



Edward Snowden, the former employee of the National Security Agency (NSA) of the United States that leaked sensitive information.

Syndrome who alleged she was a victim of a child sex abuse ring involving influential Scottish figures, including police, judges, and other prominent individuals. The deaths of three SAS operatives from heatstroke during a dangerous mountain training exercise in July 2013 was also subject to Committee “advice”. Finally, the document lists requests during November 2013–May 2014. This again included “Snowden disclosures”, alongside “MPS [Metropolitan Police] and child pornography,” and Operation Ore. Operation Ore saw thousands arrested on charges of downloading pedophilic content in the early 2000s. However, many were found innocent, numerous prosecutions fell apart, dozens of potentially falsely accused Britons committed suicide, and much of the crackdown’s evidentiary basis was demonstrated to be likely fraudulent.

‘Apologies received’ from servile journalists

While the files show a shocking number of salacious stories were handpicked for censorship by the DSMA, just as alarming is the submissiveness with which mainstream “journalists” greet the DSMA Committee’s edicts. Incredibly, public minutes of Committee meetings regularly feature “apologies... received from” numerous journalists. Presumably, these wayward reporters neglected to consult the DSMA before publishing a particular story, or let certain information seep into the public domain the Committee wasn’t happy about. At one stage, in a written response to questions from Australia’s Attorney-General’s Department, DSMA Secretary Dodds crowed how reporters “very rarely” fail to follow its “advice”, and if outlets do “publish information that may be harmful to national security,” the Committee can demand the offending article’s removal. “The DSMA Secretary indicated that approximately 90% of the UK media view the DSMA System positively,” the report stated, adding that the few renegade journalists “who are not supportive of the system” are “mostly the strongest proponents of media freedom”. According to figures cited in Ian Cobain’s 2016 book *The History Thieves*, British reporters voluntarily submit 80–90% of stories they believe could be of interest to the Committee for official examination and potential state censorship, in advance of publication. The documents provide an up-close view of the censorship process, showing how the DSMA Committee carries out “one-on-one” consultations with journalists that go beyond mere advice, and refers to the use of “track changes,” a feature in word processor software that allows users to suggest edits and add commentary. In extraordinary circumstances, such as the Snowden revelations, the Committee would issue its “advice” to “all editors” of major British outlets, though it cautioned such a measure could backfire and generate “increasing media awareness” of a topic deemed off-limits. DSMA Secretary Dodds described the consideration of “public interest” as being “of no concern when issuing advice”. The DSMA Committee is a uniquely British institution — at once operating in plain sight but virtually hidden from public view

due to media omertà, issuing non-binding “advice” reporters almost invariably obey. As the 2015 internal review notes, no other country has “any comparable system” to the UK’s D-Notice regime. However, it appears some officials in Canberra were seeking to emulate the system, asking Australian media to “give notice ahead of publication” so authorities could opine on it — an arrangement strongly resembling the advisory component of the D-Notice system. Four years later, the Committee began to formally cooperate with officials in Canberra to help them bring the D-Notice system to Australia, showing the Committee’s eagerness to export the system overseas.

DSMA considers non-compliant journalists’ extreme

A briefing on the D-Notice system given to Australian officials boasts that “instances of [journalists] publishing information against DSMA advice” happens “very rarely,” and “tends to be” the work of “extreme, non-[mainstream media] organizations”. One notable example, the Committee cited, of an “extreme” publication refusing to toe its line was Declassified UK, an independent publication focused on national security matters that was founded by historian Mark Curtis. Though its critical reporting is almost universally ignored by mainstream British media, Declassified UK’s coverage is frequently covered by international news outlets. The outlet repeatedly crossed the Committee by reporting on a “copy of ministerial brief inadvertently sent” from the MOD to the site’s editor in response to an FOI request, as well as publishing an article naming a British special forces officer “without seeking DSMA advice”. Declassified UK subsequently refused to remove the individual’s name despite pressure from DSMA Secretary Geoffrey Dodds. Declassified UK being branded as “extreme” by the Committee is particularly troubling given another article published by the outlet, which exposed “embarrassing details of [British government] views on a developing country,” is also listed in the briefing, with the caveat that the article was of “no DSMA concern”. Evidently, Declassified UK is regarded as dangerous and being actively monitored by the Committee, even though it has chosen not to opt-in to the supposedly voluntary D-Notice system, and often isn’t even breaking its informal rules. The DSMA Secretary’s complaint accusing Declassified UK of publishing information “embarrassing” to the British government directly contradicted the 2015 internal

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Minutes from a meeting between Australian officials and the DSMA Secretary noted near-universal cooperation with Committee censorship among UK media.

review, which explicitly stated the Committee was uninterested in “information that may cause political and official embarrassment”. From the British government’s perspective — and the DSMA Committee’s by extension — the proliferation of inconvenient information is deeply problematic. As the briefing notes, “the DSMA system is a UK system operating in a globalised world,” and “the prevalence of digital media means that UK information can be published in other countries, and there is no recourse for the DSMA to prevent this.” However, “In the main, overseas publication of UK national security information rarely happens.” The 2015 internal review of the D-Notice system saw the “national context and culture” of Britain — where journalists generally have little access to top decision makers and are largely happy to accept government instruction — as “key determinants” to upholding the censorship regime. In the “UK context,” the review states, “general access by the media to government sources of information is more tightly controlled,” and there is an “expectation that contacts will usually be through government press officers”. This means contact between high-ranking government officials and media is restricted to a “limited number of trusted journalists and media organisations,” and any access to noteworthy government sources is the “exception rather than the rule”. Notably, in correspondence between the DSMA Secretary and Australian officials, the secretary said the media’s “[interpretation] of the purpose of the [D-Notice] system” was to be able to “publish/broadcast information it wants to” without “damaging national security,” implying that the press was entrusted with protecting the secrets of Britain’s intelligence agencies and military. This dynamic was confirmed in a 2015 op-ed by DSMA vice-chair Simon Bucks, who praised the “collaborative spirit” of the “system... run by ex-military top brass, whose job was to arbitrate between journalists and officials”. Bucks proudly proclaimed that this system had “worked for a century”. Minutes of an April 2023 DSMA Committee meeting note the body’s deputy secretary lamented the “extreme sensitivity (in national security terms) of some of the material” that the Committee prevented from being reported by the British media over the past six months. He added that some of this material “had been of the most sensitive nature he had seen” since joining the Committee. During this same timeframe, The Grayzone published a series of reports on London’s secret, central role in the Ukraine proxy war. These incendiary exposés received significant international attention, and were reported on by media outlets the world over — apart from Britain. In private discussions with Canberra revealed by the FOI files, the Committee repeatedly stated “no DSMA action” is taken on “information widely available in the public domain,” and “the DSMA Secretary does not advise” on such matters. Nonetheless, minutes of an April 2023 Committee appear to contradict these claims.

The records single out a journalist who was successfully pressured into not publishing information about a British Army unit “about to deploy on operations overseas,” in an unstated country. Despite complying, the journalist argued the presence of British forces in the region “was widely known” in the country itself, formed “part of a very large international coalition effort,” and “there was open-source evidence to prove it”. As such, “the availability online of commercially available overhead imagery as well as photographs and videos with tracking data meant information previously the preserve of national intelligence effort was freely available to all in real time.” This was no deterrent to DSMA intervention, however.

DSMA seeks expansion into social media

Though social media’s “partnership” with traditional British media has been effectively cemented, the Committee still views it as a problematic area that has evaded its system of narrative control. The 2015 internal review contains several lengthy passages identifying “new digital media” as a threat to the system’s very existence, citing WikiLeaks releases of Afghanistan and Iraq war files and Snowden’s leaks as examples. These revelations were said to “demonstrate the difficulty of exercising any kind of restraint through the [D-Notice] system” in the online age. While the British media largely overlooked these disclosures, the internet had created a “global public domain,” providing information that news outlets outside the country could cover. To limit the damage of these disclosures, the Committee’s review proposes the inclusion of “representatives of new digital media” within the DSMA collective. However, it acknowledged that suppressing social media would be a tall task. Minutes from a 2022 meeting between Australian officials and the secretary also outline these worries: “globalised media” and “reluctance of digital industry” prevent the D-Notice system from working effectively, and that he believed that “tech giants” did not want to engage with him because they wanted to “settle a bargain with [the UK] government”. A written briefing noted that Britain’s DSMA was the “only [such] system in a globalized information arena,” and described the need for the “tech giants” to “strike a grand bargain” with the British government as one of its ongoing “challenges”. In February 2024, Politico reported that the Committee was “trying to woo Big Tech” through outreach efforts to Google, Meta, X, and other social media giants. At the moment, governments can request social media platforms remove content if it violates local laws or platform rules. But the Committee wants to impose a much more draconian regime of information control, compelling tech firms to monitor their platforms for content that might be covered by D-Notices, and actively seek its advice on whether to censor it. DSMA Secretary Dodds told Politico that tech giants “won’t have anything to do with us,” but expressed hope state internet regulation “could create potential leverage” the Committee might exploit. Despite what the DSMA Committee perceives as the “reluctance” of “resistant” social networks to engage with the Committee, they remained undeterred in trying to court them into the system. The DSMA Secretary told Politico the future news landscape will necessarily entail “continued increase in social media” and online publications, “so we need to get into this game.” Given that the Committee has so effectively infiltrated every major newsroom in Britain, exploiting its censorship system to influence the coverage of international events, it is almost certain to escalate its push for social media suppression.

The article first appeared on The Grayzone.



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The DSMA Secretary’s response to Australian Attorney-General’s Department inquiries reveal how the Committee interfered in editorial decisions at a granular level.

● THE GRAYZONE

Advice To Journalists

Form of Advice:

- One to one/two: verbal, track changes, email (on separate, unclass IT).
- All editors: formal email (formal supplementary notice to all editors). But need to balance effect of supp notice with increasing media awareness.

Topics or Issues: Mainly: SPI, impending military action, methods & techniques. But depends on mil and security activity. Eg: Afghanistan – mil plans capabilities intentions

Public Interest: Of no concern when issuing advice. Focus is on the agreed text on the standing notices.