



Top detective in clear over claims he kept evidence secret

Police watchdog rules
allegations unproven

Officer has been put
back on normal duties

NEAL KEELING

ALLEGATIONS a top detective failed to disclose evidence at a fraud trial eight years ago have been thrown out.

Det Supt Steve Hassall of Greater Manchester Police had been put on restricted duties while an inquiry was carried out by the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

The Crown Prosecution Service had decided in December that no criminal proceedings would be brought against Mr Hassall.

Now the IPCC has concluded there is no 'hard evidence' to prove the allegations against the officer, who has been returned to normal duties.

It was alleged Mr Hassall sub-



mitted a misleading statement and failed to disclose information relating to the credibility of a key prosecution witness at the trial of Patrick Zengeya in July 2001.

At that trial, Zengeya was convicted of two counts of attempting to obtain services by deception and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment.

The Court of Appeal quashed Mr Zengeya's conviction in May last year on the basis that there was a failure to disclose evidence at his original trial.

During the original trial, it was alleged that the defendant had arranged for a car to be taken from England to South Africa but then tried to pay the shipping costs with other people's credit cards.

IPCC Commissioner Ms Naseem Malik said: "This was a very difficult investigation.

"The lack of real documentary evidence has led to a reliance on handwritten notes and the recollection of those involved in the

case at the time. There is simply no hard evidence to support any of the opinions put forward as to what might have happened."

Ms Malik added: "Frustratingly for all involved in the investigation, the snippets of evidence are not backed up by strong hard facts. Discrepancies in accounts and the absence of hard evidence means we cannot

substantiate the allegations against Mr Hassall."

Mr Hassall has 30 years' experience in GMP, is highly respected and has several commendations for bravery and professionalism.

Mr Hassall's solicitor Ian Lewis, of Manchester firm Lewis Hymanson Small, said he was pleased with the outcome.

He said: "There has never been any evidence of Det Supt Hassall misleading anybody in these proceedings and therefore we now welcome this independent enquiry by the IPCC which has substantiated what he has been saying all along."

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