

**THE LEVESON INQUIRY**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF STEVEN NOTT**

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I, **STEVEN NOTT** will say as follows:-

1. I make this statement in response to a request for further information from the Leveson Inquiry which may be pertinent to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.
  
2. I also exhibit the following documents which I refer to in this statement:
  - i. Remittance Advice from MGN Limited dated 20 September 1999 [ ];
  - ii. South Wales Argus article titled "Anybody can hear private messages" dated 13 October 1999 [ ];
  - iii. Document produced by me titled "The truth about Vodafone" dated 28 January 2000 [ ];
  - iv. Mail On Sunday article "Mobile Phone Snooper Scam" dated 7 May 2000 [ ];
  - v. List of telephone numbers [ ];
  - vi. Letter from John Prescott dated 30 March 2011 [ ];
  - vii. Radio 5 transcript dated 22 October 1999 [ ];
  - viii. Screenshot of Twitter [ ];
  - ix. The Independent article "Hacking scandal Britain" dated 6 August 2011 [ ];
  - x. The Guardian Greenslade Blog dated 7 August 2011 [ ];

- xi. BBC News article "Phone hacking whistleblower Steven Nott went unheard" dated 6 August 2011 [ ];
- xii. Email from Paul Crosbie dated 17 July 2011 [ ].

### **Background**

- 3. I currently work as a delivery driver. I have never worked in the media and my evidence is presented is a member of the general public.
  
- 4. In 1999 I had an issue with accessing my mobile telephone messages and I contacted my service provider, Vodafone. I was advised by Vodafone that I could access my mobile telephone messages via a default number which they provided over the phone to me.
  
- 5. I attempted to get Vodafone to change their system as the security risks were enormous. I called Vodafone on various occasions expressing my concerns at the issues with voicemail security. Vodafone always said that this was not an issue and repeatedly said that there were instructions in all of the handbooks and manuals about the default number 3333 and the way to access from another telephone. I do not know if there was an instruction to change the default number or if there was guidance on how to access calls using this number. At no time could I find an instruction manual or handbook with this information in. I always felt 'fobbed' off by their attitude and my concerns were never treated with any seriousness by Vodafone.

### **Contact with the press**

- 6. Vodafone did not see the risks and I therefore contacted Oonagh Blackman, a journalist (special projects editor ) at The Daily Mirror, on 28 August 1999 and explained the problem. Ms Blackman assured me that the story could make headlines because of its implications and she decided to look into it. She

called me back 10 minutes after I had spoken to her and confirmed that what I had told was correct as she had tried it on a few numbers she had. She then went on to explain that she would put a few reporters onto this and would have them ringing up publicly profiled people in and around London. She said the story was going to be one of the biggest headlines that decade. I kept in touch with Ms. Blackman daily as I was keen to know what was going on as I thought I had unearthed a major story. I was told by Ms. Blackman because of the large amount of mobile numbers they had to contact, it was taking them longer than expected. I was told to be patient.

7. After 12 days Ms Blackman said they were not interested anymore. She said that the story probably would not make the paper. I accused The Daily Mirror of keeping the phone hacking method for their own purposes. Ms Blackman threatened me with court action if I told anyone. The Daily Mirror sent me a payment of £100 for the story which was never published. I did not expect this payment from them. *[Exhibit i]*
  
8. I then contacted Paul Crosbie, a journalist at The Sun newspaper, and he invited me into News International in Wapping and discussed the seriousness of the story with me. In his words he could not believe that The Daily Mirror had not published the story. We discussed the security implications from the Royal family, politicians and celebrities. His words were 'The Daily Mirror was very naughty'. He was aware of how much an impact such a story would have. He told me that they would probably print the story overnight, or within 48 hours. After this meeting nothing happened and the story was not printed.
  
9. I have subsequently contacted Paul Crosbie, who provided an explanation of why the story was not taken any further. *[Exhibit xii]*

**Contact with other agencies**

10. I called and wrote to New Scotland Yard expressing my concerns and telling them I may have inadvertently given two tabloid newspapers an easy way to get news scoops [Exhibit iii] I did not receive a reply to this letter.

11. I wrote to the Department of Trade and Industry, the Home Office and HM Customs and Excise explaining the same [Exhibit iii] I did not receive a reply to these letters.

12. I started to call various people to report my concerns and I have set out below some of the telephone calls I made and what the outcome was:

- o MI5 London - I called them and they said thank you for the information. I never heard from them again;
- o The National Council for Civil Liberties – I cannot remember the contents of this call;
- o Orange Press Office – I spoke to Ben Richardson who worked in the Press Office at Orange and was fascinated by the story at the time and asked me to keep in touch;
- o Chris Choi at ITN - He was very excited and sent a news crew to film me at my house; he said that it would be in the evening news. Nothing happened. I called Chris Choi many times and he wasn't interested anymore. Eventually Chris Choi was rude to me and told me to stop hassling him;
- o One2One - I called them asking them about their security and to tell them about Vodafone and my story;
- o BT Cellnet – I asked about their security with their voicemail and warning them about Vodafone's lack of security and my story;
- o Watchdog - I called them no end of times and they called me back to ask me about my story once. Nothing was ever done about the story by Watchdog;

- Nicola Carslaw at the BBC - I called The BBC and they got me on Radio 5 Live on 22 October 1999 to talk about the security issue with Mike Caldwell from Vodafone Newbury HQ. [Exhibit vii]. I kept in touch with Ms Carslaw for weeks after Radio 5 broadcast. I told her everything and who I had told. She now is partner with Paul Crosbie (formerly consumer affairs for The Sun) at Crosbie Communications;
- Mr M Soehnlein at Mannesmann Dusseldorf - I called warning him of Vodafone security loophole. Vodafone did not want a fuss, they were going through a takeover at the time with Mannesman German Mobile group; Mr Soehnlein did not seem interested.
- The BBC also filmed me in the Blue Peter garden for when the news broke as they said there was no way it would be kept quiet as it was too important. Nothing happened after that.

13. I kept a handwritten list of the people that I contacted during that time [Exhibit v]

14. The South Wales Argus ran a story about me and what I had discovered. This was 13 October 1999 [Exhibit ii]. I have contacted the South Wales Argus many times this year and they were not interested in my story this time around or the fact they were one of the first to break a 'phone hacking' story in the UK in 1999.

15. I called my Member of Parliament, Paul Murphy. He did not want to know and said it had nothing to do with him. This was in early 2000. At the time Paul Murphy was Secretary of State for Wales and my local MP. I had hoped he would help me but this was not to be. I have recently had contact with Paul Murphy MP on 31 August 2011 and he does not remember my call and said his phone records do not go back that far anyway. Mr Murphy said he was going to write some letters and speak to Shaun Woodward MP who employed Ms. Blackman as a Special Adviser from 2007 after leaving the Daily Mirror as

Political Editor. I have recently spoken to Paul Murphy MP and he suggested I contacted Shaun Woodward MP to ask further questions relating to Oonagh Blackman.

16. I wrote to the DTI again for fear that The Daily Mirror who had problems with insider trader dealing with James Hipwell and Anu Boyrhuil were possibly using the phone hacking method for their own purposes seeing as I had told The Daily Mirror first. I had no reply. It was the same letter I sent on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2000 but with an added handwritten letter attached voicing my concerns over the stock dealing and phone hacking connections. I do not have a copy of the hand written letter only the letter called 'The Truth about Vodafone'
17. In 2005/6 two people were arrested and imprisoned for phone hacking, Glen Mulcaire and Clive Goodman. I thought that was the end of it and decided not to get involved.
18. An article called "Mobile Phone Snooper Scam" was published on 7 May 2000 in the Mail on Sunday and I thought it was because of my efforts to raise the alarm. However, in the story it says the source was a city banker. [Exhibit iv]

#### **Current situation**

19. In late 2010 the story of phone hacking was in the news again with newspapers and television companies saying that phone hacking started in 2005. I decided to call Operation Weeting as I thought my information was far too important not to tell. I knew that the information the newspapers and

television stations had about the year that phone hacking had started was incorrect.

20. I proceeded to call various newspapers, The Guardian, The Observer, The Independent, The Telegraph, London Evening Standard, The South Wales Argus, Daily Mail and tell them my story. None of them were interested.

21. I then started to call the solicitors of those people apparently been phone hacked so they could know more. I sent information to Mark Lewis, Charlotte Harris and Farooq Bajwah. I have forwarded emails to you from all of these lawyers.

22. I was invited down to Mayfair in London by Farooq Bajwah and made a statement for one of the civil cases suing Newsgroup and Glen Mulcaire.

23. Operation Weeting interviewed me on 18 July 2011. I told them my story. Operation Weeting explained my information was OK to share with anyone, but preferred me not to discuss anything about our meeting with anyone, however, they said I could not stop promoting my story.

24. Because the newspapers were not interested but social media were I set up a website in mid July 2011. [www.hackergate.co.uk](http://www.hackergate.co.uk) and started to spread my story across social media websites.

25. BBC news website, Daily Mail Online and Private Eye magazine have recently run a story about 'Whistleblower went unheard' "it's all my fault". All of these articles are on my website and were not printed. The Daily Mail Online article was published online on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2011 using an image of mine from Facebook. I had no communication with the Daily Mail and wondered how they got my story.
26. I have been in touch with Alistair Campbell, Chris Bryant MP, Tom Watson MP, Louise Mensch, Therese Coffey MP, Rt Hon Lord Prescott [*Exhibit vi*] and tried to contact Philip Davies MP. I have forwarded emails from Chris Bryant, Louise Mensch (Bagshawe) MP and Alistair Campbell. Tom Watson MP and Therese Coffey I have spoken to through Twitter. I have not been asked by any of them about anything. I only directed them to my website to read my story. Therese Coffey Mp suggested I contact The Leveson Inquiry. They seem uninterested even though they seem to be pursuing the phonehacking scandal in their own ways.
27. I have recently requested help from my MP Paul Murphy again. However, I have been trying to contact him and had no reply from any emails over the past few weeks even though he said to keep in touch.
28. I contacted Radio 5 live in February 2011 and had contact with Ellie Reuter. She was very interested in my story and helped by locating the transcript of the 5 Live show from 22 October 1999 with myself, Adam Kirtley (reporter) and Mike Caldwell from Vodafone HQ. [*Exhibit vii*].
29. I had a telephone phone call from the Brian Meakin at the BBC in Cardiff asking to interview me for the Welsh Political programme "Dragons Eye". My story was not covered in very much detail. This was aired on 1 July 2011 BBC1 Wales.

30. I contacted many newspapers this year and most of them all seemed very interested to start but then lost interest. Amelia Hill at The Guardian seemed the most excited by my story and said it would be a great story especially if I had found the news clipping from The South Wales Argus. She asked me to try and find it. I did find it after many hours of research at Newport Reference Library and offered it to her by email. She told me that my story was not important and was historical. Amelia Hill said my story was not news.
31. I got so fed up with trying to get my story out again, I contacted Mark Houldey at "cash4yourstory" (online website that sells your story to the highest bidder) and he told me my story was great and could demand a high price. After three days Mark Houldey said the papers were not interested as my story had been covered before. My story had never been covered before.
32. I contacted Charlotte Harris, a media lawyer who was very excited at what I had emailed her. She telephoned me and said she would arrange for Channel 4 to have the exclusive story. I explained that my story was not exclusive and I had already told some people. She was not happy with me for telling people and said I was on my own. She has not contacted me after that phone call.
33. I have sent emails to Mark Lewis, TH Law, the Dowler family Lawyer. He has not shown any interest whatsoever in my story, however, he has always replied to my emails with a 'thanks' reply.
34. I have also received a threat on Twitter. I do not know where the threat came from, but it is in the name Oonagh Blackman [Exhibit viii]. I had to take it

seriously and informed my local Police. I was then interviewed. They had contact with The Metropolitan Police and told me they had 'marked' my house so if anything came in from my street or telephone numbers it would be treated as priority.

35. However, I have had some positive responses to my website, which have included, Matt Blake, a crime correspondent for the Independent newspaper contacting me through Twitter but he did title the story 'Its all my fault, says salesman'.

36. I have had quite a lot of online publicity with my story from August 6<sup>th</sup> 2011 and can be found easily by typing my name into a search engine.

37. Roy Greenslade from The Guardian had seen my website and ran a blog based on other news events coming out at the same time 6<sup>th</sup> August and 7<sup>th</sup> August 2011 [*Exhibit x*]

38. Matt Prodger from the BBC saw my story on Twitter and contacted me, this is how the BBC News website knew about my story. [*Exhibit xi*] Matt Prodger was very interested to know who my Daily mirror contact was but when I told him it was Oonagh Blackman he then became uninterested.

39. As stated above, I have tried over the last 12 years to alert the mobile telephone companies and the media to the possibilities of phone hacking following my discovery in 1999.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

Dated:

3rd November 2011