

Press Release

Carter-Ruck

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Tom Watson MP

News Group Newspapers Limited, the publisher of The Sun, apologised today to Tom Watson MP in a Statement in Open Court read before Mr Justice Tugendhat.

Mr Watson complained of articles published by the Defendant on 13th and 14th April 2009, which followed press reports that Downing Street Press Adviser, Damian McBride, had sent emails to a Labour Party activist, Derek Draper, which were reported to have made serious and false allegations about the private lives of a number of Conservative Party MPs in the course of discussing the possibility of setting up a website to be known as "Red Rag". In the articles, written by Trevor Kavanagh and Fergus Shanahan, it was alleged that Mr Watson was directly involved in the plot to smear the Conservatives and that he lied when he denied his involvement.

Both articles were also published online.

As the Court heard today, News Group Newspapers Limited now accepts that these allegations concerning Mr Watson are entirely untrue. Mr Watson was not a party to the smear campaign. He was not copied in on any of the emails exchanged between Mr McBride and Mr Draper and he had no involvement in or knowledge of the "Red Rag" website. Accordingly, Mr Watson did not lie when he publicly denied involvement.

News Group Newspapers Limited has unreservedly withdrawn the allegations, apologised to Mr Watson for the damage and distress the articles caused him and has joined in the reading of the Statement in Open Court today. In addition, News Group Newspapers Limited has agreed to pay Mr Watson substantial damages, together with his legal costs.

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