

Journalist Cameron admits she was RCMP informant

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Journalist Stevie Cameron has admitted being the confidential informant whose identity was protected by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the Eurocopter helicopter-procurement case.

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Despite her public insistence last fall that she was not the informant, Ms. Cameron conceded to The Globe and Mail last night that she now realizes that the name blacked out in documents produced before a secret trial was evidently hers.

But she maintained that the RCMP erroneously applied the confidential-informant designation to her without her knowledge after meetings with officers in 1995.

"The fact is that I didn't know very much at the time," she said. "You think you're off the record -- but when somebody decides for whatever reason to put you down as a confidential informant, you don't know about it."

But an RCMP affidavit suggests that the confidential informant in the case knew of his or her status as early as 2001.

Yesterday's admissions by Ms. Cameron came after The Globe learned of a legal motion the Ontario Crown intends to make next week that would unseal the identity of the informant.

A Crown notice of motion states that the RCMP are now aware of information "that means the sealing in question can no longer be sustained."

After a call from The Globe, Ms. Cameron met with her lawyer yesterday afternoon.

She later responded to all of The Globe's questions except one -- whether it was she or the police who had instigated the unsealing motion by the Crown.

"I can't get into that," she said. "I honestly can't remember, anyway, but this is on the advice of my lawyers."

Ms. Cameron said that until a few weeks ago, she was unaware of the exact definition of a confidential informant.

"What I have done is told the police I am not a confidential informant, and they shouldn't be acting as if I am," she said. "I wasn't coded, and I wasn't paid."

"I was a reporter trying to get a story; one of many reporters interviewed by the RCMP. . . . I was blissfully ignorant. I cannot tell you how many times I've wished I hadn't talked to them."

Ms. Cameron -- the author of several hard-hitting exposés about the case -- vehemently denied in an interview with The Globe last fall that she was the informant. "That theory is absolute horse shit," Ms. Cameron said at the time.

"What I said to The Globe was true," she said yesterday. "I am not, and never was, a police informant."

What she characterized as a mix-up began in 1995, when she was contacted by RCMP investigators who were considering a formal investigation into secret commissions on contracts to Airbus Industries and aviation firm Messerschmidt-Bolkow-Blohm (now called Eurocopter) in a deal to sell helicopters to the Canadian Coast Guard.

"I thought: 'Oh, is it an investigation now?'" Ms. Cameron recalled. "They said: 'No, we're just nosing around. Can we come to

see you?' I suppose I also thought they might tell me something," she said. "You know what I thought it was? I thought I was off the record, like all of us do. It was 1995, it was a casual encounter and as far as I was concerned, I was off the record."

In an article published in The Globe last fall, writer William Kaplan cited a secret hearing in which Edward Greenspan -- a lawyer for German deal-maker Karlheinz Schreiber -- pointed to Ms. Cameron as the confidential informant.

In a submission during the secret hearing, Mr. Greenspan said: "If the RCMP did use a writer -- particularly one with a professed dislike for Mr. Mulroney -- as a confidential informant, and proceeded to protect her identity to ensure she cannot be rooted out or questioned, what an unbelievable scandal this would be." Mr. Kaplan said last night that he has great trouble reconciling Ms. Cameron's explanation of not knowing she was the confidential informant with a critical affidavit from RCMP Inspector A. K. Mathews that became evidence in the secret hearing. Insp. Mathews swore that Department of Justice lawyer Ingrid Hutton told him of a 2001 conversation she had with the confidential informant in which the informant "claimed the privilege." Insp. Mathews said that based on what Ms. Hutton learned, "she advised me that the informant will not consent to the Crown waiver of privilege unless it was for the purpose of the prosecution of Brian Mulroney."

Last night, Mr. Kaplan said: "I'm glad that she [Ms. Cameron] has come forward telling the truth -- sort of. But unless Insp. Mathews and Ingrid Hutton are not telling the truth, this affidavit suggests that she confirmed [her] confidential-informant status on March 20, 2001."

Unbeknownst to her, Ms. Cameron said, the police apparently left the meeting believing she had become a confidential informant whose identity must be protected.

Ms. Cameron said she learned recently that there was a serious division of opinion within the RCMP as to whether she should be designated as a confidential informant: "Not all the officers believe that the designation fit." Ms. Cameron confirmed yesterday that she would have testified had Mr. Mulroney been charged. She said this actually proves the absurdity of any suggestion that she wanted to be a confidential informant. No true confidential informant would agree to such a condition, Ms. Cameron said. "Yes, I said the pathetic scraps of information I gave them could be exposed at trial," she added. "Once I agreed that my identity could be exposed at trial, no Crown attorney or judge could make me a confidential informant."

Ms. Cameron also said that the RCMP made it clear her identity would become public if Mr. Mulroney were charged. "They told me there would be full disclosure . . . if this ever went to trial," she said, adding: "I don't believe a journalist can be a confidential informant."

Ms. Cameron said she is more angry at The Globe for its splashy coverage than she is with the RCMP. She criticized the newspaper for not having given her a few days to consider her situation last fall before it publicly suggested that she was the confidential informant.

"With me, it was a hit-and-run," Ms. Cameron said. "It was a drive-by shooting." Ms. Cameron wrote an op-ed piece for The Globe after the original stories ran last fall in which she repeated that she was not the confidential informant.

"Journalists across the country have been in touch and given me strength and comfort," she wrote. "They know how difficult investigative work is. They know that our job is to dig to get the truth. It was my privilege to work for a Globe where reporters usually go through a rigorous editing process to make sure standards of fairness and accuracy are met. Now the paper suggests I may be a confidential informant."

Yesterday, she said the single most important question that remains is why the only charges ever laid in the entire affair were against "a couple of Eurocopter officials residing in Germany."



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