



INTELLIGENCE AND INVESTIGATIONS DEPARTMENT

A summary of WADA investigations into the
International Weightlifting Federation and the
sport of weightlifting

October 2020



WORLD
ANTI-DOPING
AGENCY

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Introduction

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Intelligence and Investigations Department (the “I&I Department”) has held an interest in the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) and the sport of weightlifting since October 2016. In August 2017, that interest transitioned into active investigations following the receipt of information from ‘Confidential Sources’ concerning alleged activities within the IWF. Since that time (2017), the department has worked quietly and diligently on many fronts, investigating doping-related issues within the IWF and the sport of weightlifting in general. The volume of allegations received in relation to this sport, mainly generated through WADA’s Speak up! platform, has been remarkable and has resulted in this sport being one of I&I’s priorities in the past four years.

This report summarizes the work that has been conducted to date by I&I in the sport of weightlifting. It also highlights the vital importance of ‘Confidential Sources’ (e.g. informants, whistleblowers, confidential information) such that our work within weightlifting has almost exclusively been driven by ‘Confidential Sources’. In publishing this report, we have sought to balance the imperatives of confidentiality and transparency. This balance does, however, necessitate the use of pseudonyms and de-identified case studies throughout this report.

Confidentiality and ‘Confidential Sources’ are essential to the success of the work of WADA’s I&I. However, transparency is essential to creating trust and fulfilling our mandate to *conduct efficient and effective investigations*. Sometimes, these drivers are competing interests. Ordinarily, when we weigh these interests in deciding whether or not to publicize our work, confidentiality prevails, not because we fear accountability, but because the risk of harm to our Confidential Sources or the success of our investigation demands it.

The I&I Department tackles the most entrenched instances of systemic doping and sport corruption, often in partnership with law enforcement. Consequently, our investigations are lengthy (they take at times years) and the decision of what can be publicly shared, and when, resides with our law enforcement partners.

Against this backdrop – and in consultation with our law enforcement partners – we have taken the unusual step of publicizing what we can about the work we have conducted, and are still conducting, in the sport of weightlifting. But we are unable to share all elements of our work because these investigations remain ongoing.

Therefore, we acknowledge the questions some may have after reading this report. We apologize for being unable to address them all at this stage and we will revisit this issue at the conclusion of our investigations.

We are hoping that by publishing this report and revealing the courage of our ‘Confidential Sources’, others will come forward and contribute to our joint goal of clean sport and a level playing field in the sport of weightlifting and in sport in general.



Gunter Younger

Director, Intelligence and Investigations Department
World Anti-Doping Agency

1. THE INVESTIGATIONS

The I&I Department's investigation of the IWF and sport of weightlifting was comprised of four pillars: *Operation Outreach*; *Operation Heir*; *Operation Extra*; and *Operation Arrow*.

While each pillar is examined in detail below, it is helpful to provide the following overview.

Operation Outreach centers on allegations from Confidential Sources¹ that a high-ranking member of the IWF received payments to promote Russian interests and protect Russian athletes. Moreover, according to these sources, this person would allegedly conceal 'doping' of athletes in exchange for money. These allegations extended to include both Russian and non-Russian athletes.

Operation Heir centers on allegations from Confidential Sources that select Romanian weightlifters were part of an organized doping program, received advance notice of testing, engaged in urine substitution and used 'doppelgängers' during testing to avoid detection.² A doppelgänger is a person who impersonates an athlete during testing and provides a sample on their behalf.

This investigation uncovered the urine substitution (doppelgänger) case of an elite Romanian weightlifter with a history of doping. In early 2020, as a direct consequence of Operation Heir, this athlete was banned for using a doppelgänger to provide an out-of-competition sample.

The I&I Department has a long history of productive work in Romania. Commencing in late 2016, acting on information from Confidential Sources, the I&I Department investigated the Romanian Doping Control Laboratory (**Bucharest Laboratory**) and discovered it had concealed evidence of doping by three Romanian athletes at the direction of external entities. The Laboratory's analysis practices were also unduly influenced by staff from

the Romanian National Anti-Doping Agency (**RNADA**). These investigations directly led to WADA's suspension of the Bucharest Laboratory on 27 November 2017 and the departure of key Laboratory and RNADA staff.

Operation Extra centers on the diverse allegations received from Confidential Sources of deficient and, in some cases, improper practices by some national weightlifting federations (the "**National Federations**").

Lastly, **Operation Arrow** - born in part of confidential information and the findings from Operation Heir - was a ground-breaking investigation into the global practice of urine substitution by athletes and the use of doppelgängers within the sport of weightlifting.

2. WHISTLEBLOWING PROGRAM

In 2015, changes to the World Anti-Doping Code provided WADA with the power to "*initiate its own investigations*" of Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs) and other activities that may facilitate doping in sport.³

The Intelligence and Investigations Department is the independent body within WADA that conducts all doping related investigations and works closely in this field with governments, law enforcement and Anti-Doping Organizations (**ADOs**). Its mandate includes the identification and dismantling of serious and endemic doping in sport.

In keeping with its commitment to protect clean athletes, WADA has a "*Whistleblowing Program*" underpinned by a "*Policy and Procedure for Reporting Misconduct*" (**Policy**).⁴

¹ In order to protect our sources, we will use "*Confidential Sources*" throughout the report regardless of whether it is a singular source or several.

² For the purposes of this report, the term "urine substitution" denotes tampering of a sample which occurs at the time of sample collection, including where the sample is provided by a person impersonating the athlete (i.e. a doppelgänger). Urine substitution is an anti-doping rule

violation and falls under World Anti-Doping Code ("*Code*") Article 2.2 (Use or Attempted Use of a Prohibited Method).

³ Code Article 20.7.10.

⁴ https://www.wada-ama.org/sites/default/files/whistleblowingprogram_policy_procedure_en.pdf.

3. CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION UNIT

Created in 2018, WADA's Confidential Information Unit (CIU) has greatly enhanced the I&I Department's capabilities in two priority areas, namely: (i) the collection of anti-doping intelligence; and (ii) the management of Confidential Sources.

The CIU defines itself by building collaborative relationships with its sources – relationships that are built on trust and two-way communication. It is the CIU's responsibility to safely manage these complex relationships, including counseling where necessary, while ensuring they produce actionable intelligence in the fight against doping.

Information is only as valuable as its accuracy. To this end, the CIU dedicates considerable resources

and focus on the information and source-vetting process. Such assessments include discerning the motivations of each Confidential Source, risk assessments, open source investigation and in-depth intelligence analysis. The thoroughness and tenacity with which the CIU undertakes its role of vetting Confidential Sources and their information is evidenced in the below case study.

The CIU is staffed by subject matter experts from the field of source-handling. All have extensive global experience in intelligence collection and source handling. All are multi-lingual and all are highly regarded in the international intelligence and law enforcement community.

In addition to its source management role, the CIU operates as WADA's de facto intelligence unit. The CIU collects, registers, assesses, and distributes all anti-doping intelligence on behalf of WADA's I&I Department.

A Case Study

The corroboration and vetting of a Confidential Source is essential to the investigative process. Moreover, it is a fluid and ongoing process. In other words, a Confidential Source and their information are continually reassessed throughout the life of an investigation. This process aims to immunize the investigation against exaggerated, false or malicious allegations. The following case study related to our IWF investigations demonstrates the value in this methodology.

In late 2018, Confidential Sources provided the CIU with a series of 'messages' purportedly exchanged between key parties during preparations for the sourcing and trafficking of Prohibited Substances. Investigations were undertaken to assess the veracity of this evidence. At the time, the 'messages' were assessed as credible. At a later juncture, however, the CIU received additional intelligence which warranted the reassessment of the Confidential Sources and the messages. Through this renewed vetting process, an opportunity arose to secure more direct evidence, which would then permit a detailed re-examination of the original messages. With excellent collaboration from the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (now renamed Sport Integrity Australia), the CIU secured this new evidence. To ensure independence and transparency, the re-assessment was undertaken by an analyst with no prior involvement in the original investigation. This analyst was provided with access to all relevant CIU reporting as well as key background information.

The reassessment determined the messages as not credible. The CIU immediately quarantined the information from all active investigations, performed an impact assessment and deactivated the Confidential Sources.

While the reassessment did identify additional credible evidence of impropriety within the IWF, ultimately, the benefit of the information vetting process was to expose questionable information and remove it from an active investigation. This Case Study demonstrates the ongoing vigilance of the CIU's management of information received from Confidential Sources.

4. OPERATION OUTREACH

Background

In late 2017, Confidential Sources alleged that a high-ranking member of the IWF was paid to promote Russian interests and protect Russian athletes. The allegations also included the claim that this person would conceal 'doping' of any athlete in exchange for money. The subsequent investigation of these matters was codenamed "*Operation Outreach*".

Investigations

In December 2017, Operation Outreach was commenced.

In early 2018, Operation Outreach continued to investigate the veracity of the allegations by conducting numerous interviews and interrogating the Moscow Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) data of Russian weightlifters.⁵

As the allegations were being developed, further corroborative allegations were received, suggesting that the high-ranking IWF member protected and favoured select athletes, teams and organizations in return for money (cash).

While our investigation to date has provided no indication that the same high-ranking person, or any other person from the IWF, was involved in the more general protection scheme exposed by WADA's Independent Person (McLaren) investigation into Russian doping, the Operation Outreach allegations that this person favoured Russian interests and protected athletes led to an I&I enquiry into the prevalence of doping amongst Russian weightlifters. Consequently, the I&I Department thoroughly examined the LIMS data of Russian weightlifters.

By mid-2018, the I&I Department had identified cases of doping against numerous Russian

weightlifters within the LIMS data.⁶ The circumstances of these cases suggested that Russian entities used diverse means by which to protect select weightlifters and conceal their 'doping'.

By late 2018, Operation Outreach had identified Confidential Sources willing to share 'on-the-record' information, provided issues of safety and confidentiality could be addressed.

Ensuring the safety and confidentiality of 'at-risk' Confidential Sources is the mandate of the CIU. The work needed (e.g. risk assessments, security protocols, intervention strategies) before evidence can be formalized is methodical and time-consuming.

By mid-2019, the Confidential Sources were confident with the arrangements in place and Operation Outreach obtained the first of several confidential statements. In short, the Confidential Sources detailed a history of protection orchestrated from within the highest levels of the IWF to the benefit of 'doped' Russian weightlifters. More specifically, between 2012 and 2016, a high-ranking member of the IWF purportedly received about \$5,000,000 USD from Russian entities to cover up allegations of doping by Russian weightlifters. These monies were concealed within the IWF under the banner of "*finances*" (**Administrative Fines**) imposed under the IWF Anti-Doping Policy.⁷ These serious allegations are now subject to further investigations. However, the ongoing character of the investigations prevents the details of that information from being disclosed at this time.

The IWF Secretariat is based in Budapest, Hungary. Conduct of this kind, if true, is criminal and in contravention of Hungarian laws (e.g.

⁵ The Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) data was received from a Whistleblower and pertained to analysis conducted by the Moscow Anti-Doping Centre from 2012 to 2015. The analysis of the database was codenamed Operation LIMS.

⁶ By February 2019, the I&I Department had provided the IWF with a total of 40 case packages against Russian weightlifters as part of WADA's Operation LIMS. As with all evidence packages transmitted by WADA to International Federations as part of Operation LIMS, WADA's Legal Department is following up with the IWF (as well as the International Testing Agency, to which the IWF has since delegated the

implementation of its anti-doping program) to ensure these cases are being dealt with.

⁷ Article 12.5 of the current IWF Anti-Doping Policy allows the IWF to impose fines on "*Member Federations*" should three or more 'doping' violations be committed by members of that respective federation within a calendar year. These fines can total up to US\$500,000 if nine or more 'doping' violations are incurred within the calendar year. This sanction has been available in all versions of the IWF Anti-Doping Policy since at least September 2012 and is specific to the IWF.

embezzlement, misappropriation of funds and money laundering).⁸

In September 2019, Operation Outreach identified additional Confidential Sources willing to provide information about the President of the IWF at that time, Mr Tamas Aján. These Confidential Sources claimed that Mr Aján routinely used the influence of his honorary Hungarian “*diplomatic passport*” to transport large sums of money in and out of Hungary undisturbed. A diplomatic passport ordinarily ensures that the holder and their luggage are exempt from any interference or inspection by border control.

In October 2019, discrete, covert investigations by Operation Outreach revealed a significant discrepancy (almost \$3,000,000 USD) between the total value of Administrative Fines received by the IWF as published on the IWF website, and those recorded internally by the IWF. This discrepancy partially corroborated the claims of the Confidential Sources.

Law Enforcement

The nature of the allegations necessitated the involvement of law enforcement and by November 2019, Operation Outreach had successfully sought the assistance of law enforcement agencies.

Upon the involvement of law enforcement, as a matter of best practice, the I&I Department takes no further investigative action in order to ensure law enforcement has the greatest chance of success. Moreover, the I&I Department takes proactive measures to ensure that the confidentiality of law enforcement action is maintained. Only after the conclusion of the law enforcement investigations will the I&I Department finalize its investigation of any outstanding matters within the jurisdiction of the World Anti-Doping Code.

As at the date of publishing of this report, the law enforcement investigation arising from Operation Outreach remains ongoing.

⁸ For the purposes of this Report, the meaning of embezzlement, misappropriation of funds and money laundering shall have the same meaning as ascribed by the Criminal Code of Hungary, sections 372, 376 and 399, respectively.

On 4 June 2020, Professor Richard McLaren published the results of his four-month independent investigation into allegations of corruption in weightlifting commissioned by the new IWF leadership (the “**McLaren IWF Investigation**”). Throughout Professor McLaren’s investigation, the I&I Department cooperated with his team. Professor McLaren’s success was greatly assisted by his access to confidential and otherwise inaccessible internal IWF documents provided to him by the new IWF leadership.

With the assistance of Professor McLaren, the I&I Department accessed the complete findings of his investigation. Where relevant, this information has been provided to law enforcement.

5. OPERATION HEIR

In early 2018, the CIU began receiving information from Confidential Sources alleging that an organized doping and protection scheme operated within Romania to the benefit of select weightlifters. The scheme allegedly included, trafficking of Prohibited Substances, advance notice of testing missions and urine substitution (via the use of doppelgängers). Allegations included the involvement of “*officials*” and encouragement of the “*clean*” athletes to remain quiet and not to speak up.

The subsequent investigation of these matters was codenamed “*Operation Heir*”.

Background

The I&I Department has had an interest in Romania since 2016, and it is useful to provide some background here.

Bucharest Laboratory

In 2016, the I&I Department received information from Confidential Sources alleging irregular and improper practices within the Bucharest Laboratory, including concealment of Adverse Analytical Findings (**AAFs**)⁹ of select Romanian athletes and an improper relationship with the

⁹ *Adverse Analytical Finding*: A report from a WADA accredited laboratory that identifies in a sample the presence of a Prohibited Substance or its Metabolites or Markers (including elevated quantities of endogenous substances) or evidence of the Use of a Prohibited Substance.

Romanian Anti-Doping Agency (RNADA). An investigation was commenced.

In September 2017, the I&I Department finalized this part of its investigation, concluding that “staff”¹⁰ from the Bucharest Laboratory had knowingly and intentionally concealed the AAFs of two Romanian Athletes.¹¹ The I&I Department also found that some RNADA staff unduly influenced the Bucharest Laboratory.

This investigation directly led to WADA’s suspension of the Bucharest Laboratory on 27 November 2017 and the departure of key Laboratory and RNADA staff.

Investigations

The allegations levelled by Confidential Sources, if true, warranted the involvement of law enforcement. Consequently, prior to approaching law enforcement, Operation Heir undertook efforts to evaluate the veracity of the allegations.

However, direct investigations could not be conducted without risking the exposure of the investigation and the Confidential Sources. Consequently, Operation Heir was largely conducted as a covert investigation. To this end, Operation Heir conducted comprehensive debriefings of the Confidential Sources, open-source investigations, select interviews and targeted out-of-competition testing. Operation Heir was greatly assisted by international partners, including, in particular, the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (now renamed Sport Integrity Australia).

In late 2018, Operation Heir facilitated out-of-competition testing of select Romanian weightlifters. While no evidence of use of Prohibited Substances was detected, evidence which led to the sanctioning of an athlete for urine substitution (via the use of a doppelgänger) was secured.¹²

¹⁰ These staff members, though identified and removed from the Bucharest Laboratory, are not named in this report.

¹¹ Both athletes were international Romanian wrestlers. They were sanctioned respectively with a period of four-year and two-year sporting ineligibility for use of Prohibited Substances.

Law Enforcement

In early 2019, Operation Heir successfully sought the assistance of law enforcement. As at the date of publishing of this report, the law enforcement investigation remains ongoing.

After the conclusion of the law enforcement investigation, Operation Heir will finalize its investigation of any outstanding matters within the anti-doping jurisdiction.

6. OPERATION EXTRA

Weightlifting has been a strategic priority for the CIU since its formation in 2018 and has consistently appeared within WADA CIU’s top tier of yearly intelligence ‘tip-offs’ in terms of both volume and importance.

The objective of Operation Extra was to collect, collate and assess all weightlifting intelligence received by the I&I Department in order to ensure all intelligence relevant to Operations Outreach, Heir and Arrow was identified and triaged.

Additionally, the CIU was mandated to develop intelligence leads that would enable the I&I Department to better understand the scale of alleged anti-doping mismanagement and misconduct within the sport of weightlifting.

To this end, Operation Extra was an intelligence operation.

Source Security

It is important to note that the CIU’s ultimate priority, beyond the intelligence it receives, is the protection of its Confidential Sources. All CIU follow-up actions arising from Operation Extra were guided by this requirement.

Consequently, all Operation Extra Confidential Sources who have agreed to work with the I&I Department, have expressly provided their permission for the CIU to share their intelligence with external partners. If a source does not provide

¹² As this sanction is currently under appeal, and to protect the ongoing Results Management process, Operation Heir will not to disclose the identity of this athlete and other relevant details in this report.

their permission, the information is not disseminated outside the I&I Department.

What did Operation Extra find?

Intelligence collected through Operation Extra suggests the existence of a pervasive culture of mismanagement and abuse within the sport of weightlifting. Although the CIU is unable to corroborate some of the allegations it received, much of the information provided by the Confidential Sources suggests the sport of weightlifting suffers from poor representation at the local and national level of select countries.¹³ More specifically, Operation Extra identified a number of National Federations, whose officials were alleged to have engaged directly or indirectly in the doping activities of their athletes.

By way of example, Operation Extra has received allegations of the following conduct by athletes and officials within weightlifting:

- Use of synthetic urinary devices by international-level athletes to swap dirty urine with clean urine.
- Urine substitution to protect doped athletes.
- Use of 'clean' athletes to provide samples in place of 'doped' athletes.
- Use of "undetectable" growth hormones to evade doping controls.
- Use of transfusions to clean an athlete's system prior to competing at the Olympic Games.
- Coaches who provided athletes with doping programs.
- Officials who provided bribes to protect athletes.
- Officials who provided advance testing to coaches and athletes.

¹³ For investigative purposes, these countries have not been identified in this report.

¹⁴ The CIU intelligence collection process begins with collection and registration of allegations into case files. Confidential sources are vetted, and their allegations assessed. Collected intelligence is then converted into intelligence reports and additional analysis is performed. When the CIU assesses that the intelligence falls within a partner organization's area of responsibility, a Case Transmission Form (CTF)

- Doping Control Officers (DCOs) who provided advance notice for testing.
- A coach who doped athletes from different nations by acting as a doping consultant.

What did Operation Extra do?

Operation Extra identified over 30 current or former athletes suspected of doping, over 15 current or former coaches suspected of assisting their athletes in doping, and over 10 current or former officials suspected of knowingly facilitating the doping of athletes under their supervision. This intelligence has been disseminated to trusted partners for further investigations.

The I&I Department will continue to monitor the results of those investigations.

Operation Extra has also identified numerous dealers of Prohibited Substances, new 'doping' substances, contemporary 'doping' methodologies, urine substitution techniques, and several examples of bribes in exchange for anti-doping protection. This intelligence has been disseminated to all relevant WADA departments and external stakeholders.

Operation Extra resulted in eight separate lines of inquiry, which produced 27 separate intelligence disclosures. This intelligence was shared with the relevant Anti-Doping Organizations.¹⁴ Due to the sensitivity of the files – and I&I's mandate to protect Confidential Sources – not every piece of relevant intelligence could be shared with outside stakeholders. However, the CIU has registered, assessed, and shared all actionable intelligence permitted within the bounds of confidentiality.

The CIU is also working closely with the International Testing Agency (ITA), as the IWF's delegated investigative authority, to ensure that all relevant intelligence is being robustly pursued.

(also known as an Intelligence Disclosure) is drafted. Prior to the distribution of a CTF, a risk assessment is conducted. The CIU then requests the source's permission to share the intelligence. If permission is granted, the intelligence is then distributed to the partner agency, and the CIU runs a parallel follow-up program to ensure the intelligence is actioned by those bodies. In case an Anti-Doping Organization (ADO) does not follow up properly, this can lead to compliance consequences for the ADO under the World Anti-Doping Code,

What did Operation Extra conclude?

The McLaren IWF investigation and the I&I Department investigations point to a system of patronage for protection directed by former IWF President, Mr Aján. This system appears to have allowed certain National Federations to operate with virtual doping impunity.

Operation Extra intelligence suggests that the mismanagement of some National Federations represents a major weakness, which has allowed doping to thrive within the sport.

Operation Extra intelligence also suggests that, among certain National Federations, promising young athletes were protected, while those with less potential were either encouraged to dope or used as donors of clean urine.¹⁵

The allegations received by Operation Extra would suggest the problems faced by weightlifting are not centralized in any particular country or region but are more global.

Culture of Silence

A disturbing trend which emerged during Operation Extra was an apparent culture of silence and fear that exists within the sport. Operation Extra intelligence indicates that many weightlifters had little to no confidence that their national and international federation was protecting their best interests and the sport's best interests.

During Operation Extra, Confidential Sources expressed distrust in their fellow athletes, coaches, and federation officials. Even more disheartening, many expressed their disillusion that the situation would ever change. One Confidential Source stated:

"It is like going in a prison and expecting to find not-guilty people.... there are exceptions but, in our sport, [the exceptions are] one in a million"

and

"I saw steroid use from a young age. Today those same past users talk about a clean age in weightlifting. I didn't want to start training at a

young age because I knew that some day, I will face a dilemma: to continue lifting and losing at competitions or to use steroids and win."

Another young Confidential Source commented:

"As long as one athlete needs to be protected, the other ones suffer. I am one of those victims! How about my many years of hard work? I started this sport as a young boy with great confidence and hard work. How can bad people break that confidence? Should I leave the sport now? "

Many of these athletes were afraid to come forward as they believed they would suffer consequences for speaking out.

One Confidential Source stated:

"I don't consent to share my information with another Anti-Doping Organization. I do not trust the president of my national federation. They are very closely connected to the IWF... Probably a lot of people that I've mentioned will recognize who spoke out... This is the reason why I didn't speak to the police here. If the information I gave isn't helpful as it is, please ignore it as I am going to leave the dirty sport of 'weightlifting'."

This culture of silence provided an almost guaranteed level of impunity to those individuals who sought to corrupt the sport for their own personal gain. The CIU was fortunate and grateful that a small number of individuals accepted to share their full stories. Others would only agree to provide anonymous information. Potential sources declined to provide their contact information or allow follow-up communications. Some only wished to share information about their specific cases but did not provide names. Others were simply too afraid of the potential consequences to come forward.

This culture of silence has undeniably adversely impacted the I&I Department's ability to pursue some of the investigative leads it received. Indeed, many of our interview requests were turned down. If weightlifting is to tackle its problems, athletes and officials must be provided with ways and means to speak up without fear of consequence.

¹⁵ "Protected" athletes allegedly benefitted from urine substitution, advance testing notice, whereabouts manipulation, advice on when to

dope and how to avoid detection, or federation officials/support personnel failing to report acts of misconduct, among other examples.

7. OPERATION ARROW

In September 2019, the I&I Department commenced “*Operation Arrow*”, a covert investigation into the existence of urine substitution (at the time of collection) in the sport of weightlifting.¹⁶

Operation Arrow was born in part from Confidential Sources and has been greatly assisted by a global expert on urine substitution from a WADA-accredited Laboratory (the “**Substitution Expert**”).

Operation Arrow is a standalone investigation and will be subject of separate reporting by the I&I Department. As such, only an overview of the investigation and findings to date are included in this report.

Background

During the course of Operation Arrow, on 5 January 2020, German broadcaster ARD¹⁷ aired a documentary (“The Lord of the Lifters”) (the “**Documentary**”), which alleged that the IWF leadership, particularly Mr Aján, had protected doped weightlifters in exchange for money. Such protection allegedly included subversion of the doping control process and urine substitution (collectively, the “**Protection Scheme**”). Moreover, DCOs from the Hungarian Anti-Doping Organization (**HUNADO**) – purportedly favoured by the IWF - would be complicit in the Protection Scheme.

¹⁶ Urine substitution is an anti-doping rule violation (“*ADRV*”) and is covered by World Anti-Doping Code (“*Code*”) Article 2.2 (Use or Attempted Use of a Prohibited Method). Urine substitution is a prohibited “*physical*” method (M1) as defined by WADA’s Prohibited List. The *ADRV* of “*complicity*” (Code Article 2.9) implicates any person who assists, encourages, aides, abets, conspires or covers up the alleged Conduct. Moreover, the collection and handling of a urine sample is governed by the International Standard for Testing and Investigations (ISTI).

¹⁷ Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. The documentary was aired on 5 January 2020.

¹⁸ See https://www.sportsintegrityinitiative.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/INTERNAL-AUDIT-REPORT_HUNADO_20-April-2020.pdf. Operation Arrow last visited this link on 7 July 2020.

¹⁹ See page 5; McLaren Independent Weightlifting Investigation Report (the “*McLaren IWF Report*”), page 5 (<<https://mclarenweightliftingenquiry.com/wp->

On 31 January 2020, in response to the IWF Documentary, the IWF Executive Board suspended President Aján and appointed Professor McLaren to investigate the allegations raised by the ARD Documentary, including the alleged Protection Scheme (viz McLaren IWF Investigation).

On 20 April 2020, HUNADO published the results of its own internal investigation, which refuted the Documentary’s claims.¹⁸

On 4 June 2020, Professor McLaren reported his findings, which included the discovery of vast amounts of “*unaccounted*” monies within the IWF and the discovery of hidden AAF records.¹⁹ In regards to the alleged Protection Scheme, Professor McLaren found that HUNADO was “*not the cause of doping sample manipulation or hidden results*” and had, in fact, “*operated in compliance with WADA standards*”. To this end, the “*source of the anti-doping issues that plagued the IWF and the sport of weightlifting [lay] elsewhere.*”²⁰ Professor McLaren did not publicly identify the ultimate source of these anti-doping issues.

The Investigation

In examining the existence of urine substitution in weightlifting, Operation Arrow interrogated WADA’s ADAMS database for detailed information concerning samples collected from weightlifters between 1 January 2012 and 31 December 2019 (the “**Dataset**”). A total of 59,153 unique samples were identified.²¹ Information including the Testing Authority (**TA**)²² and the Sample Collection Authority (**SCA**) was also compiled.

<content/themes/mclarenweightliftingenquiry/assets/mclaren-independent-investigator-report-iwf-final.pdf>>.

²⁰ See McLaren IWF Report, page 4.

²¹ The date of 1 January 2012 was selected as the commencement date because from this date, the International Standard for Laboratories (“*ISL*”) mandated that all WADA-accredited Laboratories report ‘negative’ samples in ADAMS.

²² ISTI Article 3, *Testing Authority*: The organization that has authorized a particular Sample collection, whether (1) an Anti-Doping Organization (for example, the International Olympic Committee or other Major Event Organization, WADA, an International Federation, or a National Anti-Doping Organization); or (2) another organization conducting Testing pursuant to the authority of and in accordance with the rules of the Anti-Doping Organization (for example, a National Federation that is a member of an International Federation).

Urine substitution may be asserted through DNA analysis and comparison. Theoretically, the urine used to substitute the 'true' urine of an athlete should not contain any Prohibited Substances. Therefore, samples reported as 'negative' were of primary interest to Operation Arrow.

The International Standard for Laboratories (ISL) requires that 'negative' samples be stored for a minimum of **three months**,²³ while any 'negative' samples or samples reported as AAFs may be stored for up to ten years.²⁴ Identification of DCOs and other persons involved in a sample collection process requires the recovery of the original 'hard copy' Doping Control Form (DCF). The International Standard for the Protection of Privacy and Personal Information (ISPPPI) previously required that DCFs for samples reported as negative be retained for a maximum of **18 months**.²⁵ This 'routine' destruction of samples and DCFs had a significant impact on Operation Arrow and its investigations as most of the identified 'suspicious' samples (and their associated DCFs) had been destroyed.

The Analysis

The identification of samples suspected of having been substituted was guided by a specific pattern observed through Operation Arrow. While this pattern will be reported in full at the completion of Operation Arrow, it is helpful to state here that the pattern centered, in part, on weightlifters who provided a 'negative' sample and then a 'positive' sample (AAF) shortly thereafter.

This methodology identified a prospective pool of 130 weightlifters comprising 132 samples suspected of having undergone urine substitution. From this group, only 31 samples (in 23 laboratories), representing 30 weightlifters, were still in existence. The rest had been routinely destroyed by the respective laboratory after the mandatory three-

month minimum storage period had elapsed and if the Testing Authority had not requested the long-term storage of the sample.

Two weightlifters and their respective samples were excluded from Operation Arrow as their samples were already part of a separate investigation as part of the Operation LIMS re-analysis program.²⁶ Operation Arrow also included 14 weightlifters²⁷ (24 samples) that the Substitution Expert had separately identified as having potentially engaged in urine substitution. Thus, through a new methodology developed by WADA and applied as part of Operation Arrow for the detection of suspected cases of urine substitution, Operation Arrow has identified and investigated **53 samples (related to 39 weightlifters)** for urine substitution.

The Results

Urine substitution was **confirmed** through DNA profile analysis and individualization in **11** samples. These cases represent **10** weightlifters from five countries.²⁸

Urine substitution was also "**very likely**" to have occurred in **15** samples. These 15 cases represent **eight** weightlifters from five countries.²⁹ The 'routine' destruction of these samples prevented DNA confirmation of urine substitution.

The remaining **27** samples (representing **21** weightlifters) were shown **not** to have been substituted.

Operation Arrow will be forwarding all identified and suspected cases of urine substitution to the IWF for Results Management when completed.

While the role of an athlete in urine substitution is clear, Operation Arrow is keenly focused on who else may be involved in facilitating this deception, (e.g. DCOs, coaches, Athlete Support Personnel). To date, Operation Arrow has identified numerous

²³ See ISL Article 5.3.2.1.4.

²⁴ See ISL Article 5.3.2.3.1.

²⁵ Unless the ADO requested longer storage by the laboratory for possible re-analysis, or unless the sample was collected as part of a biological passport program. See the previous version of the ISPPPI at Article 10.4 and Annex A Module 4 – Testing. Under the new version of the ISPPPI to come into force on 1 January 2021, DCFs will be retained for 10 years from the sample collection date.

²⁶ The 'Operation LIMS re-analysis program' is the targeted re-analysis of 2,262 'unique' samples (4,523 vessels) removed from the Moscow Laboratory by the I&I Department on 30 April 2019.

²⁷ Notably, Operation Arrow had already identified three of the Substitution Expert's 14 weightlifters. These three weightlifters were removed from the 14 weightlifters identified by the Substitution Expert.

²⁸ As the Results Management process remains ongoing, the countries have not been identified in this report.

²⁹ As the Results Management process remains ongoing, the countries have not been identified in this report.

persons of interest,³⁰ including athletes, DCOs, coaches, team doctors and officials. This work by Operation Arrow remains ongoing and will be subject of separate reporting at the conclusion of the investigation.

Moving Forward

The methodology applied by Operation Arrow in identifying actual and suspected cases of urine substitution can easily be applied to sports other than weightlifting. Indeed, the I&I Department will share the learnings and methodologies discovered by Operation Arrow with other sports, National and Regional Anti-Doping Organizations, Major Event Organizations, laboratories and Athlete Passport Management Units to ensure a global and united effort to address urine substitution.

Operation Arrow has also demonstrated the vital importance of laboratory experts in triaging and identifying suspected cases of urine substitution.

Upon its completion, Operation Arrow will seek to identify practices and strategies which may further decrease the risk of urine substitution and increase the chances of early detection.

Finally, Operation Arrow has demonstrated that the three-month-storage of 'negative' samples and the 18-month-storage of DCFs was insufficient. Most of the samples that have been requested for DNA analysis by Operation Arrow were routinely destroyed after this minimum storage period. Had Operation Arrow been able to access these destroyed samples, it is very likely that more cases of urine substitution would have been conclusively established.

Whereas the ISL permits a 'negative' sample be stored for up to 10-years,³¹ laboratories routinely discard these samples after three months, the minimum period required. While cost and storage space limitations within the laboratory are a reasoned basis behind this practice, Operation Arrow highlights the need for WADA and ADOs to find additional ways to ensure that those 'negative' samples worthy of long-term storage

can be identified and kept. This, coupled with the 2021 ISPPPI amendment requiring DCFs be stored for 10 years, would go a long way to address the issue of urine substitution.

8. CONCLUSION

The investigation into the sport of weightlifting has been complex, difficult and time-consuming. Indeed, the culture of fear and silence within this sport has been a significant impediment. That said, the large volume of allegations received via the confidential WADA *Speak up!* platform has been very encouraging.

Although not all allegations investigated by the I&I Department were corroborated - many being identified as rumours or stories - a significant number of the corroborated allegations evidenced a deep and long-lasting culture of doping and protection in the sport of weightlifting. Moreover, the fear of speaking up and the consequences to those who did, ensured that 'power' remained with a few people, and clean athletes felt abandoned.

Our investigations to date have revealed that doping within weightlifting extended beyond the athletes and included support or complicity from DCOs, support personnel, coaches and officials. That said, it is important to remember that clean weightlifters, coaches, and officials do exist. These individuals and their organizations wish to compete on a level playing field. For people associated with the sport to feel confident in reporting misconduct, reforms must be enacted.

The pervasive culture of silence was similarly observed in Operation Heir. However, it needs to be stressed that there were brave Confidential Sources that came forward to expose misconduct in Romania. In support of these brave individuals, the I&I Department will continue to work with trusted partners and monitor the situation within the

³⁰ The designation 'person of interest' denotes that the individual is suspected of either being involved in urine substitution or possessed information that is material to establishing the violation.

³¹ See World Anti-Doping Agency. International Standard for Laboratories ("ISL"), Article 5.3.2.1.4.

IWF, Romania, the National Federations and the sport of weightlifting in general.

While the I&I Department remains highly motivated to contribute to positive change to the sport of weightlifting, it is important to acknowledge the obvious impediments to detecting wrongdoing. More specifically, Professor McLaren's ability to access the IWF's internal records, correspondence and documents played a vital role. This kind of evidence would not have been otherwise accessible to WADA, including through its monitoring role of Anti-Doping Organizations' compliance.

To this end, WADA has no legal power to compel the production of internal documents of the kind made accessible to Professor McLaren by the IWF's new leadership. WADA compliance audits, which enable WADA to identify an ADO's non-conformities with the World Anti-Doping Code and the International Standards and to require corrective actions, are not a vehicle by which WADA can discover entrenched and systemic wrongdoing as these audits are reliant upon the cooperation of the audited party. Only law enforcement or internally mandated investigations, like that conducted by Professor McLaren on behalf of the new IWF leadership, have the necessary power and means to discover such entrenched wrongdoing.

To prevent a re-occurrence of the situation observed within the IWF, a discussion should be initiated whether WADA should be empowered to compel access to information of the kind uncovered by Professor McLaren under specific and strict conditions.

Intelligence gathering within the sport of weightlifting continues.

Following the change of leadership within the IWF and the McLaren IWF Investigation, the I&I Department is working very closely with the ITA, as the IWF delegated in September 2019 the full management of its anti-doping program to it, including its investigative and results management authority. The WADA I&I Department will therefore ensure that all relevant intelligence is shared with the ITA and thoroughly pursued. That said, as a Signatory to the World Anti-Doping Code, the IWF remains ultimately responsible for ensuring that the investigative follow-up is properly carried out, which includes that the necessary resources are made available for the ITA to properly pursue its investigations. The IWF will be subject to the I&I Department's follow-up procedures and, should issues be identified, they will be addressed through WADA's compliance monitoring program.

Meanwhile, the I&I Department will continue to ensure the intelligence it receives has maximum investigative impact with minimal impact on its Confidential Sources.

Lastly, a further report will follow the completion of all law enforcement and outstanding I&I Investigations.



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