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Press watchdog rules against private investigator

The Press Complaints Commission has dismissed complaints lodged by a private investigator at the centre of covert intelligence-gathering operations on campaigners

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A private investigator who has been covertly gathering intelligence on protesters has lost her case in front of the watchdog which regulates the press.

Rebecca Todd, the investigator, complained about two articles in the Guardian. However the watchdog, the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), has dismissed all of her complaints.

Back in February, we reported how three large energy companies had been carrying out covert intelligence-gathering operations on environmental activists. The companies were E.ON, Scottish Resources Group and Scottish Power.

They had hired Todd, the owner of a private security firm called Vericola, for the job.

The basis of the articles were a series of leaked documents which showed Todd, for example, instructing an agent to attend campaign meetings and coaching him on how to ingratiate himself with activists.

Soon after the two articles appeared, Todd complained to the Press Complaints Commission.

She alleged that the articles were inaccurate, breached her privacy and relied on documents obtained through subterfuge or clandestine means.

Today we are publishing the verdict ([here](#)) of the Press Complaints Commission showing how the regulator has ruled against her on each count. The PCC decided that publishing the stories was justified in the public interest.

The PCC's ruling speaks for itself so we don't intend to comment in detail.

Some readers may find it ironic that an investigator who was covertly gathering intelligence on activists complained that her own privacy had been invaded, but perhaps that would be unfair.

The documents for the original articles in the Guardian were passed to us by activists who, as we reported in those articles, uncovered the evidence showing what Todd was up to. The activists' own investigation is described [here](#) on [Indymedia](#). We are grateful to those activists for passing on those documents enabling us to write the articles.

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