

Hacked UK police blogger wins damages from Times

October 9 2012, by Cassandra Vinograd

(AP)—A police blogger unmasked after the Times of London hacked his email has been awarded 42,500 pounds (\$68,000) in damages from the newspaper's publisher.

Rupert Murdoch's News International, which publishes the Times, said Tuesday it had agreed to pay damages and legal costs for Richard Horton.

Horton's lawyer Mark Lewis confirmed the settlement but said it would be inappropriate to say more given an ongoing police investigation.

"Although a substantial financial settlement has been achieved there is nothing that can undo the effect of the intrusion in the first place," he added in an email to The Associated Press.

The Times unmasked Horton as the detective behind the award-winning "NightJack" blog in a 2009 piece that Horton sued to try to suppress.

The blog provided a rare, behind-the-scenes look at policing in Britain, where many forces are so media shy that even spokespeople demand that their names be kept secret.

According to an account of the lawsuit published in Britain's New Statesman magazine, Horton's lawyer raised the possibility that the detective's Hotmail account had been illegally accessed—an allegation dismissed as "baseless" in 2009 by Times lawyer Alastair Brett.

However, in public statements since and in testimony before an official inquiry into media ethics, senior Times managers admitted that one of their reporters had accessed Horton's account.

The media ethics inquiry, headed by Lord Justice Brian Leveson, was set up to deal with phone hacking at Murdoch's now-defunct News of the World and other media misdeeds. The top-selling Sunday tabloid had spent years routinely eavesdropping on the voicemails of celebrities, politicians, sports stars and other public figures in an effort to stay ahead of its competitors.

The scandal has led to dozens of arrests and prosecutions. It also prompted resignations from some of Murdoch's key lieutenants and three top police officials. The inquiry is expected to issue a report on its findings next month.

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