



# Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

## 2000 CHAPTER 23

### PART V

#### MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTAL

##### *Supplemental*

#### **81 General interpretation.**

(1) In this Act—

“apparatus” includes any equipment, machinery or device and any wire or cable;

“Assistant Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis” includes the Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis;

“Assistant Surveillance Commissioner” means any person holding office under section 63;

“civil proceedings” means any proceedings in or before any court or tribunal that are not criminal proceedings;

“communication” includes—

- (a) (except in the definition of “postal service” in section 2(1)) anything transmitted by means of a postal service;
- (b) anything comprising speech, music, sounds, visual images or data of any description; and
- (c) signals serving either for the impartation of anything between persons, between a person and a thing or between things or for the actuation or control of any apparatus;

“criminal”, in relation to any proceedings or prosecution, shall be construed in accordance with subsection (4);

*Status: Point in time view as at 25/09/2000. This version of this provision has been superseded.*

**Changes to legislation:** Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, Section 81 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 04 June 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

“customs officer” means an officer commissioned by the Commissioners of Customs and Excise under section 6(3) of the <sup>M1</sup>Customs and Excise Management Act 1979;

“document” includes a map, plan, design, drawing, picture or other image;

“enactment” includes—

- (a) an enactment passed after the passing of this Act; and
- (b) an enactment contained in Northern Ireland legislation;

“GCHQ” has the same meaning as in the <sup>M2</sup>Intelligence Services Act 1994;

“Her Majesty’s forces” has the same meaning as in the <sup>M3</sup>Army Act 1955;

“intelligence service” means the Security Service, the Secret Intelligence Service or GCHQ;

“interception” and cognate expressions shall be construed (so far as it is applicable) in accordance with section 2;

“interception warrant” means a warrant under section 5;

“legal proceedings” means civil or criminal proceedings in or before any court or tribunal;

“modification” includes alterations, additions and omissions, and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly;

“ordinary Surveillance Commissioner” means a Surveillance Commissioner other than the Chief Surveillance Commissioner;

“person” includes any organisation and any association or combination of persons;

“police force” means any of the following—

- (a) any police force maintained under section 2 of the <sup>M4</sup>Police Act 1996 (police forces in England and Wales outside London);
- (b) the metropolitan police force;
- (c) the City of London police force;
- (d) any police force maintained under or by virtue of section 1 of the <sup>M5</sup>Police (Scotland) Act 1967
- (e) the Royal Ulster Constabulary;
- (f) the Ministry of Defence Police;
- (g) the Royal Navy Regulating Branch;
- (h) the Royal Military Police;
- (i) the Royal Air Force Police;
- (j) the British Transport Police;

“postal service” and “public postal service” have the meanings given by section 2(1);

“private telecommunication system”, “public telecommunications service” and “public telecommunication system” have the meanings given by section 2(1);

“public authority” means any public authority within the meaning of section 6 of the <sup>M6</sup>Human Rights Act 1998 (acts of public authorities) other than a court or tribunal;

“senior official” means, subject to subsection (7), a member of the Senior Civil Service or a member of the Senior Management Structure of Her Majesty’s Diplomatic Service;

“statutory”, in relation to any power or duty, means conferred or imposed by or under any enactment or subordinate legislation;

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“subordinate legislation” means any subordinate legislation (within the meaning of the <sup>M7</sup>Interpretation Act 1978) or any statutory rules (within the meaning of the <sup>M8</sup>Statutory Rules (Northern Ireland) Order 1979);

“Surveillance Commissioner” means a Commissioner holding office under section 91 of the <sup>M9</sup>Police Act 1997 and “Chief Surveillance Commissioner” shall be construed accordingly;

“telecommunication system” and “telecommunications service” have the meanings given by section 2(1);

“the Tribunal” means the tribunal established under section 65;

“wireless telegraphy” has the same meaning as in the <sup>M10</sup>Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 and, in relation to wireless telegraphy, “interfere” has the same meaning as in that Act;

“working day” means any day other than a Saturday, a Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or a day which is a bank holiday under the <sup>M11</sup>Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 in any part of the United Kingdom.

(2) In this Act—

- (a) references to crime are references to conduct which constitutes one or more criminal offences or is, or corresponds to, any conduct which, if it all took place in any one part of the United Kingdom would constitute one or more criminal offences; and
- (b) references to serious crime are references to crime that satisfies the test in subsection (3)(a) or (b).

(3) Those tests are—

- (a) that the offence or one of the offences that is or would be constituted by the conduct is an offence for which a person who has attained the age of twenty-one and has no previous convictions could reasonably be expected to be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of three years or more;
- (b) that the conduct involves the use of violence, results in substantial financial gain or is conduct by a large number of persons in pursuit of a common purpose.

(4) In this Act “criminal proceedings” includes—

- (a) proceedings in the United Kingdom or elsewhere before—
  - (i) a court-martial constituted under the <sup>M12</sup>Army Act 1955, the <sup>M13</sup>Air Force Act 1955 or the <sup>M14</sup>Naval Discipline Act 1957; or
  - (ii) a disciplinary court constituted under section 50 of the Act of 1957;
- (b) proceedings before the Courts-Martial Appeal Court; and
- (c) proceedings before a Standing Civilian Court;

and references in this Act to criminal prosecutions shall be construed accordingly.

(5) For the purposes of this Act detecting crime shall be taken to include—

- (a) establishing by whom, for what purpose, by what means and generally in what circumstances any crime was committed; and
- (b) the apprehension of the person by whom any crime was committed;

and any reference in this Act to preventing or detecting serious crime shall be construed accordingly, except that, in Chapter I of Part I, it shall not include a reference to gathering evidence for use in any legal proceedings.

(6) In this Act—

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- (a) references to a person holding office under the Crown include references to any servant of the Crown and to any member of Her Majesty's forces; and
  - (b) references to a member of a police force, in relation to the Royal Navy Regulating Branch, the Royal Military Police or the Royal Air Force Police, do not include references to any member of that Branch or Force who is not for the time being attached to or serving either with the Branch or Force of which he is a member or with another of those police forces.
- (7) If it appears to the Secretary of State that it is necessary to do so in consequence of any changes to the structure or grading of the home civil service or diplomatic service, he may by order make such amendments of the definition of "senior official" in subsection (1) as appear to him appropriate to preserve, so far as practicable, the effect of that definition.

**Modifications etc. (not altering text)**

- C1** s. 81(5) applied (25.9.2000) by 1989 c. 5, s. 1(5) (as inserted (25.9.2000) by 2000 c. 23, ss. 82, 83(2), Sch. 4 para. 4(1)(with s. 82(3))
- C2** S. 81(5) applied (25.9.2000) by 1994 c. 13, s. 11(1A) (as inserted (25.9.2000) by 2000 c. 23, ss. 82, 83(2), Sch. 4 para. 6 (with s. 82(3))

**Marginal Citations**

- M1** 1979 c. 2.  
**M2** 1994 c. 13.  
**M3** 1955 c. 18.  
**M4** 1996 c. 16.  
**M5** 1967 c. 77.  
**M6** 1998 c. 42.  
**M7** 1978 c. 30.  
**M8** S.I. 1979/1573 (N.I. 12).  
**M9** 1997 c. 50.  
**M10** 1949 c. 54.  
**M11** 1971 c. 80.  
**M12** 1955 c. 18.  
**M13** 1955 c. 19.  
**M14** 1957 c. 53.

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