

Witness Name: **Kit Malthouse**

Statement no: **First**

Exhibit: **KM7**

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THE LEVESON INQUIRY

Exhibit KM7 to the
Witness Statement of **Kit Malthouse**

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Tories claim: we have seized control of Scotland Yard

Johnson aide says Home Office 'elbowed out' as mayor tightens grip on Met

Vikram Dodd

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A larger | smaller

Article history



Boris Johnson with police officers. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

The Conservatives have wrested control of Scotland Yard from the Home Office and now have its top officers working to their agenda, a senior aide to the mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has told the Guardian.

Kit Malthouse, the deputy mayor for policing, has declared that he and Johnson "have our hands on the tiller" of the Metropolitan police and have an electoral mandate to influence what it does.

He asserted that the Johnson regime had "elbowed the Home Office out of the picture" and would no longer act as a rubber stamp to whatever the force proposed, insisting: "We do not want to be a passenger on the Met cruise."

Within months of taking office last year, Johnson forced the previous police chief, Sir Ian Blair, from his post, and Malthouse made clear: "We've decided to be more influential."

Blair's removal made it clear to top officers they will be ousted if the mayor decides they have failed.

Malthouse rejected concerns that the new approach amounted to the politicisation of policing and said the London model was being studied by the Tory frontbench as a blueprint for its approach to law and order across Britain if they were to win next year's general election.

Under Johnson, the Tories say they have placed more focus on tackling knife crime, put more officers on patrol and encouraged greater effort on tackling dangerous dogs. One Met source complained that Malthouse was on the phone almost daily complaining about dogs.

Malthouse also disclosed that a key document setting out the Met's priorities was no longer written in Scotland Yard and then nodded through by politicians. Instead it was written by a team headed by Johnson and Malthouse, with the police influencing it.

Johnson's team believe the police should be answerable to elected politicians, and, Malthouse said, see nothing wrong in pressing them to do things that would be electorally popular. Blair's removal by the mayor signalled to senior officers who they would be answerable to. "It is self-evident there is a sanction."

He added, however, such a clash should not happen again because "we implicitly trust" the judgment of the new Met commissioner, Sir Paul Stephenson. He was chosen after interviews by Johnson and former home secretary Jacqui Smith.

Blair warned in July 2008 that his post as commissioner was becoming increasingly politicised and that plans by Johnson to take more control could ultimately be damaging.

Three months later, Johnson forced him out, causing alarm among senior police officers. One told the Guardian: "It was felt it was for a purely political purpose. We don't want to see a situation where the job of commissioner becomes impossible and the commissioner falls as the administration changes."

Johnson was elected in May 2008 promising to take greater leadership of crime-fighting in London and to become chair of the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA), which is the force's watchdog. Malthouse said the MPA's powers were unchanged, but Johnson and he had decided to use them more robustly, which represented a "culture change".

Malthouse stressed he did not have control over operational policing: "We cannot tell

the commissioner what to do, we trust in his judgment. But at the same time we can say what we think the priorities are and the police authority can set the priorities."

He said: "This is a subtle, typically British, constitutional arrangement ... where these things are done on a handshake. There's nothing written down ... but we do have an electoral mandate and that is how politics works."

Malthouse said he believed the police should be under as much political control as the NHS or education. "I don't know why we reserve a special place for policing ... we are a mature democracy."

Brian Paddick, a former top Met officer who ran against Johnson as the Liberal Democrats' candidate for mayor, said the Conservatives had politicised the police: "If Kit Malthouse is claiming that unless senior officers do what their political masters instruct they will lose their jobs, it's clearly politicisation of the police and a very dangerous move."

A source with knowledge of Scotland Yard's relationship with government said that in private the Tories were being even more candid about the Met: "The Tories say they run the Met and that its management team is under their control."

Malthouse also, for the first time, gave a public account of why Johnson decided to, in effect, sack Blair: "He had become the story and that undoubtedly got in the way of things." The Home Office was also unhappy with Blair, he said, but lacked the "cojones" to take decisive action.

Malthouse said that previously the Met had played off the government and the MPA against each other: "We slightly elbowed the Home Office out of the picture. The Met could look to either to get the answer it wanted ... you cannot have two captains on the ship."

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