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[] February 2012
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IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF JAMES MURRAY

I, **JAMES MURRAY**, Associate Editor (News) at The Sunday Express, of The Northern and Shell Building, Number 10 Lower Thames Street, London, EC3R 6EN, **WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:**

- A. I am the Associate Editor (News) at The Sunday Express. I make this statement in response to a request of the Leveson Inquiry (the "Inquiry") pursuant to a letter to the solicitors for Northern & Shell dated 3 January 2012.
- 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 3 January letter.

Who you are and a brief summary of your career history in the media.

1. I trained on local newspapers in Kent, was part of a team which won Journalist of the Year while at the Evening Argus in Brighton and worked for some ten years on Today newspaper before its closure. After Today closed I

worked as Scottish Political Editor of the Edinburgh Evening News. I was also Home Affairs Editor of Scotland on Sunday, so I have a great deal of experience in television news and tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. I have been a journalist for more than 30 years and have worked in television news for both the BBC and ITV companies.

2. I have been employed by the Sunday Express for some ten years, five years as News Editor before taking on the role of investigations editor. My contractual title is Associate Editor (News). We do not have a crime correspondent at The Sunday Express but I do investigations into complicated crime stories as part of my duties. I write some of the stories myself and assign others to work on stories.

Relations between the Media and the Metropolitan Police

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

3. I believe strongly that newspapers and the general media should forge strong and trustworthy relations with police forces, partly because the police supply information for stories but also because, as a Christian, I am on the side of truth and honesty. I believe that newspapers have a moral responsibility to assist in whatever way possible to apprehend wanted people and generally support the role of the police in trying to make society a safer place. I am also prepared to investigate police officers if there are suspicions they have been acting outside the law.
4. I believe the culture of relations was always professional and positive. It was always above board, I would say, and cordial. The Metropolitan Police generally tried to give as much information as they could whilst not risking damaging their investigations and that stance was respected by responsible members of the Press.

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.

5. Whilst I was a full time reporter, I regularly telephoned Scotland Yard regarding major crime stories and usually spoke with staff at the Press Bureau rather than individual officers. I also attended many press conferences at Scotland Yard held to publicise crimes in which the public may be able to assist. I generally telephoned Scotland Yard once or twice a week and would describe the relations as courteous and professional.
6. In general I would say I have also had a good working relationship with the Metropolitan Police, not over friendly and not hostile. On most occasions they released useful information which helped in writing accurate crime stories. Occasionally, there were frustrations because they released little information. On balance I think they helped where they could but were always cautious about releasing details.
7. Occasionally I would meet up with senior detectives for meals and drinks, but these were always what I would call semi work events. Often over these dinners, the detectives would ask questions about what the media expected of the police and whether I felt they were giving a good service to the Press. These meetings would take place maybe three or four times a year and were on an off the record basis.

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. About six years ago when Sir Ian Blair was the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, myself, Martin Townsend (the Editor) and other senior

executives on the paper were invited to go to Scotland Yard to share a glass of champagne with Sir Ian and were given a tour of the Black Museum, Scotland Yard's museum of famous criminal memorabilia. This was purely a social event with the intention of getting to know Sir Ian a bit better. It was organised by our then crime editor, Andrea Perry. The only other event I can remember with someone at Scotland Yard was having lunch once with Dick Fedorcio when he was Director of Communications at Scotland Yard. This lunch was also organised by Andrea with the intention of getting to know each other and having a friendly chat.

Did you ever have the personal mobile telephone number or home telephone number of the people listed at a-e above?

9. I cannot recall having any personal mobile telephone numbers or home telephone numbers for any of them.

Describe what you were seeking to gain from the Metropolitan Police through your personal contacts with MPS personnel.

10. The purpose of my contacts with MPS personnel as described above was (a) to obtain information on major crimes to use in stories, (b) to build a relationship of trust and confidence between the newspaper and the police so that the police released information to us and (c) to discuss with the police the best ways of providing the media with information to assist their enquiries.

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.

11. The Metropolitan Police has the responsibility of investigating crimes and bringing criminals to justice. I would say their prime motive in dealing with the Press is to use us as a media for getting the public to assist with their enquiries by coming forward with information. Over the years I have attended many Metropolitan Police press conferences on murders. I particularly remember the Rachel Nickell case in which the young woman was stabbed to death on Wimbledon Common. In that case there were daily press

conferences and briefings with the aim of appealing for witnesses to come forward.

To what extent do you accept, and have you accepted, hospitality from the Metropolitan Police?

12. The only hospitality which I can recall from the Metropolitan Police is the evening with Sir Ian Blair, mentioned above at paragraph 8.

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?

13. I refer to paragraph 8 above.

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

14. As I have stated above, over the years I have taken out several detectives for lunches, never spending more than about £80 on the meals. Usually a bottle of wine was drunk and the choice of venue was a medium priced restaurant. My intention was to seek help from officers on stories I was working on.

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?

15. I refer to paragraph 14 above.

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?

16. Over the years I have been to some 30 press conferences by the Metropolitan Police. These mostly took place at Scotland Yard. In general they were valuable as senior officers were available to answer questions about major crimes which interested the public. Usually they started with a senior officer reading out a short statement and then there would be a question and answer session. Sometimes the Police team also had people

whose family members had been murdered and they would appeal directly for assistance from the public.

Relations with Other Police Forces

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

17. From my experience, all police forces operate in similar ways. I have dealt closely with Kent and Surrey forces. They have press officers who put out information on Press phone lines or on websites. They also have press officers available to answer questions.

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.

18. I cannot recall having any direct dealing with senior officers of other police forces. In general, they let senior detectives speak at press conferences.

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.

19. While at Today newspaper, I worked closely with the then chief crime correspondent, Kim Sengupta. I would speak to the Kent force and Scotland Yard every day to ask about stories. As I live in Kent I keep a close eye on crime stories in that county. Often I would ask Kent Police if there were any breaking stories or I would have specific questions about cases. I would put in requests to speak to family members of murder victims or ask to speak to witnesses in cases. These are standard media requests. The requests would either be granted or refused. At press conferences occasionally I would chat with police officers over a cup of tea or coffee and sometimes arrange to have a meal.

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

20. I was seeking to gain the same information which I have described at paragraph 10 above.

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.

21. In short I think they see the media as a vehicle to help them to solve crimes. Their principle aim is to encourage people to come forward. I have never suspected any officers of having any ulterior motives. About twenty years ago two young women were murdered in Tunbridge Wells. Officers held numerous press conferences in order to catch the person responsible.

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

22. At press conferences tea or coffee is generally available but I cannot recall being offered any other hospitality from other police forces.

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?

23. The only instance I can recall is when, many years ago, I went for Christmas drinks with Press officers from Kent police.

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

24. Apart from the occasional working lunch, I haven't offered any hospitality to other police forces or their personnel.

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?

25. I cannot recall ever providing hospitality to other police forces or any of their personnel.

General Matters

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

26. Whilst working at Thames News, Scotland Yard occasionally invited us to attend (and film) dawn raids when they were cracking down on drug dealers or other criminals. Generally this involved meeting them in the morning and then accompanying them as they smashed down doors. Scotland Yard seemed to like having television coverage of their officers at work, showing the public they were at the coal face of crime I would suppose.

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

27. Many years ago Scotland Yard did give off the record briefings but they were rare and I was not a member of the Crime Writers Association. Occasionally they were given at the end of a trial to provide background information. Other than that, I have not been offered any "off the record" briefings by the police.

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?

28. I am not aware of any mechanisms. From my perspective, all of my hospitality experiences with the police were legitimate meetings with no hidden agendas and therefore I considered there to be no need to keep records.

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 the police on the other?

29. Whilst News Editor I gave guidance to reporters on what questions to ask police and how to request press conferences. I would urge reporters to ask as many questions as possible and to be as probing as possible.

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

30. The Editor, Martin Townsend, and Deputy Editor, Rachel Jane, have oversight on all stories. There are no hard and fast rules. They usually want us to question the police as closely as possible to get as much information as possible about crimes to enable us to publish accurate and informative stories.

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?

31. I encourage journalists to be open and honest about enquiries and ask lots of questions. It is as simple as that. In terms of ethics, work on the assumption that all officers are ethical and all journalists are ethical.

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.

32. We do not make any payments to police officers or forces for information or otherwise.

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

33. Their role is to speak on behalf of forces and respond to questions from journalists. On major crimes they hold press conferences to appeal for witnesses to come forward for the good of public safety. They should also be willing to give information to journalists on any corrupt practices. In general they are there to speak on behalf of the force and give honest and straight forward questions.

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

34. I usually get access to the police by telephoning the press offices or by attending press conferences.

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?

35. I suppose they do. As a courtesy you would speak to the press office if you want to speak to a senior officer. The press officer would ask him or her and then the request would be either refused or allowed.

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

36. It seems to me to be a common sense approach.

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?

37. I am sure they try and present as honest an image as possible and put officers in a good light.

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?

38. I believe that it is vitally necessary for police forces to have a press office so that they have a means of communicating to the media.

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

39. These days they often do, but I don't think it is necessary. I would prefer it if more officers worked in press offices.

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

40. Probably about 80 per cent.

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

41. In regional forces the press officers often come from regional newspapers. The Metropolitan Police did have a lot of ex News Of The World journalists but I could not understand why. It was exceptional.

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

42. Often crime reporters on regional papers went to regional police force press offices. I think the money was better and the hours were more sociable.

About HMIC

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? (If you have not seen it, the report is available online).

43. I found the report lacked credibility as the evidence of any wrongdoing between journalists and police was not evident. Just because journalists meet officers informally should not suggest there is corruption. As an investigative journalist I also seek facts and I found the report very short on hard facts. There has been an awful lot of conjecture and talk about Millie Dowler's phone being hacked but no hard facts. Who did it and why? Now nobody is sure that the phone was hacked. The analysis suggests there were 12 inappropriate relations with police and the media, which seems negligible.
44. The recommendations seem overly wordy and lacking in clarity. My view is that police officers and journalists are sensible people who have intelligent interaction and both sides have high ethical standards. In my world I have not encountered corrupt police officers and have always enjoyed convivial relations with detectives. People need to understand that journalists and police have to have a trusting relationship, which involves some social interaction. Sensible officers know what corruption is and will not need to go on a long course to be told what it is.

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.

45. In my view there is very little wrong with the current system. In general it works. I do think forces should be encouraged to release more information. I see no problem with sensible socialising between officers and the media as that helps journalists get the facts straight and encourages officers to be more trusting of journalists.
46. I think there is a great danger of damaging relations between the Press and police if one overly tinkers with the current arrangements, especially as there is a current police investigation going on without, as far as I am aware, anyone facing any charges, despite a whole barrage of unproved allegations.
47. For the record I am not aware of any phone hacking at The Sunday Express or any other titles in the group or any other inappropriate practices.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

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



James Murray

Dated: [07] February 2012

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF
JAMES MURRAY

rosenblattsolicitors

9-13 St Andrew Street

London EC4A 3AF

DX: LDE 493

Tel: (020) 7955 0880

Fax: (020) 7955 0888

Ref: AF/EXP9-95

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MOD100060634

