

**Sir Gus O'Donnell KCB**

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Nick Raynsford MP
Member of Parliament for Greenwich and Woolwich
House of Commons
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21 July 2011

Dear Mr Raynsford,

You asked the Prime Minister in the House yesterday whether I was alerted to evidence of illegal phone hacking, covert surveillance and hostile media briefing directed against a senior official, and what action was taken. The Prime Minister undertook to look closely into your question. As the conversation in question was with me, and as the Prime Minister has had no involvement, it is therefore appropriate for me to respond.

I am very grateful to you for providing more detail on both the nature and the source of these accusations. I have now followed this up with Sir David Bell, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education who has provided me with an account of the facts and background to this case, and I enclose a copy of David's letter to me for your information. As you will see the individual did raise concerns about media harassment with Sir David. The Department for Education's Security Officer thoroughly investigated these concerns, and a further concern about possible phone tampering. The individual has confirmed that these issues were raised with the Police and phone company in question and that no evidence of wrongdoing was found. At no point did the individual mention covert surveillance to that Department or to me, nor did he ever mention to that Department or me Number 10 special advisers in his concern about phone tampering.

I completely understand why you raised this issue in the House and accept that it was in good faith and the result of a genuine misunderstanding. Since this matter has been the subject of media comment I am making this letter and Sir David's letter public.

Yours sincerely,

Gus O'Donnell

