

Jeremy Lawton
[] February 2012
1st
Exhibit []

IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF JEREMY LAWTON

I, **JEREMY LAWTON**, Chief Crime Correspondent of the Daily Star, of The Northern and Shell Building, Number 10 Lower Thames Street, London, EC3R 6EN, **WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:**

- A. I am the Chief Crime Correspondent of the Daily Star, 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 have been a journalist for 24 years. After passing Part I and Part II NCTJ Pre-Entry exams in Journalism, Law, Public Administration and Shorthand, I obtained a NCTJ Proficiency in Practical Journalism Certificate at Sheffield and worked for the Grimsby Evening Telegraph for three years. After four years at Humberside Newline – a now defunct news agency based in Hull – I

was recruited by the Daily Star for whom I have worked for the past 17 years. After starting out as a general news reporter in London, I was appointed northern correspondent based in Leeds before being promoted to my current position as Chief Crime Correspondent. I am the only Daily Star reporter not based in London and have a worldwide roving brief from my home in the north.

2. Stories I have covered since joining the Daily Star include the 9/11 and 7/7 bombings, the Dunblane and Cumbrian massacres, the Soham murders, Raoul Moat's shooting spree, the Suffolk strangler, the so-called Crossbow Cannibal killings, Jo Yeates' murder, the kidnapping of Shannon Matthews and the disappearances of Ben Needham and Madeleine McCann.

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. As I have spent most of my career on the Daily Star outside London my experience of working with the Metropolitan Police is much more limited than most crime correspondents. It is restricted to press office calls on individual stories and occasional pre-arranged press conferences. In my limited experience I would describe Metropolitan Police staff as generally approachable and helpful.

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.

4. Before joining the Daily Star I had no experience of dealing with the Metropolitan Police as I worked exclusively in the north. While working as a general news reporter in London my contact consisted of phone calls to the press bureau regarding individual news stories. These would take place up to five times a week and – while I did establish a rapport with a couple of press officers – it was phone-based and did not involve one-to-one meetings. As northern correspondent my contact was limited to the odd call on jobs with London links. In my current role contact is largely telephone-based as most of my work remains outside London, though I have attended some press briefings on major stories.

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?

5. I have had no contact with any of the above named officers of the Metropolitan Police. Where I have quoted those persons in news stories such quotes will either have derived from an organised press conference or from agency copy.

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

6. No.

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

7. Where I have had personal contact with MPS personnel, such contact was in pursuance of ascertaining routine information from the press office regarding individual news stories and the development of on-going investigations.

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.

8. Like most police forces I think their desire is to ensure they are portrayed in the best possible light and to try and discourage the publication of information that they feel could hamper any investigation or spark wider disorder within the community.

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

9. The hospitality which I have received from the Metropolitan Police has never extended further than the odd tea and biscuit at organised press briefings.

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?

10. See above.

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

11. I have never provided hospitality to the Metropolitan Police.

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?

12. None.

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?

13. The most recent I can recall was a CEOP briefing on an initiative launched to help find Madeleine McCann. It was extremely valuable, and indeed coverage of the briefing took up an entire page of our paper.

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?

14. Generally I have established good relationships with most police forces I have worked with. While on my local paper – where I also looked after the crime beat – I went daily to the town's police station for briefings about overnight incidents. This scenario – which I understand is now virtually extinct – allowed trust to build up between the newspaper and police. Both gained considerably. The police would give us guidance on running crime stories ensuring information appeals they wanted to be published reached the general public. In return we were safe in the knowledge our stories were accurate and not going to hamper any investigation or cause legal difficulties. This frequency of contact ended when I moved to the news agency but I strove to form similar relationships of mutual trust with force press officers. Though I now deal with multiple police forces nothing has changed. I

endeavour to build up relationships of trust. I am lucky in that the Daily Star has been extremely supportive in this.

15. There have been occasions where the police have asked me not to run certain details in order to avoid hampering on-going investigations and each time the newspaper has backed me. Those decisions have helped build up positive relationships beneficial to both the police and newspaper.

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.

16. Personal contact with Chief Constables/ACCs and DCCs is usually restricted to organised police press conferences on major news stories or arranged Christmas 'meet the chief' media events at which they usually ask for feedback on the current state of police-press relations.

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.

17. During the course of my career I have had some contact with most police forces in the UK. The level and frequency depends on the nature of individual stories. I have had considerable experience in dealing with West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester forces which, for me, are both excellent at media relations and should be the model for all forces. They strike the perfect balance between on-the-record briefings and off-the-record guidance. Northumbria Police's media relations were excellent in difficult circumstances during the Moat case. Cumbria Police's organisation of the inquest into Derrick Bird's killing spree was exceptional, hi-tech and a great model for the future.
18. The only occasions upon which I have found forces unwilling to engage on what I consider a satisfactory level were Leicestershire Police while handling the UK end of the Madeleine McCann case and Avon and Somerset during the Jo Yeates' murder inquiry. Unusually both forces refused to give any guidance on any of the multiple lines of inquiry that came in to most newspapers during those on-going investigations.

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

19. On each crime story the police and newspaper share the same goal – to find out the truth about what happened. All my contact with the police is focussed on this.
20. In each case I start out with the view the police are trying to solve the case and are likely to have access to the most accurate information about it. It is my job to tap into that information bank on which to base my stories. A key part of my job in covering crime involves informing readers of the state of the police investigation. For that police briefings are obviously crucial. They also offer me the defamation protection of qualified privilege. But just as important is an ability to obtain police guidance about the validity of the many strands of information that come into the newspaper independently from multiple sources – the public, witnesses, crime experts - during high profile cases. That guidance allows me to ensure my reports remain an accurate reflection of the true nature of the investigation. In certain cases – where a lack of progress is made – the quality of the police investigation itself can become the story.

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 my experience most police forces want to ensure they are portrayed as competent, hard-working, and in command of their inquiries in a bid to reassure the public and maintain order. During last summer's riots (2011) police from several forces released up-to-the-minute arrest figures and details of jail sentences dished out to looters at emergency courts in a bid to deter others and quell future disturbances.
22. Most forces use newspapers and other media to make appeals to the public at large for help with on-going investigations. They urge witnesses to come forward or release specific details about incidents/items that frequently lead to cases being quickly resolved. They can also withhold certain specific details to help them when they later interview suspects. On numerous occasions we have been asked – and agreed – to remove certain details from stories to

assist with this process or to prevent suspects being tipped off about pending arrests.

23. In the Raoul Moat case police took the world's media into their trust after recovering a taped threat from the still-at-large gunman that he would execute a member of the public for every perceived untruth about his family he read/heard in the media. At an off-the-record briefing officers in the case explained the situation and asked newspapers/TV and radio to avoid publishing/broadcasting information about Moat's family or any details about the threat itself. On my part a double page spread we were planning to run the next day was pulled – without protest or question - the moment I told the news desk. Everyone adhered to the news blackout. Moat was caught without further bloodshed.

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

24. Again, I cannot recall ever having received hospitality from a police force which extended further than tea and biscuits at press briefings.

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?

25. Again, such hospitality has never gone further than the provision of routine refreshments.

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

26. Nothing routinely and nothing on condition of any kind of return 'favour'. I have bought the odd pint or coffee depending on location of meetings.

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?

27. See above.

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.

28. When I have been warned off-the-record about pending arrests it is usually to stop us running something that may hamper the investigation. That happens infrequently and no specific times/places for arrests would be given. Some forces sometimes offer the media the chance to be present on specific raids - such as drug busts – as part of organised anti-crime initiatives though I have never taken part in one.

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

29. Yes. All good forces offer off-the-record briefings. In my opinion they are an essential tool for accurate crime reporting. In an age of 24-hour TV news coverage, live televised police press conferences, and Twitter, off-the-record briefings are critical in allowing police and journalists to have full and frank exchanges about aspects of the investigation neither would want instantly broadcast to the world.
30. Before 24-hour news channels police press conferences were much more frank affairs where officers could raise and explain their concerns about the reporting of specific case details and journalists could ask for discreet guidance about various lines of inquiry they were pursuing. Mutual trust meant much of these briefings remained confidential. It would now be impossible to have these briefings as – screened live on TV – they would risk prejudicing investigations and hampering inquiries. In my opinion all forces should offer separate off-the-record briefings along with live press conferences.

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?

31. All expenses are scrutinised by the news desk, Managing Editor and accounts department prior to reimbursement. I am required to provide details of everyone I ‘entertain’. Entertaining is the word management uses to

describe hospitality. I am required to provide receipts for all such transactions and explain why they were incurred.

32. Our company's Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy – of which I have enclosed a copy at page [] of exhibit JL 1 – states: *"The Company must keep financial records and have appropriate internal controls in place which will evidence the business reason for making payments to third parties. You must declare and keep a written record of all hospitality or gifts accepted or offered, which will be subject to managerial review. You must ensure all expenses claims relating to hospitality, gifts or expenses incurred to third parties are submitted in accordance with the Company's expenses policy and specifically record the reason for the expenditure. All accounts, invoices, memoranda and other documents and records relating to dealings with third parties, such as clients, suppliers and business contacts, should be prepared and maintained with strict accuracy and completeness. No accounts must be kept "off-book" to facilitate or conceal improper payments"*.

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?

33. When I joined Express Newspapers in 1994 I was given a company handbook and put through an induction course by my then-news editor who outlined the company's expected standards of behaviour. In short I was expected to obey the law and work within the Press Council/Press Complaints Commission guidelines which were outlined to me. I was free to converse with journalists on rival titles and work sensibly with them when the situation dictated. For instance, if five journalists from different titles arrive at the same door at the same time it is sensible to agree to let one or two knock and share the information in order to spare the individual the anguish of answering to a crowd or having to suffer multiple knocks from reporters asking the same questions. Though this information would be pooled among those present any information I obtain individually as a Daily Star reporter is the property of the newspaper.
34. As far as the police were concerned I was advised to build and maintain contacts through mutual trust. The newspaper has changed owners during my employ and rule/contract changes are circulated via post/email whenever

they happen. Following the introduction of the Bribery Act 2010 I – along with all employees – was sent a copy of the company's Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy. It states: "*The Company takes a zero-tolerance approach to bribery and corruption*". It also provides precise guidelines as to acceptable and unacceptable behaviour which I adhere to. Recent changes to the Editors' Code of Practice were also emailed out to all journalists by the legal department which also circulates notices relating to legal complaints across all titles, PCC bulletins and notices of court orders and injunctions. Though the Daily Star is not currently in the PCC the editorial director declared that all journalists must still adhere to its code of conduct. Reference is made to this in the newspaper which every day carries the declaration: "*This newspaper adheres to the ethical and professional standards of the publishing industry as set out in the Editors' Code of Practice.*"

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

35. I have answered this question in part at paragraph [].
36. In regard to exclusive stories there is an oversight by the News Editor and other executives on the newspaper. Also the newspaper's lawyers may require information regarding sources. After 17 years in the job I would like to think I am trusted – and expected – to be able to talk to the police without breaching the law/rules.

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?

37. Apart from the obvious ethical issue of reporting police-released information accurately the key issue to consider is bribery. Anything that could be deemed an inducement – no matter how apparently innocuous – offered in return for an officer or police civilian passing on information or acting outside the confines of their normal duty would put me at risk of prosecution and the sack. I could be accused of enticing them to break the rules. On the other hand I can still buy an officer a beer - just like anyone - as long as no strings are attached.

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.

38. None

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?

39. I imagine their role is to promote the individual police force and ensure it is portrayed in the best possible light. That's what they try and do. Press officers act as intermediaries between journalists and officers.

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

40. Via the press office.

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?

41. Some – but not all - see their duty to 'protect' senior officers from journalists.

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

42. I would always prefer to talk to the officer directly but I don't have a problem as long as the press officer accurately relays the information and I get an accurate response.

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?

43. I think a large part of their role is to ensure the force is portrayed in as good a light as possible. That is only natural particularly in tough financial times and amid rumours of force mergers.

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?

44. Yes. Press officers are (usually) available whereas police officers are frequently too bogged down with all their other duties to talk. When a query emerges on a daily newspaper, speed of response is critical. Good press officers, who understand how newspapers work and journalists' requirements, concerns and pressures, can actually help explain to reluctant officers on your behalf why it may be mutually beneficial to release certain pieces of information.

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

45. Yes

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

46. I would have to guess, but if I did, I would say that it would be around half.

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

47. In my experience most come from local/regional newspaper/TV/radio backgrounds.

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?

48. I think police press office work appeals to regional journalists because the pay is usually better than in their current jobs which have little prospect of promotion or large salary hikes. With the current decline in the fortunes of many local newspapers police jobs are probably seen as more secure.

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).

49. I am all for anti-corruption training and setting high standards of integrity but I believe that the new proposed rules are unnecessary in light of the Bribery Act 2010. I believe that the rules should be flexible enough to focus on the intent behind an act rather than the simple act itself. After many years as a crime reporter I count among my friends a number of policemen, solicitors, barristers and other senior members of the legal profession. I should be free to play a social round of golf with a police officer pal or buy him lunch purely as a friend as long as there is absolutely no condition attached to it. If, on the other hand, I was to make it a condition of lunch he passed me some illicit information then that would be considered corrupt. I presume that would be covered by the Bribery Act 2010 and I would be risking prosecution and dismissal.
50. The HMIC review's key findings were:
- 1 - We did not find evidence to support any contention of endemic corruption in Police Service relationships, either in relation to the media or more generally, with the majority of police officers and staff striving to act with integrity.
 - 2 - Instances of deliberate malpractice in relation to these matters appear to be infrequent.
 - 3 - We found instances of enforcement action against individuals at all levels, where sufficient evidence had arisen.
51. Accordingly, with no "endemic corruption" and strict new bribery laws already in place, I do not consider there to be a need for additional rules that can only harm police-press relations when they should be strengthened.

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.

52. See my answer above. If the aim of this Inquiry is to improve press ethics, standards and practice then surely an integral part of that is ensuring stories are as accurate as possible. That can only be achieved by greater cooperation between press and police – on a strictly above-board level – not by less. That cooperation should obviously not involve financial inducements

but be based on a fair and frank information exchange in an environment of mutual trust.

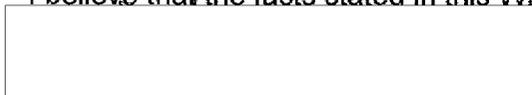
53. As the Inquiry has heard from other witnesses I would like to state that in the vast majority of cases the press behaves well and gets it right. In a statement issued – via the police press office - by the parents of Jo Yeates after Vincent Tabak was convicted of her murder they said: *"We would like to thank the media for not pestering us and giving us space to try and start coming to terms with our loss. We would ask you to continue to give us the same consideration and respect as you have given us since Jo first went missing."*
54. Referring to answer to question 15, it is surely of significance that the cases in which individual police forces have chosen not to engage with the press have resulted in some of the most vociferous complaints about coverage. Had Leicestershire Police chosen to give off-the-record guidance to the press about the state of the Madeleine McCann investigation then coverage may have been markedly different. Instead Leicestershire greeted every query with, "It is a Portuguese police investigation. You need to contact the Portuguese police", in full knowledge – as you have previously heard in the inquiry – of the fact the Portuguese police refused to comment officially on any aspect of the case due to that country's official secrecy laws.
55. Though I was on annual leave when Chris Jefferies was arrested I covered the murder of Jo Yeates from the point at which her killer Vincent Tabak was detained until the conclusion of his trial. Had Avon and Somerset Police chosen to give discreet off-the-record guidance regarding Mr Jefferies' background and the nature of his arrest it is possible he may have been spared the ordeal he described to the Inquiry. In my experience journalists, news desks and editors listen to, respect and react to police guidance. The Raoul Moat case, outlined above, is a classic example.
56. My concern in the fall-out from phone hacking and this series of inquiries is that a wedge will be driven between the police and press that will restrict the level of trust and guidance therefore making accurate reporting more difficult.
57. The HMIC report states: *"Concerns that inappropriate police relationships represent endemic failings in police integrity are not borne out by the*

evidence.” My concern is that a knee-jerk reaction to try and wipe out “infrequent” incidents could lead to a widespread breakdown in police-press relations resulting generally in less accurate reporting. The majority of leads – even on crime stories - don’t come from the police. It should be remembered that the press often obtain or are given evidence of wrong-doing by members of the public. The press have a duty to pass such information to the police or other relevant authorities and it does so. In such circumstances the journalist has a legitimate expectation to be kept abreast of developments to his benefit and of the newspaper.

58. In order to maintain accuracy it is vital we have a facility to check out the validity of this steady influx of information prior to publication. It is also important to the police to have the facility to approach the press for help if they fear information is to be published which could hamper or prejudice their inquiries. This requires a healthy, above board, two-way relationship based on mutual trust. Any regulations that threaten that risk damaging the very aims of this inquiry.
59. At a personal level “appropriate contact” between police and press in a democratic society should allow for acts of genuine friendship. I would no more put a police officer friend of mine in a compromising position regarding his job as I would a friend who was a plumber, social worker or barrister.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

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



Jeremy Lawton

Dated: [6] February 2012

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF
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