

**THE DIRECTORATE OF LEGAL SERVICES  
THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE**

**Witness Statement - Employment Tribunal**

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**Title of Action:** Charles Shoebridge -v- The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

**Witness:** Robert Cox

**Occupation:** Chief Press Officer

**Address:** Directorate of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service, New Scotland Yard, Broadway, London

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**I confirm that the contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief**

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1. I have been the Chief Press Officer for the Directorate of Public Affairs 'DPA' since October 2000. Prior to this I was the Assistant Director for Public Affairs with responsibility for internal communication. I was also the Press Officer responsible for Terrorist Branch for about seven years during the 1980's to 1990's. The function of DPA is to provide support on media issues for the Metropolitan Police Service through the 24-hour Press Bureau, four area press offices and specialist press officers. DPA also generates corporate publicity and communicates news and messages across the MPS.

2. I have been referred to a copy of the Further Particulars of Claim provided by Charles Shoebridge, the Claimant in this case. I have been asked to detail any involvement that I have had with the media concerning Mr Shoebridge. I confirm

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that in about late December 2001 or early January 2002 that the Press Office received an enquiry from the Independent on Sunday about Mr Shoebridge. As I recall this matter was referred to me to deal with as the member of staff in Press Office, who received the call, was uncertain how to respond to it. I cannot however now recall who initially received the call from the Independent. The journalist whom I spoke to from the Independent was Severin Carroll. He informed me that the Independent were interested in the career history of Mr Shoebridge. Mr Carroll indicated that the reason for the enquiry was that Mr Shoebridge had made various media appearances as an expert in subjects such as terrorism and policing. As I recall, the Independent wanted to produce an article about Mr Shoebridge. The Independent wanted to know where Mr Shoebridge had acquired the experience for this role and ultimately they wanted details of his career history.

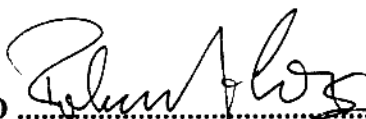
3. I would point out that I had no knowledge of Mr Shoebridge at this time. For instance, I was unaware that he was previously a police officer and, having seen him on television, I thought that he had a military background. To put this in context I am not routinely aware of the full extent of information stored by Press Bureau nor the enquiries that Press Bureau receives on a daily basis. I tend to deal with the more complicated issues arising in the Bureau hence I necessarily would not routinely be aware of the full extent of information passing from the Bureau nor the enquiries in respect of the same received from the media.
4. Even though there was some information relating to Mr Shoebridge recorded on the Press Bureau Log, I was unaware of the content of this until I accessed it

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following the enquiry from the Independent. The information retained was in relation to the media interest that followed an employment tribunal hearing which had taken place some time earlier. It was apparent from the Press Bureau log that the MPS Directorate of Legal Services had previously provided advice to Press Office. This was on the extent of any information that the MPS could release to the media following enquiries at the time of the employment tribunal hearing.

5. I had concerns about releasing any information to the Independent and I therefore sought legal advice on this from the Directorate of Legal Services. My written request for advice to the Directorate of Legal Services recounted that Press Bureau had received an inquiry from the Independent on Sunday. It indicated that The Independent wanted to be informed of the Applicant's service history and that they wanted this to be 'on the record'. The note indicated that the Independent claimed that the Applicant was frequently seen on television news programmes where he was claiming to be an 'expert' on various matters ranging from terrorism to public order.
  
6. I received legal advice on this issue and in accordance with this, I declined to provide any information to the Independent. I informed Severin Carroll of the Independent that the MPS were unable to assist them as it could not provide them with any information, either 'on' or 'off the record'. This even precluded confirmation by Press Office that Mr Shoebridge had previously been a police officer. I did not make any entry on the Press Bureau Log in respect of this in view of the fact that I did not disclose any information to the Independent.

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Generally, log entries are only made to reflect pre-prepared press lines by the MPS or if some information has been disclosed to the media.

7. Some time after this, in about 2003, Severin Carroll from the Independent asked to come and see me. I agreed and met with him. This is not an unusual occurrence as I regularly meet with journalists. It was apparent from this meeting that Severin Carroll had a considerable amount of information about Mr Shoebridge, for instance, that he had a website. It seemed apparent that he had done a lot of research into Mr Shoebridge. As I recall however Severin Carroll was still trying to establish Mr Shoebridge's credentials as a terrorist expert and he wanted confirmation of Mr Shoebridge's career history. I informed Severin Carroll, that I was unable to divulge this information nor any other information about Mr Shoebridge to him. I pointed out that this was in accordance with the legal advice which I had previously received. I was also unaware of Mr Shoebridge's career history hence I could not in any event have provided this information to Severin Carroll.
8. As far as I understand the Independent did not subsequently publish an article about Mr Shoebridge.
9. I would point out that the only information relating to Mr Shoebridge that was available to me via the Press Bureau log was in relation to the employment tribunal issues. This did not include details of Mr Shoebridge's career history. I also did not have access to Mr Shoebridge's personnel record nor any computer record detailing this. The only personnel records retained by DPA, with the

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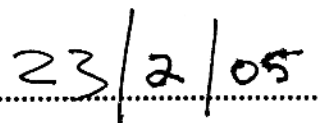
exception of those relating to staff working at DPA, are generally CV's relating to senior officers for disclosure to the media when there is likely to be press interest. For instance, information of this nature was recently disclosed following the announcement of the appointment of Sir Ian Blair as the next Commissioner. I reiterate that even now I am unaware of the full details of Mr Shoebridge's career history apart from that he served at Fulham. This features on the Press Bureau Log.

10. If any enquiries are received from the media, the details of any response given is entered onto the Press Bureau log. There are guidelines in place within DPA in relation to the provision of information to the media about serving or former members of personnel. The guidelines indicate that such information is confidential and that, in the absence of the consent of the individual concerned, details should not be disclosed. I understand that the main concern that led to these guidelines was compliance with the Data Protection Act. Whilst these guidelines were not formalised at the time that I received the enquiry from the Independent relating to Mr Shoebridge, the legal advice which I received from the MPS Directorate of Legal Services was in accordance with the content; primarily that no information could be disclosed to the media. Occasionally, personnel in the MPS speak directly to the press. For instance if there is a local policing incident where a senior officer may be interviewed at the scene. The Press Bureau would not necessarily be aware of this and accordingly, if this was the case, details of the contact would not be included on the Press Bureau log. In my experience, the well established sections of the media such as national newspapers

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and broadcasters will however contact Press Bureau direct as they are generally aware of the central contact points.

11. I have been asked about a phone call to ITN which is referred to in Mr Shoebridge's Further Particulars of his claim. He states that this phone call was made on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2003 between 1230 and 1300 that day. I understand that efforts to trace this phone call have confirmed that it was made from my phone extension, number 6-2475. The records also show that the call was made to telephone number 0207 430 4170, which I also understand is a number at ITN.
12. I cannot recall making this telephone call. I assume that I must have in view of the results of the investigation. It is unusual for me to telephone journalists as I generally receive calls from them as opposed to pro-actively contacting them. I note that the telephone number for ITN, according to the investigative records of this, seems to show an individual's extension number. I do not recognise the number. This leads me to conclude that I probably called this number in response to a telephone message requesting that I do so. Otherwise I would use the general Newsdesk number for ITN which is 0207 430 4000. The Newsdesk number is the number for ITN which is recorded in the Bureau.
13. On 25th November 2004 I spoke to Dan Rivers, the Crime Correspondent at ITN. I asked him if he could provide a running log of the 1230pm news on Nov 19th 2003. He could not readily access it but with help of a colleague he said the main stories of that day were the visit of the President of the USA to London, the issue of an arrest warrant for Michael Jackson, and the Daily Mirror reporter who was

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employed as a footman at Buckingham Palace. I also asked him who had the extension 0207 430 4170. He rang the number and told me it was Martha. He advised me that she is a facilitator who books guest speakers for the programme. She works with someone called Storms. I understand that Mr Shoebridge has confirmed that the person at ITN who allegedly received the call from New Scotland Yard, was Martha Collins. I do not know Martha Collins or someone called Storms at ITN and do not recall ever speaking to them. I also would not have a need to speak to a 'facilitator' as I generally speak to Crime Correspondents direct.

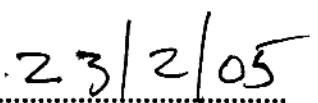
14. Assuming that I did make the telephone call and therefore I am the 'caller' referred to, I deny the allegation that I suggested the name of someone whom ITN should use instead of Mr Shoebridge. I did not state this and I would not have provided such advice. This was particularly the case in light of the previous legal advice which I had received that I should not disclose any information on Mr Shoebridge nor indeed make any comment about him. I also deny the allegation that I offered to help ITN in the future by supplying, for example, advance notice of the Prime Minister's parliamentary questions. I did not make any such offer to ITN. Furthermore I have no knowledge of nor indeed access to the advance notice of the Prime Minister's parliamentary questions.

15. I can confirm that my diary indicates that I met with Tom Bradbury from ITN on 1st December 2003. He had just taken over as the new Home Affairs Editor of ITN. In addition to this, at about this time, ITN were appointing a new crime correspondent. A number of the prospective candidates for this post came to see

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me in order to seek my advice on issues involving the MPS. I did not discuss Mr Shoebridge with Tom Bradbury nor any of the candidates who came into see me nor did any of them raise this with me.



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