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On the day that [Damian Green](#) was arrested by [police](#) last month, David Cameron had barely any time to decide whether or not to embark on a wholesale assault against the Metropolitan police. As Green sat in police custody for nine hours, the role played by one key figure persuaded the Tory leader to accuse the authorities of "Stalinesque" behaviour.

Cameron was told that Assistant Commissioner [Bob Quick](#), who approved the arrest of Green as head of the Met's counterterrorism squad, had been abrasive in his dealings with opposition parties.

Relations between the Tories and Quick reached a low when the officer was dispatched earlier this year to explain the government's plans to detain terror suspects without charge for up to 42 days. Former shadow home secretary David Davis was irritated that Quick appeared to be unfamiliar with one of the main arguments against the 42-day plan. This was that the "threshold test", which allows police to charge a terror suspect on the basis of weaker evidence than normal, meant the law was already sufficient.

The Met says Quick's role was more nuanced and that he has not acted as a salesman for the government's plans. They point out that in May there were reports of differences between Sir Ian Blair, the former Met commissioner, and Jacqui Smith after Quick offered only equivocal support for the 42-day plan in a letter to the home secretary.

By then the damage had been done and the Tories had Quick in their sights. Soon after Green's arrest, Tories said Quick's role had not escaped their attention.

Conservative sources later noted that Quick rejected claims by Michael Martin, the Commons speaker, that police had failed to follow proper procedures when they searched Green's parliamentary office without a warrant. In a letter to the home secretary, Quick said his officers had correctly followed the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. Geoffrey Robertson QC, the human rights lawyer, said Quick's letter was "full of inaccurate statements".

Briefings against Quick convinced him that the Tories had inspired this weekend's Mail on Sunday to report his wife's wedding chauffeur service. This is emphatically denied by the Tories.

The bad blood between the two sides meant that the Tories maintained the pressure on Quick yesterday even after he issued an unreserved apology for alleging that they had leaked the story in a "corrupt way". Dominic Grieve, the shadow home secretary, accepted the apology and said it had drawn a line under the matter. However, within hours Grieve went on the radio to say that Quick should "reflect" on whether he should continue to head the investigation into Green.

Home secretary Jacqui Smith offered her support: "Bob has now retracted some of the things that he said over the weekend and I think the most important thing is that he is able to get on with the job of keeping this country safe."