

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION

BETWEEN:

- 1) **DAVID GOULDING**
- 2) **PHILIP DOUGHTY**
- 3) **BRITAM DEFENCE LIMITED**

Claimants

and

ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS LIMITED

Defendant

STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

The Claimants' Solicitor-Advocate (Adam Tudor, Carter-Ruck)

My Lady, I appear for David Goulding, Philip Doughty and Britam Defence Limited, the Claimants in this libel action.

Britam Defence is a risk management and training consultancy, with a multinational presence. David Goulding is Britam's Business Development Director, and Philip Doughty its Founder and Chief Operating officer. The Defendant is the publisher of the Mail Online, whose website address is <http://www.dailymail.co.uk>.

On 29 January 2013 the Defendant published an article on its Mail Online website under the headline "*U.S. 'backed plan to launch chemical weapon attack on Syria and blame it on Assad's regime.*" The article focused on internal emails at Britam Defence, which the article said had been hacked from Britam's computer system and published on the internet. Those emails were said to demonstrate that the American government had approved a covert plot to launch a chemical weapons attack in Syria that could then be blamed on President Assad's regime.

In particular, the article quoted one email which had purportedly been sent by Mr Goulding to Mr Doughty, in which Mr Goulding outlined a proposal whereby Britam would supply chemical weapons and Ukrainian personnel to Homs for use in the attack.

As the Defendant accepts, the article would have been understood to suggest that the Claimants were willing, for enormous financial reward, to consider taking part in a nefarious and illegal plot of the kind described, which would have led to the death, injury and maiming of countless innocent civilians.

In fact, however, and as the Defendant also now accepts, the emails in question were forgeries. The emails were not written or sent by the Claimants (or by anyone at Britam Defence Limited or anyone associated with them), and the illegal hacking of Britam Defence's website remains the subject of a criminal investigation. The Claimants had no involvement in any chemical weapons plot and would never contemplate becoming involved in the heinous activities which were the subject of the article.

By reason of the publication of the words complained of, the Claimants have suffered damage to their reputations and the First and Second Claimants have suffered considerable distress and embarrassment.

My Lady, the Defendant now accepts that the allegations complained of were false and should not have been published. Having already published an apology on the Mail Online website it has agreed to join in the reading of this statement, withdrawing publicly the allegations and apologising for the hurt and distress caused to the First and Second Claimants by the publication.

The Defendant has agreed to pay a substantial sum in damages to the Claimants, together with their legal costs.

The Defendant's Solicitor (Martin Wood, Associated Newspapers)

My Lady, on behalf of the Defendant, I confirm that the Defendant offers its sincere apologies to the Claimants for the damage and distress caused by the publication of these false allegations, which had appeared on US websites. The Defendant acknowledges that the emails in question were completely fabricated and that there is no question of any of the Claimants being involved – or even considering becoming involved – in the heinous actions to which the article referred. The Defendant is pleased to set the record straight.

The Claimant's Solicitor-Advocate

My Lady, the Claimants are satisfied that they have been vindicated and accordingly are content to let the matter rest.