

British MI6 agents named in Balkans

Paul Mitchell
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Over the last few weeks newspapers in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have exposed the identities of several British MI6 intelligence agents operating in the Balkans.

The most important agent is Anthony Monckton, who was based in the British embassy in Belgrade and was regarded as “the uncrowned king of the intelligence agencies” in the Balkans. He is credited with organising the kidnap of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague in 2001.

Other agents named include Gareth Lungle, first secretary for political affairs at the British Embassy in the Croatian capital Zagreb, Christopher Looms an ICTY employee, Julian Braithwaite, Information Director to Paddy Ashdown, who is the High Representative for Bosnia, and Alistair Sommerlad stationed at the British Embassy in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo.

The names were leaked after a major restructuring of intelligence agencies in the Balkans. A number of agents were sidelined or fired—including Franjo Turek, director of the Croatian counter-intelligence agency POA (Protu-obavjestajne agencije) and Zeljko Bagic, national security advisor to the Croatian President Stipe Mesic.

Monckton was first publicly identified as an MI6 officer based in Zagreb in a list of 116 alleged MI6 agents that surfaced on the internet. The British Labour government’s then-foreign secretary, Robin Cook, declared the list to be the work of former MI6 agent Richard Tomlinson. However, Tomlinson has repeatedly denied that he had anything to do with the publication of the list.

The book *Requiem for a State Secret* published in February 2004 by Zoran Mijatovic, former deputy head of the Serbian intelligence agency DB, alleged that Monckton was Britain’s leading agent in the Balkans. Mijatovic, who retired soon after Milosevic’s downfall, blames Monckton and MI6 for interfering in the restructuring of the DB and lobbying against his reappointment.

Monckton’s name did not reach a wider audience until the Belgrade newspaper *Nedeljni Telegraf*—publishers of Mijatovic’s book—disclosed it in an article on August 11 2004.

In the article Serbian intelligence officials criticise Monckton for being inept or interfering, giving as examples his inquiries into the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic last year, spying for Ashdown in Bosnia, not warning about the pogrom against Serbs in Kosovo in March 2004 and blackmailing Milo Djukanovic, the prime minister of Montenegro, to persuade him to back down on his demands for independence from Serbia.

A few days later the Croatian weekly *Nacional* also identified Monckton, but added the names of the other alleged MI6 agents—claiming they were part of a “one-year intelligence and media operation by British spies stationed in Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo” directed “against the security of the Republic of Croatia, or rather the final phase of weakening that system and removing those people who

protected the system from the infiltration of foreign agents, such as former POA director Franjo Turek and Zeljko Bagic, former presidential advisor.”

Another POA agent, Damir Jukica, told *Nacional* that he was fired earlier this year for criticising MI6 influence. He said MI6 “as all other foreign agents and their associates, would not have harmed Croatia if they had only worked in the areas where the interests of both countries overlap” and accused the organisation of “seriously compromising Croatian state interests.”

Jukica said he would have found MI6’s activities acceptable if Croatia had “become a British colony or if we had been given status similar to Bosnia, where an international protectorate is in effect.”

Even in Bosnia objections to MI6 spying operations appeared in the weekly paper *Slobodna Bosna*. It complained that following Ashdown’s appointment as High Representative, the country had been “transformed into a British intelligence protectorate and a base for the activities of British agents in neighbouring countries.”

According to *Slobodna Bosna* in 2002, Ashdown sacked Munir Alibabic, director of Bosnian intelligence FOSS (Federalne obavjestajno-sigurnosne sluzbe) after he complained about the infiltration of British spies into FOSS and was replaced with Ivan Vuksic. The paper says MI6 used FOSS to spy on investigators for the ICTY and Ashdown’s US deputy, Donald Hayes.

In June 2004, FOSS was merged with the intelligence service of Republika Srpska, forming the Bosnian Intelligence-Security Agency (OSA) with the loss of approximately 130 Bosniak OSA employees in what is described as a “purification” process by the OSA’s new director Almir Dzuvo.

More recently, the Serbian magazine *Ekstra Magazin* (September 26, 2004) concluded, “The West Balkans region is becoming the polygon for winning predominance between intelligence agencies from the US and Great Britain.” The magazine claimed that after European troops (EUFOR) take over from multinational troops (SFOR) in Bosnia, the US plans to use the new NATO centre in Sarajevo where 600 civilians work on intelligence “to pushback the influence of other networks”.

The British press has either not reported the events in the Balkans, or tried to limit the damage blaming the revelations on “vengeful Serbs” (the *Times*, August 15, 2004), “rogue elements in the Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian security services who don’t want the Balkans cleaned up” (the *Guardian* August 27, 2004) or “disgruntled local intelligence services” (*Daily Telegraph*, September 27, 2004).

They do not want to jeopardise the national interests of the UK that according to the *Guardian*, has been “particularly active in the Balkans on the intelligence front”.

MI6’s over-riding objective is to protect and promote British economic and political interests in the face of greater economic penetration by its rivals. The Croatian Embassy in the US reports, for

example, that the US, Germany and Austria each invested approximately one billion US dollars in Croatia between 1993—2000, whilst Britain invested only \$US102 million.

Another major concern is Britain's international credibility; Prime Minister Tony Blair has promoted the ICTY as an expression of his so-called ethical foreign policy. However, the tribunal is beset with problems.

None of the charges of organising genocide—for which the western powers demanded military intervention—have been proved so far. Instead Milosevic has successfully used the tribunal to indict the Western powers for their own role in the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. The US administration has insisted that the ICTY prosecution complete all its cases by 2008 and all appeals by 2010 and yet the three most-wanted suspects—Croatian General Ante Gotovina and Bosnian Serb leaders Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic—are still fugitives years after their indictments. An additional blow for the prosecution is the recent reduction of the 45 year sentence given to Bosnian Croat general Tihomir Blaskic to nine years and his imminent release from prison.

Whatever the claims, counter claims, black propaganda or misinformation that run through the MI6 spying scandal one thing is clear. Compliant governments of nominally different political persuasions in the Balkans are following the dictates of western financial and political institutions and the intelligence agencies must be made to do likewise. In the process the nationalist, criminal and corrupt elements the western powers cultivated during the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the war against Milosevic's Serbia must submit or become expendable.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in Croatia. A Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) government headed by Prime Minister Ivo Sanader came to power in December 2003. The HDZ was founded by the nationalist, racist and anti-Semitic Franjo Tudjman in 1989, the year he became president of the Yugoslav Republic of Croatia. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the western powers lost interest in the unity of Yugoslavia which they had viewed as a bulwark against Soviet expansion and came to regard Yugoslavia's old, centralised state structure as an obstacle to the privatisation of state-owned industry and the penetration of western capital.

The German government and later the US and other European governments pushed for the rapid recognition of Croatia after Tudjman announced the country's independence in 1991. Tudjman became a western ally in limiting Serbia's influence in the Balkans and received support from the US and Germany in the 1992—1995 civil war in Bosnia, enabling him to conquer large sections of northwest Bosnia, driving out hundreds of thousands of Serbs. The ICTY have indicted General Gotovina for "command responsibility" for war crimes carried out at this time.

The HDZ was in power throughout this period, losing elections to a Social Democratic-led coalition in 2000. When Sanader's HDZ regained power last year, unemployment stood at 18 percent, average family income remained at \$100 a week and the public debt had soared. During the election campaign Sanader claimed to be remoulding the HDZ as a German Christian Democrat type party and offered voters a signed "Guarantee Card" promising tax cuts, increased economic growth, living standards and employment and accession to the European Union and NATO. Some HDZ politicians suggested a referendum would be held on whether Gotovina should hand himself over to the ICTY.

The European Union and the IMF are now demanding further cuts to

social benefits and economic liberalisation in return for more loans. The government must drop promised increases in pensions, wages and allowances to disabled war veterans, increase utility prices, reduce labour legislation, rapidly privatise remaining state companies and lift barriers on imports of agricultural products from the EU.

Since coming to power Sanader has declared he will fully cooperate with the ICTY as demanded by the EU. He arranged the surrender to the tribunal of six Bosnian Croat leaders of Herceg-Bosna, a region that attempted to secede from Bosnia in 1992 and two generals Ivan Cermak and Mladen Markac.

He used the evidence of former Croatian police chief Ranko Ostojic that "the police would have long ago arrested General Gotovina, but was being obstructed by the counterintelligence agency and the Office of the President" to begin his purge of the POA.

Soon after, Sanader apparently gave MI6 freedom to roam throughout Croatia for two months in order to track down Gotovina. He told new POA chief Josko Podbevsek to provide the agency with two offices and the names of Gotovina's associates and allow MI6 to bring in three surveillance vans to discover the location of mobile phones and then track them by satellite. It is said the scope of the operation was so large that even Sanader and President Mesic were cautious about using their mobile phones.

With MI6 granted free access to Croatia, both ICTY Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte and British Minister for Europe Dennis MacShane optimistically announced Gotovina would be in custody by the end of June 2004. MacShane added that the UK would withdraw its objections to plans for Croatia's EU membership in 2007 saying, "Gotovina no longer remains an obstacle. Croatia can start accession talks."

Instead Gotovina remains at large and MI6 operations in the Balkans have been exposed.

Many leading members of the HDZ and army officers consider Gotovina a national hero and are increasingly bitter at Sanader's cooperation with the ICTY. The EU's attempts to make Croatian membership of the organisation conditional on compliance with the ICTY and further economic restructuring is backfiring. A poll by the Institutit Puls polling agency shows support for the EU has fallen from 72 percent in January to 49 percent now.



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