar as you provide, or have provided hospitality to other police forces, or any of their personnel, what is, or was, the nature of the hospitality that you provide, or have provided?

39 The occasional drink, coffee or restaurant meal.

General Matters

(22) Have the police either formally or informally ever given you prior notification about proposed arrests, raids or other action? If so, please elaborate.

40 On a small number of occasions I have been given advance notice of enforcement action. In all cases this has been because I have been persistently asking questions about an investigation or proposing to write stories which the police have been concerned might

inhibit an ongoing operation. They have shared information with me, under strict embargo, to preserve the security of the operation.

41 Occasionally police forces formally invite the media to go on early morning raids during which suspects are arrested (in London this is often done with the Commissioner or the Mayor of London leading the charge as part of anti-burglary initiative). The case I am most familiar with where news of arrests in a high-profile case leaked out was an anti-terrorism raid in Birmingham targeted at a gang planning to kidnap and behead a British soldier. I was not given a tip-off, but am aware that there was a major inquiry into the leak to the media the night before the arrests. As far as I am aware that inquiry concluded that the leak came from a Ministry of Defence source.

(23) Have you ever been offered "off-the-record" briefings by the police? If so, please elaborate.

42 I have had both formal and informal off-the-record briefings. The formal briefings have tended to be off-record because the officer giving them has been in a sensitive role (for example counter-terrorism, organised crime) and reluctant to be named/quoted/identified for personal security reasons.

43 Informal off-the-record briefings have been kept confidential usually because the contact is passing on information which they are not supposed to disclose to a journalist. In my experience this has been information about mismanagement, incompetence or inappropriate actions by their organisation or senior managers/officers. A few years ago I ran a series of stories which were highly critical of the work of the SOCA. At the time SOCA was extremely secretive, had no police authority or similar body to which it was answerable and had been totally exempted from the Freedom of Information Act. Huge efforts were made to try and track down my source who would have been dismissed had he/she been discovered. Thankfully they were not traced.

(24) What mechanisms, if any, are in place in your workplace to monitor and record hospitality as between the police on the one hand and you, or your fellow journalists on the other?

44 There is an online expense system. Through this expenses are checked for financial compliance and approval by the Expense Administration Team. The newsdesk and the Managing Editor's office will then check the claim by reference to the editorial expenses policy and give editorial approval. Once both approvals have been obtained a payment will be made by BACS. I understand that a copy of the editorial expenses policy has already been provided to the Inquiry and has the reference MOD100015807.

(25) What training, guidance, policies and/or practices are in place in your workplace governing contact between you and your fellow journalists on the one hand and the police on the other?

45 The PCC Code of Conduct is part of my employment contract. While not specifically addressing relations with the police, it does cover reporting on crime and courts, dealing with potential witnesses in trials and the protection of sources. Furthermore, News Corporation's anti-bribery and anti-corruption policy, of which an amended version was issued in September 2011, governs payments to officials. This has been provided to the Inquiry and I understand has the reference MOD100014805.

(26) What editorial or management oversight, or control, if any, is there over communications between journalists and police at your media outlet?

46 I am an experienced reporter and like to think I have good antennae for the maintenance of proper communications with the police. If I think there is an issue or a problem I can raise it with my news editor or, if necessary, discuss it with my editor.

47 The newsdesk will occasionally quiz me on the reliability of the source of a story and the editor has, less frequently, done this too.

(27) What ethical issues do you consider arise, or need to be held in mind, by a journalist communicating in the course of his or her employment with the police, or anyone serving with, or employed by, a police force?

48 I am constantly aware at all times that there is a danger as a specialist reporter of becoming too close to the police. Police forces, and particularly the Met, are the major source of stories and information on crime, but it is essential to maintain contacts with others in the field of crime and justice, particularly those who are critical of the police. Exactly 10 years ago, with the arrest in London of an Algerian pilot Lotfi Raissi over allegations he trained the 9/11 hijackers, I saw how police and prosecutors are prepared to tell blatant lies to get the result they wanted. Working with Raissi's family and lawyers, I like to think my journalism helped discredit the police's case and prevent a miscarriage of justice in the making. One of my articles is attached as Exhibit SO2. All journalists writing on specialist subjects - politics, business, health, education - have to be wary of being taken captive by those they are writing about.

49 The reporter also has a powerful duty in this area of journalism to protect his or her sources, whether they are police officers, police employees or members of the public with concerns about the police. If sources want to give information on a confidential basis, the reporter must strive to protect their identity. Officers often talk to reporters because they have serious concerns about the way their force is operating or about failures in

investigations which have put the public at risk. They put their careers on the line when they do that and the journalist has a responsibility not to expose them to retribution. The way the Guardian handled its series of leaks, about who was being arrested by Operation Weeting, was a perfect example of how to expose rather than protect a source.

(28) What payments (if any) are considered to be legitimate financial transactions between persons serving with or employed by a police force and journalists at your media outlet? Please explain.

50 None that I am aware of. I have never paid a source for a story and have never considered offering a police contact a financial incentive in return for a story.

(29) What role do you consider that the Metropolitan Police Service Directorate of Public Affairs (especially the Press Bureau) and corresponding parts of other police forces fulfil? What, in practice, do they do?

51 The Met's press bureau and other forces' press offices exist primarily to provide updates on developing news stories and publicise successful police work. They are also the first port of call for questions on stories about force policy or allegations of misconduct, investigative failures etc. This is basically what they do, but increasingly press offices adopt a corporate element which seems to be about protecting the image and reputation of a force and its chief constable.

(30) How, in practice, do you get access to the police?

52 Apart from formal contact through press office channels, first contact between reporters and police often takes place at the scene of a crime, through press conferences or at court.

(31) Does the Head of Public Affairs at the Metropolitan Police Service and/or corresponding persons in other police forces act, or seek to act as gatekeepers controlling access by the media to other police personnel?

53 Yes.

(32) If so, what is your attitude to this state of affairs?

54 I think this is a reprehensible situation. The police are a public body and an arm of the state. They have a huge amount of power, including powers of coercion, detention and violence, and they have to be accountable for the use of those powers. At a time when police authorities are being abolished to be replaced by the untried and untested political office of Police and Crime Commissioner, the press has a really important function in finding out what the police are doing holding them to account. The head of press at the Yard and his or her equivalent elsewhere should be facilitating the flow and disclosure of information not seeking to stem it.

(33) To what extent, in your opinion, does the MPS' Press bureau, and corresponding parts of other police forces, exist to manage the relevant police force's corporate image in the media?

55 To an increasing extent, see my remarks in answer to question 29 above.

(34) Is it necessary for police forces to have a press office, and what is your view as to the utility and role of police press offices?

56 I think it is necessary for press offices to exist. Reporters most often want to talk to police officers when they are at their busiest in the middle of an investigation. It is simply not practical to expect an officer to have to field dozens of calls from reporters at that time. Their work is not simply about achieving publicity. Media coverage of successful arrests can act as a deterrent to criminals and, in the middle of a major inquiry, produces new leads and information which can lead to arrests.

(35) Is it common for persons working for police press offices to have a background in the media?

57 I have no idea. The professional background of police press officers does not interest me in the slightest.

(36) What proportion of personnel working in police press offices do you estimate have a media background?

58 I repeat my answer to question 35 above.

(37) Is any particular form of media background predominantly found amongst police press officers (e.g. tabloid, broadsheet, television)?

59 I repeat my answer to question 35 above.

(38) To the best of your knowledge is there any discernible patterns in the movement of personnel from the media into police press offices and vice versa?

60 I repeat my answer to question 35 above.

About HMIC

(39) What is your view of the recommendations contained in the HMIC's recent report "Without Fear or Favour" insofar as they concern relations between the media and the police?

61 The HMIC report is, I feel, a largely reasonable document, although its recommendation that all contact between police and journalists be formally noted is, in my view, bureaucratic, unworkable and ultimately a threat to legitimate whistleblowing and freedom of expression. More broadly, the report highlights that the issues around police hospitality and the media are rather limited - less than 1% of 9,600 gifts/hospitality came from the media. My own experience is that hospitality plays a very small part in crime reporting and is virtually non-existent compared to travel journalism, food and drink writing or some aspects of business journalism. I think senior police officers, especially those with influential roles in the awarding of contracts, have more serious issues to consider around hospitality with private sector contractors who lavish them with corporate invitations. However, I do think that there is absolutely no need for senior police officers to be socialising with proprietors of newspaper groups or media companies.

62 I would also like to comment on Elizabeth Filkin's recent report for the Metropolitan Police on its relationships with the media. I found this document patronising and ultimately dangerous for future accountability of the police. It has already created a climate of fear in which police officers - who may want to pass on information that is in the public but not the corporate interest - are afraid to talk to the press. Despite its repeated talk of openness and transparency, the key passages in the Filkin report refer to a clampdown on "unauthorised contact" between police and the press. The passage below reads as if it comes from an East German Ministry of Information manual rather than guidance for public servants in 21st century Britain:

"The MPS must create an environment where the improper disclosure of information is condemned and deterred. Senior managers should make messages of deterrence strong and effective. Where leaks cannot be proved to the evidential standard required for a criminal prosecution, robust management action should nevertheless be pursued. However, whether there has been genuine harm should always be assessed before proportionate action is taken. Investigations should be seen as an important but subsidiary part of a broader preventative approach."

Filkin Report, Recommendation 7, page 48.

63 Senior officers and managers will and, in my view, are already using this to prevent officers and staff from talking to the media. They and they alone decide what it is “improper” to disclose. These are the very same senior ranks who, Filkin says, are the root of the problem in the first place. Every hint of a leak from Scotland Yard is already being responded to with an investigation by the department for professional standards; I have even encountered a leak inquiry generated not by a story but by a question which I put to a senior officer at the Yard.

(40) Do you consider that there are further or different steps which could and/or should be taken to ensure that relationships between the police and the media are and remain appropriate? Please explain when answering this question what you consider to be appropriate contact between the police and journalists in a democratic society.

64 I don't think there is any requirement for new laws or rules in this area. It is illegal to pay police officers for information and the disclosure of information which compromises operations will almost always result in investigation and either prosecution and disciplinary sanction. What is required, and what has been shown to be lacking over the issues of phone-hacking and relations with News International management, is better professional judgment, especially by senior police officers.

65 I strongly believe that the ongoing clampdown on relations between reporters and police officers is very dangerous to our democracy. The police are immensely powerful, immensely secretive and have a lot to hide. A few examples of this secrecy include:

(i) Police misconduct hearings across the country (for all ranks) are held in secret and there is no requirement on the police to publish the findings of those hearings. The Times spent months last year obtaining statistics on misconduct hearings via Freedom of Information requests, with some forces very slow in providing a response. The Independent Police Complaints Commission has the power to hold misconduct hearings in public but has used it only once. My articles on this subject are attached as Exhibit SO3.

(ii) The remuneration packages of senior police officers are, to say the least, opaque. There is a secretive bonus scheme, there are local 'off book' payments and deals under which chiefs have school fees and stamp duty paid. I have battled to expose these and met with fierce resistance from within policing. One chief constable, who The Times revealed was receiving £75,000pa on top of his published salary, is now under investigation for corruption. My articles on this subject are attached as Exhibit SO4.

- 66** An aggressive and inquisitive press is one of the mechanisms society has for holding the police to account and contact between journalists and officers is just one of the ways we do that. Allowing chief officers to clamp down in a draconian manner on the flow of information, as Filkin recommends, would be a retrograde step.
- 67** There are many, many examples of cases where “unauthorised disclosure” of police information to the media has been in the public interest but has harmed the corporate reputation of the police. The examples of the phone-hacking story and the Stephen Lawrence murder case are well-known. Less well-known are the disclosures over the Met’s failures in the John Worboys and Kirk Reid serial rape cases; reporters learnt of serious investigative failings in both cases by attending early court hearings and put pressure on the Yard which forced it to make public disclosure of its errors. Ultimately this led to a fundamental reform of the way rape and serious sexual offences are investigated in London. These articles are attached as Exhibit SO5.
- 68** Stories which I have personally worked on where so-called “improper” disclosures have been vital include the exposure of corruption and brutality allegations against the Enfield Crime Squad (a case the Yard was trying very hard to keep quiet) and a series of articles which exposed a decades-long child abuse scandal at Ealing Abbey and St Benedict’s School in west London. Our coverage of the Ealing situation resulted directly in new witnesses coming forward, prosecutions and at least one conviction of a child abuser, as well as a ground-breaking report by Lord Carlile of Berriew on the future management of religious schools. These articles are attached as Exhibit SO6.
- 69** Outside the Met, the “improper” disclosure to me of information about a gun-runner who had smuggled 60 handguns into the UK in his luggage on passenger flights from the US led to the exposure of serious flaws in airport security. I believe the US and UK governments would rather this had been kept quiet too. Inevitably, this led to yet another leak inquiry. This was a situation in which we held back publication of the story for several weeks so as not to hamper an ongoing police investigation. These articles are attached as Exhibit SO7.

70 I would also like to remark on the practice of the media employing former officers to comment on policing issues. Much has been written about The Times hiring Andy Hayman, former Met Assistant Commissioner and a lot of it has been wildly inaccurate. I was instrumental in hiring Mr Hayman. I'd had contact with him from my work on counter-terrorism and knew him to be plain speaking. In summer 2008, seven or eight months after he abruptly resigned from the Met, I learned that he was writing a book and was being pursued by the Daily Telegraph as a possible columnist. I thought his knowledge of counter-terrorism and his views on policing would be useful to The Times and persuaded the editor we should sign him up. I believe he was on a £10,000 per annum retainer. At the time he was hired, the phone hacking story was not in the news and the decision to recruit him was not connected in any way to the hacking issue. We have used several retired police officers to write comment pieces since I have been crime editor. I believe they offer a valuable insight into the workings of the police and the way the police behave. Any imposition of a "cooling off period" between leaving the police and commenting in the media would reduce their relevance. The policing world can change very quickly (as we have seen in the wholesale transformation of the leadership of the Met recently) and it is most helpful to the readers to have relevant and contemporary voices writing and commenting on it.

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed



Dated

30th January 2012