

[OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE]



# Overview Report of IOPC Cases Relevant to IICSA Westminster Investigation

70. An instruction from a senior officer to stop investigating an allegation of child sexual abuse is at first blush extremely concerning. However, there may be a legitimate reason for such an instruction in some circumstances.
71. When considering such matters, consideration should be accorded to the hierarchical structure of the police service, which continues into the present day. The police service had, and has, a very clear structure of rank, and there are certain decisions which require authorisation from senior officers, such as search warrant applications and covert operations. Police officers, especially those at a more junior level, are limited as to the decisions they can make and in the execution of their duties they will often be following lawful orders provided by senior officers. Indeed, at the current time, Schedule 2 to the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2012 lists 'Orders and Instructions' as one of the Standards of Professional Behaviour, and a failure to follow such lawful orders could lead to disciplinary action being taken against an officer. However, this is limited to 'lawful orders', and police officers are also required to challenge and report improper conduct.<sup>83</sup>
72. This hierarchical structure was of course in place during the period to which these allegations relate (although the relevant legislation and standards applied differed). It may be speculated that a culture of deference was, if anything, more prominent at that time, although this has not been evidenced for the purpose of this Report. In any event, it is possible that senior officers exercised their authority in order to prevent effective investigation, and that such instructions were followed by police officers. It is also unlikely to be considered surprising if junior police officers did not question the decisions of senior police officers when allegedly told not to pursue a certain line of enquiry or indeed a whole investigation at the time in question.
73. Whilst the above may be considered to increase the plausibility of these allegations, it is clearly not evidential. In addition, in some Operations there is evidence that decisions were made by senior officers to progress an investigation through transfer to a different unit, but that this may not have been appropriately communicated to junior officers, leading to speculation and concern, as commented further below. Indeed, in some instances successful prosecutions followed police investigations alleged to have been inappropriately terminated, for example the conviction of the 'Dirty Dozen'.<sup>84</sup>

## Government Awareness

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74. An important issue of concern is whether the government or political parties were made aware of any of the alleged behaviour(s) of persons of public prominence, and what action, if any, was taken in respect of this. This does not include where the alleged perpetrator(s) formed part of the government or party, and would therefore be said to have such an awareness themselves.

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<sup>83</sup> As also specified in Schedule 2 to the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2012.

<sup>84</sup> Operation Nala.