

Thousands to be contacted in UK hacking case

February 9 2011, By RAPHAEL G. SATTER , Associated Press

(AP) -- British police revealed Wednesday it would contact thousands of people whose cell phones may have been targeted by the News of The World tabloid, an indication of the scale of the scandal at the heart of Rupert Murdoch's media empire.

Police have long insisted only a small number of people were believed to have been have been spied upon by the tabloid, which employed a private detective to break into the voice mail boxes of the paper's targets and eavesdrop on their private messages.

But that contention has been challenged by lawmakers, fellow journalists and former employees of the News of The World, who have claimed that the practice was widespread. There have also been allegations that police were hiding the full scale of the phone hacking operation for fear of jeopardizing its relationship with the politically powerful tabloid.

The police have denied those claims, but the force has long been cagey about who exactly was targeted - and how many individuals were involved. Alleged victims of the hacking have complained that police only gave them evidence reluctantly - fueling allegations of a cover-up.

Police said they were taking a "fresh approach" to informing people whose names appeared in documents taken from The News of The World's private investigator, Glenn Mulcaire.

"With this new investigation, we will be as open as we can be and will

show them all the information we hold about them, while giving them the opportunity to tell us anything that may be of concern to them," Deputy Assistant Commissioner Sue Akers said.

Police have previously said around 3,000 cell phone numbers were recovered over the course of their investigation into the [hacking](#), although [police](#) cautioned that did not necessarily mean that they were all targeted. Akers made clear that every one of the people connected to those numbers would be informed.

"In time, we will ... make contact with everyone who had some of their personal contact details found in the documents," Akers said.

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Citation: Thousands to be contacted in UK hacking case (2011, February 9) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-02-thousands-contacted-uk-hacking-case.html>

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