

Former police officers guilty of phone bugging

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Two men, including a former police officer at the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), have today been found guilty of illegally bugging phones and hacking into computers.

Their work was carried out for Active Investigation Services (AIS), where they arranged for phone lines and computer networks to be monitored on behalf of clients between 1999 and 2004 at a cost of thousands of pounds.

Former officer Scott Gelsthorpe, 32, from Kettering was convicted at Southwark crown court of two counts of conspiracy to cause unauthorised modification of computer material and one count of conspiracy to intercept communications unlawfully.

David James Carroll, 59, of Highgate, north London, was found guilty of three counts of conspiracy to cause modification of computer material and three counts of conspiracy intercept communications unlawfully.

Another former MPS officer, Jeremy Howard Young, 39, of Ilford, pleaded guilty in April to seven counts of conspiracy to cause unauthorised modification of computer material; Conspiracy to defraud; conspiracy to intercept communications unlawfully; and conspiracy to cause criminal damage to property.

The three men will be sentenced at a later date.

Southwark crown court heard how AIS used sophisticated bugging and IT technology to hack into computers and tap landline telephones to engage in corporate espionage and invade the privacy of members of the public.

The company charged clients between £5,000 and £7,000 to hack into computers and £6,000 to bug telephone lines.

Millionaire Matthew Mellon, 43, of Belgravia, was cleared of conspiracy to cause unauthorised modification of computer material to spy on his ex-wife, the Jimmy Choo shoe company founder Tamara Mellon.

Detective Inspector Kevin Hyland from the Anti-Corruption Team described the case as a "major investigation".

"One of those at the heart of the agency was a serving police officer.

While the vast majority of MPS officers and staff uphold the high standards expected this case shows that any criminality by MPS employees is not acceptable and will be prosecuted," he added.

"This case has highlights the concerns law enforcement agencies have long held about the illegal activity undertaken by some members of the private investigation community which remains unregulated."