

The Leveson Inquiry

Witness Statement for Part 1, Module 1

Witness statement of Ian Hurst

I, Ian Hurst c/o Collyer Bristow LLP, 4 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4DF will say as follows:

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1. I make this statement in connection with my role as a Core Participant in the Leveson Inquiry.

Background

2. I am a former member of British Military Intelligence. I served in the Intelligence Corps and Force Research Unit (a covert military intelligence unit) in Northern Ireland between 1980 and 1991. My primary role in Northern Ireland was to recruit and run agents within Republican terrorist groups in order to obtain tactical and strategic intelligence.
3. I retired from the Army in 1991. My last posting in the Intelligence Corps was for the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) of the Ministry of Defence.
4. In 1997 I decided to write a book. The motivation to write the book was to highlight aspects of my service which had a genuine public interest.
5. Following a series of articles in The Times in 1999, I was arrested by Special Branch Police officers in connection with alleged offences under the Official Secrets Act. No charges were ever brought against me but I remain subject to an injunction dating back to 1999.
6. In 2004 I moved with my family to France. During my time in France, I was engaged in researching matters very closely associated with the work I did in Northern Ireland. It is fair to say that I have maintained a close link to the intelligence community since my retirement and I have also come into contact with the

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workings of the UK and international press on a number of occasions.

Panorama

7. In the last week of December 2010 I was approached by Stephen Scott, the producer of the BBC Panorama programme. He was making a documentary about the phone and computer hacking scandal that was engulfing News of the World. I attach with this statement a DVD marked "IH1" containing the Panorama documentary that subsequently aired on BBC television in March 2011. I refer to the documentary during the course of this statement.
8. Mr Scott told me that Panorama had obtained information which showed that I was a potential victim of computer hacking. Mr Scott asked me if I would take part in the Panorama documentary he was making and I readily agreed.
9. When my wife and I learnt that our computer may have been hacked, we felt it was important to carry out our own investigations to determine whether there was any substance to the claim and we did so during the course of 2011.

Computer hacking revelations

10. Panorama said it had information which showed that one of our computers had been hacked by News of the World (or at least someone engaged on the paper's behalf) in 2006. During filming, they showed me extracts of emails which had been obtained from my computer and which had been sent by fax to the Dublin office of the News of the World on 5 July of that year marked for the attention of I was extremely surprised and concerned by the revelation.
11. I now know that it is relatively easy for a computer to be 'broken into' and spied on. If a computer is connected to the internet, files and emails on it can be accessed illegally using what is known as a 'Trojan'. This is a piece of software which is usually imbedded in or attached to an email sent to the account of the target individual. Once the email has been opened or the attachment clicked on the Trojan allows the hacker to remotely access and download files

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such as documents and emails. Effectively the hacker has access to all the information that the computer user does, provided the computer is online.

The hacker

12. The BBC said they had ascertained that the [redacted] of the News of the World [redacted] had engaged the private investigator [redacted] to target me. [redacted] had then employed a private detective specialising in applying and controlling computer viruses to do the hacking job. The specialist hacker was an individual known to me, having served with him in the intelligence community in Northern Ireland for over 3 years whilst he was attached to the FRU. I will refer to this person as 'X'.
13. During the making of the Panorama documentary I asked if I could confront X about what I had learnt to allow him to record his position. I initially visited his house but as he was not in I spoke to him on the phone. We arranged to meet at a local hotel straight away. X said he was not surprised that I had made contact as [redacted] [redacted] had told him two or three days earlier that Panorama were 'sniffing around'. I secretly filmed our meeting and a very small part of it (less than 1 minute from 2 hours of filming) was shown on the Panorama documentary. When the meeting had finished X agreed to let Mr Scott be present for a summary of the points we had talked about.
14. During the course of our meeting, X stated that he had placed a computer Trojan on my hard drive (by sending me an email from a bogus address which I then opened) and had, over a three month period, obtained all email traffic which was sent and received by me. I now cannot recall whether I opened an email from a bogus address in 2006. However, I can say that I would have been much more likely to have opened an email that had come from a trusted contact rather than an unfamiliar or unknown name. I do know that an email was sent to me by a trusted media contact within Times Newspapers Ltd around the time the Trojan became active and was collecting information from my computer. I have recently seen evidence that this individual was in email contact with X regarding my activities during these months, something which had previously

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been denied.

15. X also told me he had attended a meeting in Leeds in mid 2006 with [redacted] and one other News of the World journalist. Apparently X's instructions were to obtain information and documents about activities connected to my ongoing investigations relating to matters in Northern Ireland. X confirmed to me that he had supplied the information obtained from my computer to others involved in the conspiracy.

The News of the World, other newspapers and the Police

16. I believe that News of the World employees targeted me for a number of reasons and certainly because of my work in Northern Ireland and the investigations I have been involved in since my service. I think they may have been trying to obtain information on an IRA informer with the code name [redacted]. During 2006 I was investigating the possibility of bringing a private prosecution or claim for defamation claim against [redacted]. I have seen evidence that emails between me and Carter Ruck (which were legally privileged) and information exchanged between me and Jane Winter of the British Irish Rights Watch were intercepted by X.
17. After I was made aware of the hacking of my own computer I started looking into the practice in general. I am convinced that computer hacking was not confined to the News of the World and there were other newspapers engaged in this type of illegal information gathering. I am also absolutely certain that there were strong links between certain newspapers and former and current officers of the Metropolitan Police Service.
18. The police have admitted to me that documents and hardware seized in 2007 during the arrest of [redacted] showed that the security of my computer had been compromised and information had been obtained from it. This position was reinforced by the arrest of X during 2009 when further information was obtained from his seized computers. Even though the police were aware that my computer had been hacked as long ago as 2007 they did not inform me until October of this year. I strongly feel that the matter was 'swept under the carpet' and if the hacking had been fully investigated by the police when it first came to light further illegal

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information gathering would not have occurred. I am now bringing a civil claim in relation to the hacking of my computer.

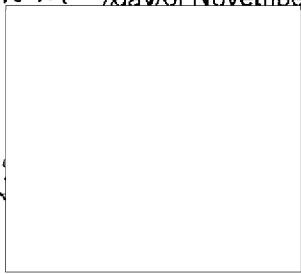
19. Following the filming of the Panorama documentary, I have uncovered a considerable amount of evidence about the unhealthy role played by the police. I will be providing a further, more detailed statement for Part 2 of the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

DATED the Ninth day of November 2011

SIGNED:



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