Police unlawfully intercepted Mirror reporter's phone records after disgraced chief's lies were exposed

Force unlawfully snooped on us and others after its £191,000-a-year Chief Constable, later sacked in disgrace, had an affair with a colleague, lied about it, and spent thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money on jollies with her

BY JEREMY ARMSTRONG
22:36, 18 DEC 2016  UPDATED 23:01, 18 DEC 2016

A police force last night faced stinging criticism for unlawfully snooping on the Daily Mirror after we revealed its Chief Constable blew taxpayers’ cash to conduct an affair with a colleague.

Bosses used powers designed to track terrorists and dangerous criminals to access my phone records as well as those of other journalists, officers and a solicitor in a bid to find who was leaking information about alleged racism within its ranks.
We had told how £191,000-a-year Cleveland Chief Constable Sean Price was having a fling with his chief staff officer Heather Eastwood.

He claimed the romance started after he had left his wife Jackie, but that turned out to be a lie.

Later sacked for gross misconduct and branded a liar and a bully, he also spent £57,800 on a force credit card, which included bills for hotels and flowers.


And a tribunal in London heard it breached communication data powers to get hold of the information.

It claimed the move was done by mistake.

But former Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper branded the breach "very serious".
Price leaves his home yesterday  (Photo: Ben Lack Photography Ltd)

- Snoopers' Charter passes into law giving British intelligence services sweeping internet surveillance powers

The Commons Home Affairs Select Committee chairwoman said: “Communications data powers exist so the police can investigate serious crimes, not so they can prevent journalists holding them to account.

"In a democracy the freedom of the Press is incredibly important and needs to be protected not undermined."

Stockton North Labour MP Alex Cunningham added: “As a former journalist, I know how precious the protections that exist for the media are.

“For a police force to stand up in court and admit it misused security powers to spy on its own officers, lawyers, newspaper offices and reporters beggars belief.” Redcar’s Labour MP Anna Turley branded the snooping “shocking”.

She said: “Having a free Press in this country is a vital part of our democracy. We do not live in a police state."

The Investigation Powers Tribunal in London was told our reporter's calls were checked between January 1 and May 1, 2012, under RIPPA. Its excessive use for information other than terror or crime is a threat to civil liberties.

At the time, a “damning” review into racism and other confidential documents within the force had been leaked and bosses were trying to find the source.
Shamed Sean Price as top cop (Photo: PA)
The force also allegedly snooped on former officers Mark Dias and Steve Matthews, Northern Echo reporters Graeme Hetherington and Julia Breen and a lawyer. It denies the claim.

But tribunal judges indicated their ruling, due in the New Year, would find it acted unlawfully on this matter. They also raised concerns about the amount of data seized and the length of the request – four months’ worth of Mirror records.

Mr Dias and Mr Matthews claimed an equality report was in the public interest. Mr Dias told how he had been standing up to racism in the police.

He said: “They used RIPA to identify contacts between police officers, members of the public and journalists. It was a fishing expedition and unlawful.”

Mr Matthews’ representative Hugh Tomlinson QC added: “The tribunal indicated it will find the accessing of communications was unlawful. These are supposed to be draconian powers used in extreme circumstances.”

In 2010, the Mirror told how Price had started a fling with Eastwood, now his wife. An internal report by Cleveland Police told how he tried to cover up his affair when we first broke the story.
Eastwood later married her boss (Photo: Ben Lack Photography Ltd)

Terror plot foiled "in its final few hours" after spooks hack attackers' phones and emails

But in interviews with officers investigating alleged corruption, Price admitted the affair started in 2009, when he was still in the £750,000 home he shared with Jackie and their young son.

The report into his conduct said the information released on his behalf was “inaccurate and misleading”. It added: “He allowed the view to be reported that they had met socially after they both separated. This was untrue.”

And the probe into their conduct detailed tens of thousands of pounds of public cash spent on trips abroad.

Price blew £57,800 on his force credit card over five years to June 2011. He stayed at top London hotels with Eastwood and splashed out on food, travel and drink.

Rooms were booked but not used as they apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were “necessary and for a policing purpose”.

But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: “One of my key tasks was to find a pub with the football on!!!”

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: “On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with Eastwood.”
Pair stayed in Estonia capital Tallinn (Photo: Hemis.fr RM)

Couple went to Denver, US (Photo: AWL Images RM)

UK security ‘tailing’ to protect Brits from fraud and cyber criminals warn experts

Operation Sacristy, which looked at allegations of corruption, said the evidence was “strongly suggestive of dishonest use of significant public funds to the benefit of Price’s relationship”.

He told investigators that “at no time did I cause the Mirror to report that my relationship with Heather had begun later than it had. I did not speak to any reporter at the Mirror about this matter”.

But the probe found “three occasions” prior to the story where the evidence suggested that they shared a room.

Five months after our phone records were accessed, Price became the first chief constable to be sacked in 35 years.

We also told how the force tried to claim back £330,000 in bonuses paid to him. That was later dropped.

Price was yesterday spotted leaving his home in Northallerton, North Yorks. He made no comment.

Cleveland Police said: “We have fully co-operated with the tribunal and process and await the determination of the panel in the coming weeks.”
Strictly Ore: My incredible story

EXCLUSIVE: Winner reveals extraordinary journey to glitterball victory

CHEATING TOP COP & THE SPY SCANDAL

Police unlawfully intercepted Mirror reporter's phone records after chief's lies exposed
Fox squashes Farage talk of role as UK 'bridge' to Trump

BY BEN GLAZE Deputy Political Editor

NO 1. Farage's offer of being a 'bridge' to Donald Trump has been slapped down.
International Trade Secretary Liam Fox said the UK had successfully dealt with incoming US president in the past.

He asked: "We have a perfectly good ambassador. Last time I looked there was no other vacancy.

The Tory also denied the former UKIP leader's claim that Cabinet ministers had been buzzing from talking to him. He said, "I have not had any such instruction." Mr Farage had accused Downings Street of "small-minded, petty, tribal" politics in not acknowledging him and said Mr Trump was a "big Anglophobe" which would be good for the prospects of a trade deal.

The pair were pictured together grinning when Mr Farage was the first senior UK politician to visit the US after the election victory.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage had accused Downing Street of "small-minded, petty, tribal" politics in not acknowledging him and said Mr Trump was a "big Anglophobe" which would be good for the prospects of a trade deal.

The pair were pictured together grinning when Mr Farage was the first senior UK politician to visit the US after the election victory.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

The pair were pictured together grinning when Mr Farage was the first senior UK politician to visit the US after the election victory.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

EXCLUSIVE

A POLICE force last night faced stinging criticism from a in a "bridge' to Trump

BY BEN GLAZE Deputy Political Editor

NO 1. Farage's offer of being a 'bridge' to Donald Trump has been slapped down.
International Trade Secretary Liam Fox said the US had successfully dealt with incoming US president in the past.

"We have a perfectly good ambassador. Last time I looked there was no other vacancy.

The Tory also denied the former UKIP leader's claim that Cabinet ministers had been buzzing from talking to him. He said, "I have not had any such instruction."

Mr Farage had accused Downing Street of "small-minded, petty, tribal" politics in not acknowledging him and said Mr Trump was a "big Anglophobe" which would be good for the prospects of a trade deal.

The pair were pictured together grinning when Mr Farage was the first senior UK politician to visit the US after the election victory.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said."

EXCLUSIVE

A POLICE force last night faced stinging criticism from an in a "bridge' to Trump

BY BEN GLAZE Deputy Political Editor

NO 1. Farage's offer of being a 'bridge' to Donald Trump has been slapped down.
International Trade Secretary Liam Fox said the US had successfully dealt with incoming US president in the past.

"We have a perfectly good ambassador. Last time I looked there was no other vacancy.

The Tory also denied the former UKIP leader's claim that Cabinet ministers had been buzzing from talking to him. He said, "I have not had any such instruction."

Mr Farage had accused Downing Street of "small-minded, petty, tribal" politics in not acknowledging him and said Mr Trump was a "big Anglophobe" which would be good for the prospects of a trade deal.

The pair were pictured together grinning when Mr Farage was the first senior UK politician to visit the US after the election victory.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said."

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

EXCLUSIVE

A POLICE force last night faced stinging criticism from an in a "bridge' to Trump

BY BEN GLAZE Deputy Political Editor

NO 1. Farage's offer of being a 'bridge' to Donald Trump has been slapped down.
International Trade Secretary Liam Fox said the US had successfully dealt with incoming US president in the past.

"We have a perfectly good ambassador. Last time I looked there was no other vacancy.

The Tory also denied the former UKIP leader's claim that Cabinet ministers had been buzzing from talking to him. He said, "I have not had any such instruction."

Mr Farage had accused Downing Street of "small-minded, petty, tribal" politics in not acknowledging him and said Mr Trump was a "big Anglophobe" which would be good for the prospects of a trade deal.

The pair were pictured together grinning when Mr Farage was the first senior UK politician to visit the US after the election victory.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said."

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

EXCLUSIVE

A POLICE force last night faced stinging criticism from an in a "bridge' to Trump

BY BEN GLAZE Deputy Political Editor

NO 1. Farage's offer of being a 'bridge' to Donald Trump has been slapped down.
International Trade Secretary Liam Fox said the US had successfully dealt with incoming US president in the past.

"We have a perfectly good ambassador. Last time I looked there was no other vacancy.

The Tory also denied the former UKIP leader's claim that Cabinet ministers had been buzzing from talking to him. He said, "I have not had any such instruction."

Mr Farage had accused Downing Street of "small-minded, petty, tribal" politics in not acknowledging him and said Mr Trump was a "big Anglophobe" which would be good for the prospects of a trade deal.

The pair were pictured together grinning when Mr Farage was the first senior UK politician to visit the US after the election victory.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said."

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

EXCLUSIVE

A POLICE force last night faced stinging criticism from an in a "bridge' to Trump

BY BEN GLAZE Deputy Political Editor

NO 1. Farage's offer of being a 'bridge' to Donald Trump has been slapped down.
International Trade Secretary Liam Fox said the US had successfully dealt with incoming US president in the past.

"We have a perfectly good ambassador. Last time I looked there was no other vacancy.

The Tory also denied the former UKIP leader's claim that Cabinet ministers had been buzzing from talking to him. He said, "I have not had any such instruction."

Mr Farage had accused Downing Street of "small-minded, petty, tribal" politics in not acknowledging him and said Mr Trump was a "big Anglophobe" which would be good for the prospects of a trade deal.

The pair were pictured together grinning when Mr Farage was the first senior UK politician to visit the US after the election victory.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said."

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.

"I have no such instruction," Mr Farage said.
ABUSE OF POWER BY POLICE

Spy Cops

Force unlawfully snooped on us & others after its £191,000-a-year Chief Constable, later sacked in disgrace, had an affair with a colleague, lied about it, and spent thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money on jollies with her.

Information released on his behalf was "immaculate and misleading". It added, "He allowed the view to be reported that they had met socially after they both separated. That was untrue."

And the probe into their conduct resulted in thousands of pounds of public cash spent on trips abroad.

Price said, "One of key costs was to find a pub with the football on!" Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.

But the report stated: "On occasions, Price did use public funds in furtherance of his personal relationship with her." Operation Jactry, which looked at allegations of corruption, said Price "apparently tried to hide their relationship. The couple went to conferences in Estonia and Denver, USA. Eastwood claimed all the trips were "necessary and for a policing purpose". But during one from Estonian capital Tallinn, she emailed her mum and told her: "One of my key costs was to find a pub with the football on!"

Price had insisted no public money had been used to accommodate them.
Cheating cop who accessed Mirror phone records claims his phone was also monitored

Sean Price, 59, was sacked from his £191,000-a-year job with Cleveland Police four years ago after we told of his affair with a colleague.
The cheating policeman at the centre of the Mirror data scandal has claimed his phone was monitored too.

Sean Price, 59, was sacked from his £191,000-a-year job with Cleveland Police four years ago after we told of his affair with a colleague.

The disgraced Chief Constable hid his fling with his ex-chief staff officer Heather Eastwood, 45, after spending thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money on jollies with her around the globe.

Cleveland Police has admitted accessing Mirror phone records for four months from Jan 1 to May 1, 2012 - at the time we ran a number of stories on Price and the long-running investigation into claims of his corruption.

Five months later, he became the first chief constable to be sacked in 35 years, branded 'a liar and a...
Cheating cop who accessed friend’s school bullied.”

Russian ambassador shot dead: Latest updates after Andrei Karlov gunned down at art exhibition

Berlin Christmas Market Truck Attack: Terror attack feared in Berlin as truck ploughs through packed Christmas market, killing and injuring shoppers

Russian Ambassador Assassinated: Shocking footage shows moment Russian ambassador to Turkey repeatedly shot and killed ‘in revenge for Aleppo’
Sean Price was sacked from his job as a chief constable. (Photo: PA)

At his home near Northallerton, North Yorks, the ex police chief said: "I think my phone was probably being monitored as well at the same time.

"But I didn't order anything of that nature." He later added: "None of this happened while I was in office.

"So there is nothing I can say about it because I know nothing about it.

"There is no link between me and this course of action it happened after I left the force."

Wearing his Everton shirt before the derby match, the dad-of-two was asked if he got information from a specific officer during the course of the inquiry into his alleged corruption.

He pondered before replying: "It doesn't ring a bell I'm afraid."
But officers were trying to trace the source of our stories - despite Cleveland Police claims that they breached data powers 'by mistake'.

Sean Price also claims his phone was monitored. (Photo: North News & Pictures)
An e-mail from Det Insp Tony Rock, sent on May 3, 2012, stated: “The recent Operation Leven leaks to the Daily Mirror are going to be even more difficult to pursue as a number of forces have been involved in this investigation.

“There is some indication that the information to the Daily Mirror came from a source.

“I also have some reservations that it has been so high profile that there will have been background Facebook and Twitter chat which may have been picked up and then presented to us as from an ‘unnamed police source’ to illicit a response.”

Our records were taken under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), which regulates public bodies intercepting communications. But it was meant to detect serious crime and terrorism.

Cleveland Police admitted obtaining mobile phone records from three reporters, a solicitor and two police officers at an Investigatory Powers Tribunal last week.
Cleveland Police admitted obtaining mobile phone records from three reporters (Photo: Evening Gazette)

They were looking for the officers behind the leak of a “damning” review into racism and other confidential documents.

Ex-officers Mark Dias and Steve Matthews claim leaking an equality report and an internal grievance was in the public interest.

They have now complained to Barry Copping, the Cleveland police and crime commissioner, about the ‘serious corruption’ in the force aggravated by discrimination on the grounds of race.

Mark claimed officers were involved in ‘covering up’ the unlawful use of surveillance relating to RIPA applications.

He warned complaints had to be dealt with swiftly so that officers did not retire or leave before an inquiry was carried out.

Cleveland Police said: “We have fully co-operated with the investigatory powers tribunal and process and await the determination of the panel in the coming weeks.”