

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

8 February 2017

PRESS NOTICE

Inquiry comments on the announcement of the Independent Police Complaints Commission Investigation into the shredding of documents

This press release has been prepared to read alongside [today's announcement by the Independent Police Complaints Commission](#) that it has been investigating an allegation of the shredding of documents in 2014 kept by the National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit. The Independent Police Complaints Commission investigation was commenced following a referral by the Metropolitan Police Service in May 2016.

Inquiry Statement

The Inquiry was made aware of the allegation by the Metropolitan Police Service in April 2016, prior to the referral to the Independent Police Complaints Commission. The Inquiry has not published information before now, so as not to cause prejudice to the Commission's own investigation. Nevertheless, as soon as the allegation came to the Inquiry's attention, and in light of its potential impact, the Inquiry took steps to gain additional assurances about document preservation and retention by the Metropolitan Police Service. The Inquiry has ensured that the Metropolitan Police have preserved backups of the information in the database concerned (known as electronic mirror images) from 2014 and 2016¹.

The Inquiry notes from the Independent Police Complaints Commission press release that *'there is evidence which suggests documents were shredded after both the Undercover Policing Public Inquiry was announced and a specific MPS instruction that documents should not be destroyed without express permission was issued'*. The Inquiry will await the further conclusions of the Commission, including as to the circumstances in which the documents were shredded, with interest.

STATEMENT ENDS

¹ When first published, this part of the note also referred to mirror images taken in 2015. Reference to 2015 was included by the Inquiry in error. The electronic mirror images that have been preserved are from 2014 (two backups) and 2016 (one backup). The error and subsequent correction does not have any bearing on the underlying issues; the Inquiry has ensured that the Metropolitan Police Service has preserved all available backups of the information in the database concerned.

Chronology of main Inquiry steps relating to alleged document destruction in respect of shredding in the National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit in 2014 and in respect of Baroness Jones

Published below is a chronology that is intended to show, in outline terms, the main steps taken by the Inquiry since being made aware of this allegation of document destruction.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission press notice also makes reference to a complaint made by Baroness Jenny Jones having been referred to it for investigation on 27 January 2017. The Inquiry remains aware of the allegation of improper destruction of information relating to Baroness Jones. The Inquiry will await the outcome of the Independent Police Complaints Commission's investigation into that allegation.

As part of its ongoing work, the Inquiry continues to investigate whether any of the material alleged to have been destroyed was potentially relevant to the work of the Inquiry. In order to protect the integrity of that investigation, the Inquiry is not yet releasing further details about this work.

July 2015

- Opening statement from Undercover Policing Inquiry.

July to December 2015

- Inquiry communicated with the Metropolitan Police Service to obtain assurances as to the retention and preservation of material of potential relevance to the terms of reference.

January 2016

- Inquiry became aware, via an article in the Guardian (8th January) and through correspondence with Bindmans solicitors on behalf of Baroness Jenny Jones (11th January) of an allegation relating to the destruction of material relating to Baroness Jones.
- As a result, the Inquiry escalated its requests for assurance by issuing a Rule 9 request to the Metropolitan Police Service (15th January) for a signed witness statement providing further information, assurance as to document retention and preservation, and the need to avoid conflict of interest in connection with handling material relevant to the Inquiry.
- First assurance witness statement received from Detective Superintendent Neil Hutchison (29th January).

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April 2016

- Inquiry formally notified by the Metropolitan Police Service of a second allegation, relating to shredding of documents at the National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit.
- Inquiry issues further request for assurance evidence.
- Inquiry received and considered material from the Metropolitan Police Service relating to allegation concerning Baroness Jones.

May 2016

- Meeting between Inquiry legal team and Metropolitan Police Service legal team regarding assurance and the National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit.
- Inquiry made aware that the Metropolitan Police had referred a second allegation to the Independent Police Complaints Commission.
- Inquiry issued a request for evidence and assurance regarding the National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit and its records.

June 2016

- Inquiry received supplemented versions of the first assurance statement from Detective Superintendent Neil Hutchison (dated 3rd June and 17th June).
- Received a second assurance statement from Detective Superintendent Neil Hutchison (dated 9th June).
- Inquiry in liaison with the Independent Police Complaints Commission in relation to both allegations.
- Witness statement received from the Metropolitan Police, responding to requests made about the National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit and its records.

July 2016

- Inquiry issued further request for assurance evidence to Detective Superintendent Neil Hutchison.

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- Updated assurance witness statements received from Detective Superintendent Neil Hutchison (29 July 2016 – two statements, then published on the Inquiry’s website)
- Inquiry agrees to Independent Police Complaints Commission request to provisionally restrict (redact) information about their investigation into the shredding allegation. The application was made ‘to avoid causing any prejudice to the [Independent Police Complaints Commission] investigation...there are still steps to be taken to secure evidence ... which may be prejudiced if potential subjects are alerted to the investigation.’ Publication of (the detail or fact of) this application would have had the potential effect of undermining the substantive application for restriction.

August 2016

- Inquiry requested clarification and further information about document retention and preservation within the National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit and its successor the National Counter Terrorism Police Operations Centre, further to the witness statement received on this issue in June.
- Inquiry seeks further clarification of issues in statements of Detective Superintendent Hutchison

September 2016

- Inquiry received and considered additional information from the Metropolitan Police Service concerning the allegation relating to Baroness Jones.
- Witness statement received from Metropolitan Police containing further information about document retention and preservation sought in August (and referenced above).

October 2016

- Inquiry issued a request for further evidence concerning National Special Branch Intelligence System database under the control of National Counter Terrorism Police Operations Centre.
- Inquiry sought and received assurance from the Metropolitan Police Service that all routine review and deletion of material on the National Special Branch Intelligence System database under the control of National Counter Terrorism Police Operations Centre had been suspended; that forensic mirror images of the database from 2014 and 2015 had been preserved in a secure location; and that a further mirror image had been taken and was similarly securely preserved.

November 2016

- Inquiry issued request for evidence in connection with its own enquiries into allegation related to Baroness Jones.
- Inquiry received two witness statements from the Metropolitan Police Service concerning assurance within the National Counter Terrorism Police Operations Centre, with particular reference to the National Special Branch Intelligence System database.

December 2016

- Inquiry issued supplemental request for assurance evidence concerning the National Special Branch Intelligence System database.

February 2017

The Inquiry continues to seek assurance to ensure preservation of documents relevant to the Inquiry, and the need to avoid conflict of interest in the preservation of and provision of documents to the Inquiry.

Statements from Detective Superintendent Neil Hutchison published by the Inquiry (information formerly subject to a restriction at the request of the Independent Police Complaints Commission underlined). Information being updated on the Inquiry website.

Detective Superintendent Neil Hutchison statement published on 29 July 2016

“49. I am aware of an allegation in relation to deletion of records relating to Baroness Jones (which is the subject of a separate rule 9 request by the UCPI). If substantiated this may lead to criminal or misconduct proceedings. The material in relation to this allegation and the MPS response to it is to be provided in the response to the rule 9 request that specifically relates to it. Other than this issue I am not aware of any instance where an officer has been suspected of circumventing or attempting to circumvent the steps taken described above.

...

66. Update to paragraph 49 of my previous statement. In this paragraph I state that I am aware of one instance whereby any officer may have circumvented, or sought to circumvent, steps taken to preserve material. Since completing this statement I have become aware of a further separate incident and have ensured that the UCPI have been made aware. This incident is currently subject to investigation. The UCPI will be kept informed of progress. Both incidents that I am aware of took place prior to the commencement of the UCPI in July 2015 but after the circulation of instructions to

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officers and staff to preserve material of potential relevance to undercover policing. I also wish to clarify that while the investigation did treat the allegation as a potential criminal or misconduct matter at the point when I completed my previous statement the investigation had concluded with no offences or conduct matters being identified.”

Background

The purpose of the Undercover Policing Inquiry is to investigate and report on undercover police operations conducted by English and Welsh police forces in England and Wales since 1968. The Inquiry will examine the contribution undercover policing has made to tackling crime, how it was and is supervised and regulated, and its effect on individuals involved, both police officers and others who came into contact with them.

The work of the Inquiry ranges across the full scope of undercover policing work and will look at the work of the Special Demonstration Squad, the National Public Order Intelligence Unit and police forces in England and Wales. The Inquiry will also examine whether people may have been wrongly convicted in cases involving undercover police officers, and refer any such cases to a separate panel for consideration.

The work of the Inquiry will fall into three modules:

1. Module one will look at what happened in the deployment of undercover officers in the past, their conduct, and the impact of their activities on themselves and others.
2. Module two will look at the management and oversight of undercover officers, including their selection, training, supervision and care after the end of an undercover deployment. This section will also look at the law and other rules covering undercover policing.
3. Module three will make recommendations about how undercover policing should be conducted in future.

Notes to Editors

- The Undercover Policing Inquiry is constituted under the [Inquiries Act 2005](#).
- The Inquiry's [terms of reference](#) were announced by the Home Secretary on 16 July 2015.
- The Inquiry's [frequently asked questions](#) provide further information on the Inquiry more generally.
- The Inquiry's website is www.ucpi.org.uk and the Inquiry can be found on Twitter @ucpinquiry.

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