

IN THE UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY

OPENING STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE CATEGORY M CORE PARTICIPANTS

INTRODUCTION

1. The Category M participants were some of the ex-wives of undercover officers (UCOs), the mothers of their children, the family they came home to. They were a vital part of the modus operandi; a way of trying to keep the UCOs grounded, of ensuring they remembered which 'side' they were on; a tether to 'normal' life.
2. No doubt there are other wives or partners of undercover officers, officers whose conduct will be examined in this Inquiry – potentially many others. But the three women we represent today are the only ones who are here as core participants to tell their stories.
3. Those women fulfilled their role dutifully, towards both their husbands and the honourable causes they believed they were serving – the fight against crime, terror and violence. These sacrifices came with a heavy price for their own lives and their families, and they believed they were making them for all of us, the public.
4. They have come forward to the Inquiry again with a sense of public duty, to help answer many of the questions that lie at the heart of this Inquiry's terms of reference. They can provide a unique insight both into the effect of the work on the UCOs and those close to them, and into the involvement and conduct of those responsible for managing them. They have come to the Inquiry willing to share that knowledge and their experience.
5. They are also hoping that the work of the Inquiry will provide answers. The Inquiry will hear from many whose most intimate lives have been affected by the practices of undercover policing, heart-rending stories of betrayal and deceit. But there has been little

focus on the harm done to the wives of UCOs. Their sacrifices went way beyond those they had willingly taken on, and have had a shattering impact on each of their lives (and that of their wider families) as they have come to learn something of the reality of their husbands' roles. This has cost each of them their marriage, and had a profound ongoing psychological impact. They hope that this will be recognised and that their voices are heard in this Inquiry.

WHO ARE THE WOMEN IN CATEGORY M AND WHAT WERE THEIR EXPERIENCES?

6. Each of the women in category M has her own unique story to tell and consequences to describe, but there are common themes between them.
7. **First**, each of these women were police wives. That was woven into their identity. At the outset, they saw themselves as part of the wider police service, investing in their husbands' careers, and also saw themselves as respectable members of the community.
8. When their husbands joined Special Branch, they felt the shared pride that came with such an achievement, as well as a sense of pride around what their husbands did in helping keeping people safe and upholding the law.
9. When their husbands went undercover, they provided the support, unwaveringly. They willingly made all the sacrifices that went with that. They took on the burden of secrecy, unable to talk about the impact on them or their husbands. They lived in fear of reprisals both at the time of deployment (and subsequently, when the true nature of their husbands' activities became known), but they believed that their sacrifices were worth it for the cause. They did so without any proper support from the MPS.
10. Years later they found out that their marriages were based on lies, that their husbands' jobs - of which they had been so proud - had been vehicles for the worst kind of infidelity. They have been left to reconstruct their lives, and those of their children, forever tainted by their connection with men who have behaved so appallingly. What once brought them pride, now brings them shame and fear.
11. **Second**, each saw and experienced the significant and overwhelming impact that undercover deployments had on their husbands, and in turn on their families' lives.

12. From the personality changes that they witnessed their husbands undergo – anger or distress from the pressure, and no doubt the deceit – and the way in which those changes bit by bit eroded their marriages and distorted their family life.
13. The officer husband of one of them made an urgent demand that they and their young children must move immediately because of a risk that he had been identified by a person he was infiltrating. This demand was reinforced by a personal visit to her home by Bob Lambert (who was by then a senior officer tasked with the management of UCOs). Knowing what she now knows about the UCO activities, she doubts the explanation she was given and believes she was misled into making such a life-changing move. She knows that this and other significant family decisions were made on the basis of half-truths and misinformation.
14. **Third**, they were all equally blindsided by the revelations that have ultimately led to this Inquiry. None of them had any idea that in the name of policing their husbands were having sexual relationships with other women. All were left shocked and devastated by the media coverage as it unfolded, and the media intrusion that accompanied it, which affected not only them but also their children and wider families.
15. **Fourth**, they were mothers of children born into relationships imbued with deceit. Some of their children were conceived or born during the currency of the very deployments with which this Inquiry is concerned.
16. Not only did they have to witness - and help as best they could - their children navigate relationships with fathers who were absent, angry or palpably altered by their experiences (sometimes being unable to reveal the truth to protect their children); but in the years that have followed since the deployments ended and the true nature of their fathers' conduct began to be revealed, they have had to help their children re-chart the same relationships with entirely new and shocking knowledge, doing their level best to protect them at such a vulnerable time from the very public fallout and media attention. There was no support in the form of facts to help the children (or the women) have a true understanding or certainty as to the actual situation.

WHY ARE THEY SO IMPORTANT TO THE INQUIRY?

17. The impact of their husbands' deployment on them and their families is only one aspect of the evidence that these women can give to this Inquiry. They were in a unique position. They were both an integral part of the process and exploited by it.
18. They had a close-up view of the impact of undercover deployments on the UCOs, and they saw the role the MPS played (and did not play) in supporting the UCOs.
19. They met senior MPS officers in connection with their husbands' recruitment and work in the SDS, so each has direct evidence to give on what they were told and whether it was borne out by subsequent events.
20. The function of this opening is not to rehearse all the evidence they will give but to summarise the 5 main themes it will cover, within the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. From their individual perspectives they can give evidence to the Inquiry about:¹
 - a. The recruitment process to the SDS, including indications that the MPS specifically sought married men so as to keep them grounded. Bob Lambert was a senior officer who told them this, explicitly. They will tell the Inquiry about
 - The extent to which the MPS did – or did not – appear to give any thought to what that would mean for the marriage or the children.
 - The lack of any apparent consideration of the collateral and lifelong damage that the undercover work – and the undercover relationships – would cause.
 - The strong impression that the women had that they and their families were being 'vetted' for their suitability in that supporting role, without any apparent reciprocal assessment of risk to them or their children, either from external parties or from the UCO, and the enormous pressure their situation placed them under.

¹ Although the women's direct experience falls within Tranche 3 (1993-2006), the issues that their evidence raises will be equally relevant to Tranches 1 and 2.

- The visits to their homes from senior officers, and the encouragement to support their husbands, to play their role, without any parallel commitment to provide adequate support.

- b. Their understanding of the type of work that the UCOs would be doing, and the clear indication given to them that the groups to be targeted were serious and violent criminals or extremists, not protesters that posed no threat to the UCOs or their families. This is particularly important given the enormous stress that the fear of reprisals caused for each of the women both during and after deployments. More broadly, it is significant in the context of the Inquiry's consideration of whether the MPS was keen to encourage the impression externally that the targets were violent criminals, and not the protesters, campaigners, or political groups who were in fact being infiltrated. When the women found out the truth about the groups their husbands infiltrated, they were horrified as this was at odds with the picture that had been painted to them.

- c. The practicalities of that work and its impact on their families – the nights, days, weekends or weeks away, the work trips abroad - that now look to be 'holidays' with their unsuspecting 'partners' or part of the extraction process at the end of a deployment. All this apparently done to maintain the lie of another life. But perhaps most of all, the isolation for them that came with it. Whilst their husbands had fellow officers, managers and supervisors to share their experiences with, the women had no one. They had never met each other, never even knew the others existed, until this Inquiry was set up. Such was the secrecy, that there was no way of finding mutual support in friendships.

- d. The lack of support - practical and emotional/psychological - that was available to the UCOs and their families, and the reality of its near total absence both during and after the deployments, even when it was expressly promised by or sought from the same senior officers who had come into their homes and encouraged them in their roles. With one exception, that includes the many years that have passed since it was first publicly alleged that the UCOs had been having sexual relationships with their targets, which for the wives was the first occasion on which

they began to learn something of the true position.² At no stage did the MPS approach them, to warn them before, to support them during, or to offer them help afterwards.

- e. The level of monitoring and supervision of UCOs, which at times for one officer appeared to one of the women to be near daily, undermining any suggestion that those more senior in the SDS did not know what was going on 'on the ground'.

21. The women in category M are small in number but the evidence they can give is of the highest relevance to the central issues of this Inquiry.

22. For them to be able to maximise their value to the Inquiry, and the quality of the evidence they can give, it is important that the women are provided with the level of disclosure which recognises their role, and their existing knowledge and experiences. They will ask the Inquiry to trust them in that process in the same way that the MPS has trusted them over many years to keep their husbands' roles confidential.

23. They in turn place their trust and confidence in the Inquiry – that it will rigorously and transparently pursue answers to the questions before it. To that end the officers' wives are determined to provide every cooperation and assistance that they can.

WHAT DO THE WOMEN IN CATEGORY M HOPE FOR FROM THE INQUIRY?

24. The women are hopeful of 3 outcomes from this Inquiry:

- a. They want some recognition: recognition of their existence and their roles, of the impact and damage on them and their children. They can see the apology from the MPS, hard fought for, which has been received by some of the women who were targeted by UCOs, and cannot understand why they have not received one too. They sacrificed so many aspects of their lives for the MPS and not once has anyone from the police acknowledged, let alone apologised for, what has been done to them and their families.

² Some limited support was provided to one of the women and one of her children by the MPS subsequent to the media revelations and only after considerable effort on her part.

- b. They would like openness, transparency, and answers to many of the questions that the Inquiry is posing. Applying the Module Issues to their own experiences, some of the key things they want to know are:
- i. How were their ex-husbands selected for undercover work? How much of a role did the fact that they were married to these particular women play in this? Was the SDS in reality recruiting a package of husband with supportive and loyal wife - and was an emphasis put on family life that created a culture that encouraged the officers to have (more) children, despite knowing that they were at the same time betraying their wives?
 - ii. When the SDS was recruiting UCOs, was there any assessment of the suitability of the family unit for this sort of work, or the impact it would have upon them? Or the risks and pressures it would expose them to?
 - iii. What explanations, assurances or undertakings were routinely given to families of UCOs and were they true? Were these women lied to by the senior SDS officers they met, about the nature and role of their husbands' work?
 - iv. What support was offered to the UCOs? Were there any procedures the women weren't told about as to how they could raise concerns about the impact of the work on the UCOs or their families, or was this just not thought about? Why, when they did try to raise concerns, were they not properly responded to?
 - v. Was there any training or support offered to other partners of UCOs before or during deployments and why did these Officers' wives not get any training or support?
 - vi. Who within the SDS knew about the sexual relationships between the UCOs and their targets? Were those relationships encouraged or authorised? Why weren't the women told about the relationships at any

stage before they were made public, despite MPS' awareness that it was about to happen?

c. For the future, they hope for assurances that:

- there is no place in policing for intimate relationships between a UCO and an unsuspecting target;
- no other UCO partners, or their families, will be exploited as they have been, or go through what they have been through;
- no other women or men will be the victims of sexual deceit in the name of policing;
- that this Inquiry identifies the lessons that can and must be learnt from the experiences these women, and the very many others affected by these events, have suffered.

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23 October 2020