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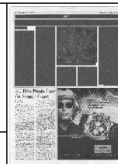
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# Brooks, Others Charged in Hacking Case

BY PAUL SONNE  
AND CASSELL BRYAN-LOW

LONDON—Prosecutors on Tuesday charged Rebekah Brooks, the former head of News Corp.'s British newspaper unit, with conspiring to obstruct justice, marking the first criminal charges filed in a wide-ranging criminal investigation at the media company's U.K. tabloids.

Ms. Brooks and five others were charged by the Crown Prosecution Service with "conspiracy to pervert the course of justice" by impeding a criminal investigation into phone hacking and alleged bribery of public officials at the company's tabloids, the News of the World and the Sun, according to prosecutors.

Ms. Brooks, a former top lieutenant to News Corp. Chairman and Chief Executive Rupert Murdoch, is one of the most high-profile figures ensnared in the phone-hacking saga. She edited the News of the World from 2000 to 2002 and the Sun from 2003 to 2009 before becoming the chief executive of News International, the company's U.K. newspaper unit.

Prosecutors also charged her husband, Charles Brooks, who is a longtime friend of Britain's prime minister, David Cameron; her former assistant, Cheryl Carter; her chauffeur, Paul Edwards; the head of security at News International, Mark Hanna; and another News Corp. employee, Daryl Jorsling, who provided security for Ms. Brooks.

Messrs. Hanna and Edwards remain News International employees but were suspended Tuesday on full pay pending the outcome of the criminal case.

Ms. Brooks and her husband denounced the charges outside their lawyer's office in London on Tuesday afternoon. "Whilst I have always respected the criminal justice system, I have to question today whether the decision was made on a

proper, impartial assessment of the evidence," the 43-year-old Ms. Brooks said.

She added: "I am baffled by the decision to charge me today." She expressed anger that "those close to me" had also been charged.

Ms. Brooks had been arrested previously on suspicion of corruption and conspiring to intercept communications. She remains on bail following those arrests.

In the charges announced Tuesday, prosecutors allege the obstruction took place from July 6 to July 19 last year. Those are the days when News Corp.'s long-simmering phone-hacking scandal boiled over into a crisis, following a July 5 article in the Guardian newspaper that said the News of the World in 2002 had hacked the voice mail of a missing 13-year-old girl who turned out to have been murdered.

Days later, News Corp. closed the 168-year-old tabloid. Ms. Brooks subsequently resigned.

Ms. Brooks now faces three counts of perverting the course of justice.

In the first count, Ms. Brooks alone is charged with conspiring with five others to "conceal material" from police between July 6 and July 19. In the second count, Ms. Brooks is charged alongside Ms. Carter. Prosecutors allege the former News Corp. executive and her personal assistant "conspired together permanently to remove seven boxes of material from the archive of News International" between July 6 and July 9.

In the third count, she is charged alongside Mr. Brooks, Mr. Hanna, Mr. Edwards and Mr. Jorsling. Prosecutors allege the five conspired "to conceal documents, computers and other electronic equipment from officers of the Metropolitan Police Service."

Mr. Brooks, 49 years old, said the

charges are "an attempt to use me and others as scapegoats—the effect of which will be to ratchet up the pressure on my wife—who I also believe is the subject of a witch hunt." Mr. Brooks, a prominent U.K. horse trainer, said he had "grave reservations" that his wife would get a fair trial in the U.K., given the attention and criticism she has received.

Henri Brandman, a lawyer for Ms. Carter, said in a statement that the former personal assistant, 48, "vigorously denies" the charge against her.

In a statement Tuesday, Mr. Hanna, 49, said: "I have no doubt that ultimately justice will prevail and I will be totally exonerated."

Mr. Edwards, 47, and Mr. Jorsling, 39, couldn't be reached for comment.

News Corp.'s British newspaper unit continues to grapple with a police investigation into allegations of phone hacking, computer hacking and bribery. But Tuesday's charges spotlight a different issue: the alleged actions of its employees once police began investigating.

News Corp., which owns The Wall Street Journal, has said it is cooperating with probes and has apologized for any wrongdoing.

Perverting the course of justice carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, though in practice the penalty is more likely to be months or years, depending on the seriousness of the crime.

The charges against Ms. Brooks come amid increased parliamentary scrutiny of allegedly too-cozy ties between News Corp. and Mr. Cameron and his government. Mr. Cameron went to school at the elite Eton College with Mr. Brooks and his younger brother.

The prime minister had become close to Ms. Brooks, too.

—Jeanne Whalen  
contributed to this article.



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Rebekah Brooks and her husband, Charles Brooks, pictured outside a lawyer's office after addressing the media in London on Tuesday.