

Lucy Panton: Statement to Leveson Inquiry

In providing a witness statement to the Inquiry, I wish to mention that:-

- a. *It has been agreed that, as I have been arrested in respect of the Operation Elveden investigation, I will not be asked any questions that encroach on the police investigation in order not to prejudice any criminal investigation or potential prosecution.*
- b. *On account of my arrest, a number of my books of record are not presently accessible to me. Accordingly, the information set out in this statement is the best that I am able to provide in the light of that fact.*

Career

After leaving university, I started my career in journalism on a local paper, the Wandsworth Borough News. After two years I moved to the news agency, National News, where I worked as a Crime Reporter for a year.

I joined the Sunday People as their Crime Reporter in 2000. In September 2002, I moved on to the News of the World where I was Crime Reporter, before being promoted twice to Crime Correspondent and then Crime Editor.

Questions

1. Please give full details of the level and the nature of the contact that you had with the following individuals whilst they were serving with the MPS (the Inquiry is interested in both professional and social contact and who would initiate the same):

a. Sir John Stevens

I had a professional relationship and minimal contact with Sir John; however as with all the Commissioners, I would see him on a monthly basis during the Crime Reporters Association (CRA) Commissioners' briefing. Sir John became Commissioner in 2000 which was when I joined the Sunday People newspaper as a crime reporter. It was over the next few years that I started to have greater contact with the Metropolitan Police (the Met) and other police staff. I never went out on a one to one basis with Sir John.

b. Lord Blair

Again I had a professional relationship and minimal contact with Lord Blair. I never went out with Lord Blair one on one.

c. Sir Paul Stephenson

I had a professional relationship, minimal contact but perhaps a better rapport with Sir Paul, partly because I had become a more established crime reporter and under his reign had been made secretary of the CRA. That meant I had more interaction with people at New Scotland Yard (the Yard). I went out on just one occasion, one on one, for a drink with Sir Paul. I bought him a drink and he bought me one back. Everyone has different personalities and one is bound to get on better with some more than others.

d. John Yates

I had a professional relationship with Mr. Yates. As an operational police officer on high profile cases, I had more interaction with him. He was a

guest at my wedding, along with many other officers, as he was at Jeff Edwards' (a fellow crime reporter) wedding. I would class him as a friend in a work capacity in the sense that we did not socialise away from work. I have known him for around 10 years.

e. Andy Hayman

We had a professional relationship. I have known Mr. Hayman for 7 years. He was in charge of the counter-terror command during and after the 7/7 London bombings which is when I got to know him better as we had more frequent briefings with officers. I would class him as a work friend but did not socialise with him away from work. I had a couple of lunches, a breakfast meeting, coffees and drinks meetings with him. The majority of the time other officers and crime reporters were present. I would socialise with him at policing events and leaving do's etc.

f. Dick Fedorcio

I had regular contact with Mr. Fedorcio, speaking to him most weeks over the phone and sometimes meeting with him at the end of the week to discuss stories I was working on. On occasions, we would meet for lunch or sometimes drinks or coffee. I would class Mr. Fedorcio as a friend in a work capacity. We did not socialise outside of work. I have known him for around 12 years.

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

I had mobile numbers for Sir Paul Stephenson and Messrs. Yates, Hayman and Fedorcio. To my recollection, I did not have home numbers for any of the above.

3. The Inquiry understands that you attended the following:
As best you can remember, what was the purpose of each meeting and what matters were discussed?

- a. Dinner at the Ivy Club with John Yates and Colin Myler on 5 November 2009.

Yes. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce Colin Myler (the News of the World editor) to Mr. Yates. They discussed their careers and backgrounds. I remember them talking about their connections to Liverpool. To the best of my recollection, Mr. Yates used the meeting to give Mr. Myler an outline of his role in the Met and in general terms discussed topical policing issues.

- b. Lunch at Racine in Knightsbridge with John Yates, John Twomey, Justin Davenport and Sarah Cheesley on 9 April 2010.

Yes. However I do not believe John Twomey was there. Another CRA person attended, but I cannot remember who. I cannot remember what we discussed specifically but, as with all these specialist lunches, it would be a general update on terrorism trials to look out for and how the Met perceived the current terror threat both domestic and global.

- c. Dinner with Andy Hayman on 8 April 2005.

I cannot recall whether I had dinner with Mr. Hayman on that date (seven years ago) and have no way of checking this.

- d. Lunch with Andy Hayman and Neil Wallis on 29 March 2007.

I do remember having lunch with Mr. Hayman and Mr. Wallis on one occasion. This must have been that occasion. I do not remember in detail what we discussed. However, I do vividly remember having a discussion with Mr. Hayman about my daughter's illness.

I remember Mr. Hayman was very supportive and kind to me after a traumatic time in my life. My daughter had been operated on at 6 weeks old after being taken into intensive care at Great Ormond Street Hospital. I took six months' maternity leave returning to work on February 14th, 2007. My daughter fell seriously ill again and was admitted to hospital on February 24th, 2007 where she underwent a further operation. I was extremely anxious about leaving my daughter and returning to full time work. The lunch occurred a month after my daughter's second operation.

When you have a good working relationship with people, you discuss personal matters. Meeting up does not always mean you are solely discussing policing issues. Mr. Hayman was able to understand what I had been through as his own child had been a patient at Great Ormond Street and undergone several operations. I have obtained permission from Mr. Hayman to mention his child's medical condition.

I wish to make it clear that in respect of my contacting Mr. Hayman I did not discuss any of the questions or any other part of my statement with him.

4. In relation to the individuals listed at a-f above, were there any other occasions you can recall on which you had professional or social interactions with them? If so, please give full details of such interactions.

In relation to the individuals above, I would meet the Commissioners at the monthly CRA briefings, at crime correspondents' social events including the CRA Christmas party and the social events put on by the Yard or Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). I met Messrs. Hayman, Yates and Fedorcio on a few occasions for lunch. I would see Mr. Fedorcio more regularly at briefings, in his office, for coffee and drinks.

5. Did you share a bottle of Champagne with Andy Hayman on 1 February 2007 at the Oriel Restaurant?

I cannot recall meeting Mr. Hayman on February 1, 2007. I would think it very unlikely as I was still off work on maternity leave at that point.

6. Describe the nature of your relationship with Mr Hayman.

As stated in 1 above, I had a professional relationship with Mr. Hayman. We were friends in a working capacity but did not socialise outside of work.

7. Are there any other senior police officers with whom you had similar professional or social interactions. If so, please identify them by name and give full details of such interactions.

I had professional and social interactions with many senior police officers from the Met and other forces, as well as other people working within the policing landscape. I do not wish to identify by name my confidential contacts. The purpose of meeting up with police officers, press officers,

people from ACPO, Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and the National Police Improvement Agency was to learn more about their work through the people at the coal face.

It is essential that as a crime reporter you build up a relationship of trust with the police and other law enforcement agencies to enable you to accurately report on crime stories. As has been said by numerous of my crime reporter colleagues, the CRA would often be given the bigger picture and asked not to publish details in order not to jeopardise live police investigations.

8. In respect of each, please give full details of your motives for establishing and maintaining relationships with these individuals. What were you seeking to obtain and what did you obtain from these relationships? In particular, were you seeking to obtain information from them which, for whatever reason, they were not authorised to divulge?

I am a journalist and therefore my objective is to seek information but not to the detriment of a police operation. I have never met a senior officer who is so ill-informed and naive that he or she gives out information that they were not authorised to divulge. My objective was to have a long term relationship with the police which meant an open and honest relationship with the people I met.

The News of the World was a campaigning paper and by building these relationships, I was able to help facilitate events like our Save our Streets roadshows where we invited parents who had lost children to knife crime to take part in live debates with Chief Constables and senior officers about crime issues.

I was also the Sunday representative for the CRA and spent years trying to better the police's understanding on what Sunday newspapers needed from them. It has always been the case that police briefings are directed at meeting the needs of daily papers. I used these meetings to try and inform and change the way police used the Sunday papers.

The News of the World frequently carried out high profile investigations where we would need to hand our findings over to the police. My role as the crime specialist was to be able to offer other reporters on the paper advice on which police units to liaise with and to cover in some instances arrests following a News of the World investigation.

I bore in mind the fact that the paper would often want to hold back information until the last minute to prevent a story leaking and the police did not enjoy being presented with evidence last minute on press day, a Saturday. I believe I helped improve the way these types of stories were handled for both sides over the years.

9. On 1 March 2012 the Inquiry heard evidence from Mr Yates about his interpretation of an email from James Mellor to you on 30 October 2010 and your response thereto. What is your interpretation of this email exchange, in particular the following lines of Mr Mellor's email:

"Thinks John Yates could be crucial here. Have you spoken to him? Really need an excl splash line so time to call in all those bottles of champagne..."

It is somewhat difficult to be asked what Mr. Mellor meant by the email as I did not write it. That said, I understand by this email that Mr. Mellor was putting pressure on me to bring him an exclusive story worthy of putting on

the front page. I read this email as many I received at work that contained an element of banter with a serious note of expectation that they were relying on me for a big story.

I have found it rather bizarre that there seems to be such interest in what champagne I did or did not drink. I enjoy champagne but do not drink it often. I have two children, meaning I was trying to get pregnant, pregnant and breast feeding for a large amount of the time of the period in question so therefore was unable to drink much alcohol for much of the period in question.

I believe that a distorted picture has been presented of how journalists carry out their business. We do not live a champagne lifestyle and the reality of the day to day grind of journalism is far from glamorous. Other crime journalists and I work hard in a fast moving business covering often horrendous crimes, to help bring the culprits to justice and break stories that are of public interest.

10. Did you ever know or sense that any of the individuals referred to above or other senior MPS police officers, were putting pressure on you to dilute or to not publish articles that were unfavourable to them or the organisation as a whole? If so, please give full details and illustrative examples.

No.

11. When there was contact over lunch/dinner/alcoholic drinks, who paid for the same? What was the approximate financial value of this hospitality?

I paid for the majority of my lunches but officers would also buy me coffees, soft and alcoholic drinks. I cannot give an approximate value for this

hospitality. It would vary depending on occasion. Sometimes it was a few pounds for coffee, sometimes £40/£50 for lunch, and less frequently at a more expensive restaurant would be £100 plus. In later years, there was a cap and you would have to get the permission of your news desk to spend more than £100 for a meal.

12. Did you provide any hospitality to these individuals other than lunch, dinner and alcoholic drinks? If so, please give full details and the approximate financial value of the same.

No.

13. Did they provide any hospitality to you. If so, please give full details and the approximate financial value of the same.

Officers and press officers would sometimes buy a round of drinks if we were in the pub. I cannot say how much it cost.

14. What matters were discussed during the range of meetings with these individuals? Were there "off-the-record" conversations? When answering this question please set out what "off-the-record" means to you in this context.

In group situations in the pub, we rarely discussed policing matters and would take the time to have a more relaxed interaction leaving work issues behind. "Off-the-record" means we are not able to report it under any circumstances. In these group situations in a pub, I cannot recall having an off the record conversation.

15. Were there occasions when any or each of these individuals gave you information where it appeared to you that they should not have done (whether because the information appeared to be given in breach of a legal obligation or simply because they were talking about matters which fell outside their areas of professional responsibility). Please interpret 'information' broadly, to include, but not limited to, information about police operations; police policy and decision-making; and 'gossip' about colleagues.

I cannot recall being given information by individuals where it appeared they should not have done. In my experience, police officers were very careful about what they told you and usually had good reason for passing on information. On occasions, there were discussions about internal politics at the Yard which you could class as gossip. However, the News of the World was not particularly interested in writing stories about police politics and frictions on the management board, for example, so it was of little interest.

16. To what extent did you provide hospitality to other officers within the MPS? Please give full details including the approximate financial value of the same.

I would refer to 7 above.

17. To what extent did you accept hospitality from the MPS other than from these individuals? Insofar as you accepted such hospitality what was the nature of the hospitality that you accepted and what was the approximate financial value of the same?

As indicated above, I have been bought drinks by officers at CRA events and also, for example, at the end of trials when police officers have finished

a case. When following a case closely, you often get to know the officers who are at court every day. It is not uncommon to have a drink with them post trial particularly if they get a successful conviction. I cannot say the value, but it was minimal.

Dick Fedorcio and the Directorate of Public Affairs

18. In your experience as a journalist/editor do you consider that the DPA gave preferential treatment to some titles over others, whether in terms of the information provided or access to senior officers? Do you consider that you personally and/or the News of the World received such preferential treatment? If so, please give details and explain why you and/or the News of the World received such preferential treatment.

I do not believe the DPA gave preferential treatment to some titles over others. I do not consider that I or the News of the World got preferential treatment.

19. Insofar as you have not already done so in answering the questions in the section above, describe the nature of your relationship with Dick Fedorcio.

I have nothing more to add to what is set out above in respect of Mr Fedorcio.

Relations with forces other the MPS

20. Please give full details of the level and the nature of the contact that you had with senior officers from forces other than the MPS.

I would refer to 7 above.

21. Did you have personal contact with officers holding the rank of Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable, or Assistant Chief Constable? If so, please give full details of the nature, frequency and purpose of the same.

Yes. Again I am not prepared to list names of contacts. In general terms, I did have contact with all the ranks listed, but my dealings with them were infrequent.

General matters

22. What are your views of "off-the-record" communications? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the same?

Off the record communications are vital in my view and allow a journalist to see the bigger picture and understand why it is important that some information does not appear in the public domain. The more that newspapers are left in the dark the more the reporters are encouraged to rely on less reliable informants, for example, eyewitness accounts that can often be flawed.

A recent example where an "off the record" briefing was important and beneficial to the police was in Northumbria when the gunman Raoul Moat was on the loose. The situation was chaotic and the police were unable to cope with the press interest. It led to a lot of criticism of the force. The police did eventually give an off the record briefing to tell us about a tape recording they had found in a camp being used by Mr Moat. It made various threats to kill police and similar threats against journalists. We were asked not to report the items found and to tone down personal references to Mr. Moat as they believed it could cause him to carry out

further shootings. To my knowledge, all the media complied with the police's wishes. He was caught soon after.

By opening up to the media and taking them into confidence, the media had a greater understanding of the issues the police were dealing with.

During 7/7 bombings, off the record briefings were vital in helping the police particularly in the hunt for the 21/7 failed bombers.

23. In your experience, in what circumstances do reporters/editors attribute information to a 'police source'? Do you consider that this description of a source can be misleading?

Police source is used liberally in reporting.

24. On how many occasions, if any, have the police given you (or the title for which you were working at the time) prior notification about proposed arrests; searches of premises; or other police action. In relation to each occasion please identify: (i) which force was involved; (ii) whether you were notified formally/officially or informally/secretly and (iii) the nature of the police operation concerned.

I can recall these occasions I have been allowed to accompany police on arrests.

- i) *Whilst working as a reporter for the Wandsworth Borough News in the late 1990's, I was invited along by the local borough police in the Met to shadow officers carrying out raids as part of Operation Bumblebee, a police initiative targeting burglars. On the occasion I was invited along, these were co-ordinated arrests of local criminals involved in burglary and drugs.*

- ii) *In November 2000 whilst working for the Sunday People (then known as), I went along on the arrests of the Millennium Dome robbers. I had not long been on the People and I do not know where or what information the paper received prior to the arrests. I know they had a tip off and I was told by my news editor and editor I had been chosen to accompany the police on the arrests. The force involved was the Met. Information on how the tip came in was not passed on to me before or after the raid.*
- iii) *In September 2004, I went on the arrest of a gang of suspected terrorists after an investigation by Mazher Mahmood, Investigations Editor of the News of The World. The arresting force was the Met. I had nothing to do with the research and writing of the story, but was asked by my office to accompany the police on the arrest. I would often be called in to liaise with police to help support a properly planned arrest. As a crime specialist, they knew I had a good working relationship with the Met and knew I would behave responsibly in an arrest situation.*
- iv) *In November 2004, I accompanied the Met on the arrest of Levi Bellfield who had carried out a series of attacks and murders on women. I had been invited by the Met to join them after I had picked up from police sources, (in the generic sense) that there was increased activity on the inquiry and it appeared the net was closing, with this information along with what I recall was a similar flavour of information which came into our office.*

I decided to call DPA and tell them I thought an arrest was imminent in this case. I had no name of the suspect and little more information than I have stated, but my experience and my wish not to jeopardise

any arrest of such a dangerous man led me to go to the Yard at the first opportunity. I was told nothing about the operation, but asked not to publish any information we had. On the day of his arrest, I was allowed along with a photographer to witness it.

As a Sunday paper, it is incredibly hard to find different and exclusive lines on breaking stories such as arrests which generally happen on weekdays. An opportunity to witness first hand an event like this was beneficial to our readers and in the public interest. The News of the World was the UK's biggest selling paper and by reporting on someone like Mr. Bellfield's arrest and giving the article a good show in the paper, the public were reassured that he had been caught.

- v) In March 2007, I went along on the arrest of an Internet paedophile, who had been caught grooming a 12 year old girl online, during an investigation by another News of the World journalist. Again, it was a Met operation and they carried out the arrests after we passed our evidence over to them.*

- vi) In November 2009, I was invited along to witness armed robber Noel Cunningham being flown back to Britain after six years on the run. Another journalist on the paper received information as to Mr. Cunningham's whereabouts which we passed on to investigating officers. He was then tracked down in Amsterdam and arrested. Mr. Cunningham was described as "armed and dangerous" when he went on the run after escaping from a prison van on his way to court. He had faced charges of conspiring to steal £1.25 million from a Securicor truck. The van driver was shot in the leg and a guard's face was pistol-whipped as Cunningham and an accomplice made their getaway.*

vii) *In July 2010, I went along with City of London police on a series of brothel raids as part of an operation targeting organised crime groups using the sex trade to facilitate money laundering. I believe I was contacted by the press office and asked if I would like to shadow the team.*

25. What are your views of the utility (in the public interest) or otherwise of the media shadowing the police whilst on patrol or during specific operations?

I believe allowing journalists to shadow police during specific operations is in the public interest as it gives the public an insight into what is normally a closed off and secretive world. It shows the good work and sometimes complex nature of what the police have to deal with day to day.

Newspapers can play an important role in helping police track down criminals. The News of the World has offered substantial financial rewards to help police investigations. While I worked at the paper we offered a reward for the capture the killer of PC Ian Broadhurst, who was shot dead while carrying out an arrest. And doubled a police reward offered in the hunt for a serial sex attacker who preyed on the elderly.

The police do not just invite journalists along to arrests and raids. In recent years we have seen politicians, for example London Mayor Boris Johnson and Deputy Mayor Kit Malthouse, attending these events. I once spent a week shadowing the child protection teams and was shocked by some of the things I saw and heard about. The police I met were very professional and dedicated officers whose work I believe it was important to feature. I think it is also equally important to highlight when the police make errors and fail to do their jobs properly.

The terrible incident in Albert Square, Newham recently, where five officers were mauled by a dog during a raid, starkly shows the difficulties police face carrying out their duties. It also reminds us of the dangers faced by the people who accompany police on arrests. When we see reports of police facing serious dangers while carrying out their duty it generates respect for what they do. But that does not impinge on our unfettered ability to criticise. In this case the police bravery is reported along with failures in the police's recording of reports of a dangerous dog being kept at the address. A lot of care and thought has to go into the decision to allow others to accompany police during operations.

I believe a good working relationship between the police and media is essential. I think we need clearer guidelines on the contact between journalists and police officers. But I do not believe it is necessary that all contact between reporters and police officers should be recorded. It is not practical or helpful to have police press officers present at every meeting. Reporters and police officers who become friends should be allowed to socialise as long as they do not cross professional boundaries. I believe more open dialogue is needed between press and police, along with better media training for the police. Police officers should not live in fear that speaking to a reporter could lead to criminal investigation or dismissal. I believe they should be given the right training to encourage them, and give them confidence to engage with the media when appropriate.


Lucy Panton

26th March 2012