



Stephen Lawrence

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Stephen Lawrence: Met chief 'failed to tell' mother about police spying

Bernard Hogan-Howe accused of withholding information when he met Doreen Lawrence to discuss claims of covert operation

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Wed 17 Jul 2013 19.34 BST

Britain's most senior police officer failed to tell [Doreen Lawrence](#), the mother of murdered teenager Stephen, that undercover spies gathered intelligence on her family while they pressed police to carry out a proper investigation into his killing.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, the Metropolitan Police commissioner, withheld the information when he [met Lawrence three weeks ago](#) to discuss claims that a covert Special Branch unit had collected intelligence on her family. Hogan-Howe had been notified before the meeting that an internal police investigation had uncovered [information on the Lawrence family in the files of the undercover unit](#).

The disclosure comes as Lawrence reiterated her call for a judge-led inquiry to "uncover the truth of what happened to my family".

She said "there seems little point" in taking part in two private investigations which are being conducted by the police and a barrister into claims that undercover officers were asked to search for information to discredit the campaign for a better investigation into the murder.

At a hearing of the home affairs select committee on Tuesday, Mick Creedon, the chief constable leading the police investigation into the activities of the covert unit, the special demonstration squad, said that his inquiry had found documents recording "covert deployments which reported intelligence which relate" to the Lawrence family. He did not describe the contents of the documents.

Creedon also disclosed that his inquiry had notified Hogan-Howe about his discovery at some point earlier this year, before the Guardian published testimony from a [police whistleblower, Peter Francis](#), in June.

Francis went public last month to say that while he infiltrated anti-racist groups between 1993 and 1997, he had taken part in an operation to spy on and attempt to undermine the Lawrences and campaigners angry because of the failure to bring Stephen's killers to justice.

The claims prompted widespread criticism across the political spectrum, led by David Cameron who called for an immediate investigation.

Four days later, Doreen Lawrence met Hogan-Howe at New Scotland Yard to press for answers about the claims. She emerged afterwards to say her trust in the police had diminished.

Scotland Yard did not respond directly when asked why Hogan-Howe had not told her that Creedon's inquiry - codenamed Operation Herne - had discovered the intelligence on her family. A spokeswoman said: "To date Operation Herne had found no evidence of undercover deployments targeted at Stephen Lawrence's family."

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After meeting the home secretary, Theresa May, for a second time this week, Lawrence said: "I have no confidence in Operation Herne which involves police investigating police."

Keith Vaz, the chair of the home affairs select committee, said he was surprised that the commissioner had apparently failed to tell Lawrence. Vaz is writing to Hogan-Howe to find out when he was told about the discovery of the documents and what he did about it.

Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary, said: "It doesn't help public confidence for [May] to refuse Doreen Lawrence's request for an independent and public inquiry into the new allegations about the investigation into Stephen Lawrence's murder. Stephen Lawrence's case has been so important to reforming policing and tackling racism that we need to know the full truth now."

Francis has said that he had argued that details of the undercover infiltration of the campaign groups supporting the Lawrences should have been disclosed to the official inquiry led by Sir William Macpherson, a retired judge, into the police's failure to catch the racist gang who stabbed Stephen Lawrence to death in 1993. He was, he said, over-ruled by his superiors.

This article was amended on 18 July 2013 to add a comment from the [Metropolitan police](#).

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