

UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY

T1P4

[Redact]

BEFORE:

SIR JOHN MITTING (CHAIRMAN)

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COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY

MR DAVID BARR QC

MS DAISY MONAHAN

SOLICITOR TO THE INQUIRY

MR PAUL BISHOP

SECRETARY TO THE INQUIRY

MS CECILIA FRENCH

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MS AMY MANNION and MS GEORGINA BLOWER appeared on behalf of MPS-CL.

MR OLIVER SANDERS QC and MS CATHERINE COLLINS appeared on behalf of MPS-DL.

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PROCEEDINGS

DAY ONE

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[Redact] (HN341), Sworn

SOLICITOR Thank you, [Redact] [Gist: HN341]. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN Thank you. May I just try and ascertain where my own notebook is rather than take that of one of our staff? (Pause) I see. It has been taken back to the office. May I borrow yours *pro temp*? Thank you. This will do fine. Yes, Ms Monahan.

MS MONAHAN Good morning. I am Daisy Monahan and David Barr QC and I appear for the Inquiry.

THE CHAIRMAN Yes.

MS MONAHAN Amy Mannion and Georgina Blower appear for the CL and Oliver Sanders and Catherine Collins for the DL.

[Redact] [Gist: HN341], you have provided a witness statement to the Inquiry dated [Redact] 2019. Are you familiar with its contents?

A Yes, I am.

Q And are the contents of your witness statement true and correct---

A Yes.

Q -- to the best of your knowledge and belief?

A Yes, yes, they are.

Q If we just explore [Redact].

A Yes.

Q Right, we know that you had a cover name and you had then, you had [Redact] a cover address and documentation. Did you put together, when you joined the SDS, a legend?

A [Redact] my main preoccupation was to get some sort of cover work, which I managed to successfully do [Redact].

Q Yes, thank you. I am referring really just to your back story, as it were.

A Yes.

Q So that if you were ever quizzed on that or indeed just in the course of conversation perhaps with your members of your group.

A Not with [Redact] group I wasn't, no.

Q No, so----

A No, they never enquired into that at all.

Q But did you have something in reserve in case they did? Had you developed any kind of back story?

A Yes, yes, I would have done.

Q Right, and in relation to *[Redact]*

Q In terms of the methods and the intelligence product, you describe in your witness statement the ways in which the methodology of the SDS differed from your Special Branch work.

A Yes.

Q And you describe it as the antithesis----

A Yes.

Q -- in the sense that, whereas your routine Special Branch work focused on detail and information, the SDS work focused more on social interaction.

A Yes.

Q And you had to train yourself to think like your target groups.

A Yes.

Q In respect of the actual content of your reports though and the format ... well, the format is one thing, but the content, did that change when you made the transition into the SDS or were you given to understand that you could carry on in terms of the type of information you were gathering?

A Yes.

Q You could carry on as you were?

A Yes, as you were, but in a lot more detail. They were far more interested in movements of people, either people attending at one meeting and disappearing for a couple of months and coming back again. *[Redact]*

Q Yes.

A So other people's movements and, as you say, social interactions were very, very important.

*[Redact]*

THE CHAIRMAN Yes. We normally break for about 15 minutes in the middle of the morning----

WITNESS That's fine. Thank you, Sir.

THE CHAIRMAN -- in the middle of the morning to let everybody have a short break, have a rest. Would you be ready to be back about half past?

WITNESS Yes, certainly.

THE CHAIRMAN Thank you.

WITNESS Thank you, Sir.

(Short break)

MR FERNANDES Welcome back everyone. I will now hand over to the Chairman to continue proceedings.

*[Redact]*

Q Right, thank you. Right, I will move on now to the safe house.

A Yes.

Q Just some general questions here. You described going to the meetings at the safe house for a minimum of once a week, but preferably twice a week?

A Yes.

Q And your immediate managers were at the meetings.

A Yes.

Q So you recall *[Redact]*.

A Yes.

Q And he was there consistently?

A Yes.

Q And *[Redact]*?

A Yes.

Q And [Redact] would attend every two to three weeks, is that correct?

A Yes.

[Redact]

Q So, when you met at the safe house, would you tend to gather all in one room or would you break off and go into separate rooms?

A No, normally in one particular room. [Redact]

Q Yes.

A And, you know, they would be comfortable properties for people to relax in and have coffee, sandwiches, that type of thing.

Q Right, but my point there would you generally all be together? Would it be a sort of communal meeting?

A Yes, we would.

Q You would not go off, if it was a substantial property, you would not all go off into separate rooms and have----

A No, if you did, you would go off for a drink or something to eat afterwards on a social basis.

Q Right, but, when you at the safe house, you were all together----

A Definitely.

Q -- in one room?

A Definitely.

Q Right. You say that the meetings were not very structured but that each meeting would include a group discussion.

A Yes.

Q So this would be an overview of deployments, i.e., forthcoming demonstrations, meetings, big personalities.

A Yes.

Q And you also mention individual meetings with managers.

A Yes.

Q So, if you had these, would they take place in another room?

A No.

Q No?

A Not to my knowledge, no. They would either sit down at a desk or by you on a sofa or whatever.

Q Right.

A And we would go through it or you would have to do your, speak to your diary going back over the previous month. So, to my knowledge, it wasn't, you didn't go to a separate room.

Q Right. If you had a particularly sensitive issue to discuss -- and I do not know if you ever had to do that or were aware of your colleagues doing that -- would that take place in a separate room?

A Probably not, to be quite honest.

Q No, okay.

A It might take place at some other venue or----

Q Okay.

A -- if it was really serious, you would be taken hidden into Scotland Yard.

Q Okay, and did you ever have those conversations? So, let us say towards the end of your deployment when you were becoming----

A Yes, but it was, it would still be in the same room if it was softly spoken.

Q Right, okay.

A Yes.

Q You describe that after meetings you would go out for a meal and a drink.

A Yes.

Q And that "Senior officers would not go because they did not wear long hair and beards". So, by that do you mean *[Redact]* or do you mean *[Redact]*? No, sorry, you mean *[Redact]* would not come?

Q No.

A Right.

Q I think that was deliberate on both sides. (a) it was social for us to let our hair down----

A Yes.

Q -- and (b) we didn't want to be bothered by rank and it would look incongruous for one to be chatting to the other.

A Yes, yes, yes. You describe the unit as "tightly knit".

Q Very.

Q And you say that you all knew one another well, *[Redact]*. You say that spending time, as you have just said, you let your hair down. You say that it was a relief to spend time with your fellow officers.

A Yes, yes.

Q Because they understood the pressure you were under with your home lives particularly.

A Yes, yes.

Q So was that something you discussed, the particular pressure on your personal lives that the job imposed?

A Yes, yes.

Q And is that something you all shared?

A Not all of us. Some of them, one or two individuals that I knew and still know, still keep their private lives very much to themselves.

Q Right, right.

A Where they wouldn't tell you anything.

Q Right, but others would and they would share information.

A Yes, without a doubt, yes, yes.

Q So, would you say, would you characterise these as friendships?

A Yes, I would.

Q Right.

A And some remain to this day.

Q Yes.

A Yes.

Q And does it follow from that that you trusted one another?

A Implicitly. If you couldn't trust colleagues in that environment, nobody would trust you.

Q Yes. So, you distinguish between the topics that you would discuss in private and in public.

A Yes.

Q So, you say that you would not discuss your deployment----

A No.

Q -- or details of your deployments when in public, when you were having these meals, for the obvious reason that you were in public.

A Yes, exactly.

Q But you do say, you mention that there would sometimes be occasional parties or you say impromptu barbecues.

A Yes.

Q But they didn't happen often?

A No, *[Redact]*. Nothing was particularly organised. We would just phone each other up and, if we weren't doing anything that weekend, we would get together.

Q Right and, as in the way you have set out the topics you would not discuss in public, does it then follow that you would discuss these topics in private, so either in the safe house or at these parties?

A No, to be quite honest, at the social occasions, you almost try to leave the job as off limits.

Q Right.

A So it would just be purely social.

Q Right.

A Again, as an escape, if you were going to discuss your work, it would be done in a work environment or at the safe house.

Q Right, right.

A Very rarely, if ever, would it be done with spouses and families.

Q Understood. Right, so at these parties, your spouses would be invited?

A Yes, yes, they were, yes.

Q You go into some detail in your witness statement about the topics that you would discuss amongst, with your fellow UCOs and in private. I mean, I assume this took place at the safe house.

A Yes.

Q And you say that, when you did talk about work, topics included the difficulties with doing the job, maintaining cover, keeping up appearances, *[Redact]*

Q You say, at para.133, "Such discussions were not overheard by management, they were private between junior officers".

A Yes.

Q But, if you were all in one room, how can you be certain that they were private?

A Well, you can't.

Q Right.

A But, if I can use a police expression on (inaudible), it would be what I call "banter".

Q Yes.

*[Redact]*

Q Right. Is it fair to say that at these gatherings when you ... well, at the safe house and when you were relaxing, that there would be a sharing of sort of anecdotes and jokes and, as you say, banter?

A Oh without a doubt, yes, there would have been.

Q And was that confined to the UCOs or would management join in with that?

A I can't remember. Management may have joined in, but on a casual basis.

Q Right. Now, I know you are unequivocal. You were involved. You had no sexual relations with anyone during your deployment.

A No.

*[Redact]*

Q Right, right. So, from what you said, was there any banter within your earshot about women being targeted or women in the groups being targeted?

A No, not at all, absolutely not.

Q And any talk ever about---

A No.

Q -- a UCO sleeping with them?

A No, no.

Q Right.

A I would have said it would have been off limits.

Q Right.

A It wouldn't have entered my head.

Q Right.

A And certainly my colleagues to be, you know, to have thought that way.

Q But was that, do you think that was your own personal take on it, or had management explicitly said to you?

A No, management hadn't mentioned that at all.

Q Right.

A I don't think it would have entered their heads to think about that.

Q Right, right.

*[Redact]*

A -- it was, I don't think it was (inaudible) you would risk breaking cover. There were a whole series of risks associated with that that one wouldn't even go there in the first place.

[Redact]

Q You talk in your statement about drinking and smoking a lot to relieve stress.

A Yes, yes.

Q And you say that you could drink [Redact].

A Yes, I could.

[Redact]

Q By any metric, a lot of alcohol.

A Yes.

Q Do you think that had an effect on your health?

A Well, as I am [Redact], I hope not.

Q Indeed.

A To be quite honest, that's down to genetics.

Q Right.

A It was easy to get off that, but I was also smoking [Redact] cigarettes a day.

Q Golly.

A So I am not saying that was quite normal, but that wasn't abnormal. I certainly, certainly colleagues of mine at Scotland Yard could probably outdo me in those days on both counts.

Q Right, so it seems that it had a dual function. On the one hand, it was about your cover, but also it was a way of self-medicating, as it were?

A Without a doubt, without a doubt.

Q Did management know that you were drinking this much?

A No. I think it was probably regarded as not unnormal.

Q Right. Family, you talk in your witness statement about the effect on your private life of the deployment----

A Yes.

Q -- and that you think that you SDS employment effectively led to the end of *[Redact]*.

A I don't know how *[Redact]* *[Gist: my spouse]* put up with it.

Q Right. Now, you say that, when you joined the SDS, you weren't given any information about the possible consequences for your private life.

A No.

Q What now -- well maybe at the time and in hindsight -- do you attribute that reticence to? Do you think that was deliberate as a way of trying to make joining the SDS a more appealing prospect, or do you think it was just a cultural thing at the time?

*[Redact]* *[Gist: Reason given as to why HN341 did not consider that it was a deliberate way of trying to make joining the SDS a more appealing prospect]*.

Q Did you make the SDS management aware of the effect that your deployment had on your private life?

A No, I think they regarded it as quite normal. Hence, I was posted to *[Redact]*.

Q Right.

*[Redact]*

A I think that was their rest and recuperation method.

Q And that was it, I mean, in the sense of that was their ... they saw that as a sort of positive welfare step, but that was the extent of it.

A Yes, exactly.

Q Right.

A Exactly.

Q Well, that leads us onto our final topic, which is this matter of recognition.

A Yes.

Q You distinguish in your witness statement between the practical support, the very effective practical support, you were given by the SDS management----

A Yes.

Q -- but the lack of sort of emotional support, for want of a better term.

A Non-existent.

Q Right, yes.

A Other than from fellow SDS officers, who understood the position.

Q Right, right.

A Yes.

Q So you say that, yes, when it came to promotion exams, sorting out expenses, they were exemplary.

A Yes.

Q Again, you have mentioned this. So, you received no debrief after your deployment.

A No, no.

Q No counselling.

A No.

Q And you understand now that, given the pressures you were under, these arrangements were inadequate.

A And that would be an understatement.

Q Yes. Now, in the short term, you talk about, because you brought your deployment to a close, in the sense that you went to management, is that correct, and said that you needed to get out?

A Yes, I did, yes.

Q And you said that you needed to escape the intensity of living deep under cover for *[Redact]* and, in the medium term, you say that there was a need to escape from what you called the "joke as a job syndrome".

A Yes.

Q You say "This was a quip banded around the MPS at the time [you] were employed. It subverts, for the purposes of humour, the idea that you should not treat your job as a joke. In the MPS that was reversed and the syndrome was treating your joke as a job, taking it seriously----"

A Yes, exactly.

Q -- expecting recognition.”

A Yes.

Q Can I ask, what do you mean by “recognition” here?

A Well, there was none whatsoever [Redact]

A I have spoken to [Redact] [Gist: professionals] who were absolutely stunned at the way I was treated.

Q Yes, yes, yes, yes.

A I’m not asking for sympathy. That’s just the way it was.

Q Yes, yes. When you talk about this you should not treat your joke as a job----

A Yes.

Q -- and you say that this was being banded around the MPS----

A Yes.

Q -- does it follow from that that there was a certain collective sense of cynicism, a sort of disenchantment?

A Yes. In other words, you mustn’t, if you start to take this job too seriously----

Q Yes.

A -- you won’t perform properly or, if something bad happens, well it is all a joke, what do you expect, this is what the job is like.

Q Yes. And did that straddle the SDS and Special Branch or was it particular to the SDS?

A I would say it was particularly prevalent within uniform, where I was before----

Q Okay.

A -- (inaudible) joined Special Branch, so you had an old school (inaudible) going into Special Branch, where obviously everybody served in uniform first.

Q Yes.

A Where the attitude was extremely cynical.

Q Right.

A And "What do you expect?"

Q Yes.

A You know "Don't expect me to give you any praise or commendations or whatever. This is the job. You know, just do it. Don't expect recognition, because you won't get it".

Q Yes.

A I know the Security Services have had the same problem----

Q Yes.

A -- on their man management. I know a lot of them and it has been a common characteristic in there about lack of recognition.

Q Yes.

A So it is a common characteristic within the service.

Q Yes, and within where the job that you are undertaking is incredibly stressful.

A Yes.

Q Final issue, as I am aware that our time is up, in terms of the reasons that you give for your deployment ending----

A Yes.

Q -- you say that you asked for it to end because *[Redact]* *[Gist: of an event]* which you recognised was caused by stress.

A It was very unusual for me.

Q Yes.

A Yes.

*[Redact]*

Q There was this risk that we have discussed about *[Redact]* this growing sense of paranoia----

A Exactly.

Q -- was becoming overwhelming. [Redact]

MS MONAHAN Thank you. I have no further questions.

WITNESS Thank you.

CHAIRMAN Mr Sanders.

MR SANDERS No, thank you, Sir.

[Redact]

Q To what extent did the public order aspect of your deployment have any significance?

A It had a major, or I think that was my primary function [Redact]. And I know for a fact that I was able to give a lot of valuable intelligence back to Uniform Branch, me and my superior officers, about certain forthcoming events and demonstrations. Even if they never materialised, at least they had prior warning of it.

CHAIRMAN Thank you very much indeed.

WITNESS Thank you, Sir.

CHAIRMAN I am very grateful to you for coming and spending the whole morning---

WITNESS Thank you.

CHAIRMAN -- giving fascinating evidence about [Redact] years ago.

WITNESS I can't say it is enjoyable, but it has been very interesting.

CHAIRMAN We can only have an hour for lunch. We will resume at five past two.

(Adjourned for a short while)