

Statement – October 2011

Special Adviser at No10 Downing Street

I listened to the phone call between Mr Brown and Mr Murdoch in November 2009. They discussed the Sun's coverage of Afghanistan and in particular The Sun's coverage of Mrs Janes' response to Mr Brown's letter to her following the death of her son, who was killed in action. Mr Brown said that he considered the Sun's coverage not only to be a hurtful personal attack on him, but also to be damaging to the war effort in Afghanistan - even though the Sun considered itself the forces' paper, and even though he knew that Mr Murdoch was strongly supportive of the military action. Mr Murdoch replied by saying that he did not want to do anything to undermine either the morale of the troops or support for military action in Britain. He asked Mr Brown to speak to Rebekah Brookes, the Managing Director of News International, which Mr Brown agreed to do. At no point in the conversation was threatening language of any sort used by either Mr Brown or Mr Murdoch. Nor was there any discussion of issues of media regulation or phone hacking during the call, nor of plans to turn to those issues in the future.



Stewart Wood

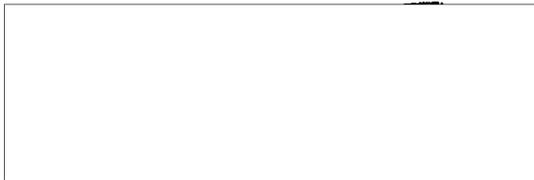
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Gavin Kelly

Former Deputy Chief of Staff at No 10 Downing Street

Gordon Brown call with Rupert Murdoch.

In autumn 2010 I listened into the final section of a call between GB and RM. To be clear, I only heard the final part of the call - I was elsewhere in the No 10 building when the call commenced. It is hard to be precise but I would estimate that I heard the last one to two minutes of the call. During that segment I recall hearing the tale-end of a discussion about how deeply disappointed GB was with the nature of the Sun's coverage of the Afghanistan conflict, and in particular his recent letter to the family of the deceased soldier. RM then requested (several times) that GB speak to Rebecca Brooks about his concerns. I have no recollection of GB making threats to RM.



Gavin Kelly

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David Muir

Director of Strategy at Number 10 Downing Street

I listened to the call between Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Rupert Murdoch following the story about Mrs Janes and her call with the Prime Minister.

The Sun's attacks on the then Prime Minister appeared to be increasingly malign and politically motivated. On his call with Mr Murdoch, the Prime Minister made clear his concern that The Sun's attacks were undermining public support for the work of our brave and determined troops in Afghanistan. Throughout this call Mr Brown was polite, dignified and professional, as was Mr Murdoch.

Never once on that call did the Prime Minister threaten; cajole or make threats that News International would be punished for their editorial line.



David Muir

10/10/11

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Michael Dugher MP

Recollection of the call between Rupert Murdoch and the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown

I was on the telephone call between Rupert Murdoch and the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

The issue being discussed on the call was the Sun newspaper's repeated criticism of Mr Brown over his letter to Mrs Janes, the mother of the soldier who died. The Sun had attacked Mr Brown over his handwriting, over alleged mistakes contained within the letter, and what the Sun regarded as Mr Brown's callous attitude towards her. We also felt at the time that the Sun had also taped the phone call between Mrs Janes and Mr Brown. Also discussed was a more general issue about the Sun's constant criticisms of the government over Afghanistan. The phone call was about these issues and only these issues. Mr Brown complained that the Sun were making personalised attacks on him and that their coverage of Afghanistan was damaging the UK war effort. Mr Murdoch apologised for the personalised nature of the attacks, though my recollection is that Mr Murdoch seemed to claim that he was unaware of the nature of the Sun's coverage on Afghanistan. At no point were any threats discussed or issued. There was no mention of anything to do with media ownership. The issue of telephone tapping did not come up and was not discussed. At no time did Mr Brown threaten the position of the News International company or say anything that linked the conversation to media ownership or phone hacking. Indeed, I remember the tone of the conversation - from both Mr Brown and Mr Murdoch - as being entirely courteous and calm.

When Mr Murdoch asked Mr Brown, as a personal courtesy to him, if he would speak to Rebekah Brooks, Mr Brown agreed. And that is where the call ended.

Michael Dugher

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Simon Lewis

Director of Communications at Downing Street at the time and the Official Spokesman for the PM.

As a civil servant I did not listen in on private calls but I was given regular reports of calls made by the PM even when these were not official but private calls. Mr Brown's call with Mr Murdoch was private. But I was briefed on it afterwards. I was able to confirm that the atmosphere of the call was businesslike and that Mr Murdoch said he was wanting good relations with the Prime Minister. So when I was asked I was able to report to the lobby that Mr Brown had a businesslike conversation with Mr Murdoch on a very difficult issue. I was able to say that he, Mr Brown, had respect for Mr Murdoch as an individual. If the call had been of a very different nature, or there were other difficulties arising from it, I would have been informed. There was no mention of inquiries into newspaper ownership or telephone hacking.

Simon Lewis

16/10/11