

Exposure of police spy in UK sheds light on covert operations

By Robert Stevens
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Last week, a trial of six environmental campaigners at Nottingham Crown Court in England collapsed. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said they could not continue, as “new evidence” had come to light undermining their case.

Police Constable Mark Kennedy had been an undercover police agent within the environmental movement since 2003 and had offered to give evidence on behalf of the six.

In an interview with the *Mail on Sunday*, Kennedy confirmed that the evidence in question consisted of tape recordings he had made, which police withheld from defence lawyers. Under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act of 1996, the police are duty-bound to make the CPS and the defence team aware of the evidence they have compiled. The Independent Police Complaints Commission is currently investigating whether Nottinghamshire Police made available all the evidence they had to the CPS.

Kennedy told the *Mail*, “The truth of the matter is that the tapes clearly show that the six defendants who were due to go on trial had not joined any conspiracy. The tapes I made meant that the police couldn’t prove their case.

“I just assumed that the police would naturally put my tapes into evidence. Clearly I was wrong”.

The six were accused of conspiring to shut down Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station in Nottingham. The court case followed the mass arrests of 114 people holding a meeting at Iona school in Nottingham on April 13, 2009. Among those arrested was Kennedy.

In December, 20 of the arrested were found guilty of conspiracy to commit aggravated trespass and sentenced to community orders. Two of the defendants were ordered to pay costs totalling £1,500. Their lawyers are considering an appeal based on Kennedy’s

involvement. Lawyer Mike Schwarz said, “The police allowed this trial, unlike the later one, to run all the way to conviction. In the light of events last week, this must be seen as a potential miscarriage of justice.”

Kennedy infiltrated the environmental movement under the name of Mark Stone, playing a leading role in organising, financing and directing campaigns and protests. One of the six acquitted, Danny Chivers, said of Kennedy, “We’re not talking about someone sitting at the back of the meeting taking notes—he was in the thick of it.”

Kennedy had been “involved in organising” the Ratcliffe-on-Soar protest for months, Chivers said. The police “could have stopped it at the start”.

Kennedy’s identity was established last October, after a passport containing his real name was found by his activist girlfriend. Kennedy then confessed to six of the group members, before disappearing. Shortly after, he left the Metropolitan Police and is understood to be living abroad.

Kennedy was part of the secretive National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIC), one of three covert organisations that target “domestic extremists”. The NPOIC is run by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). The ACPO is virtually a law unto itself, being a private limited company with no statutory basis and no parliamentary oversight. It is also not subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

A section of the NPOIU—the Confidential Intelligence Unit—compiles a database of personal information on targets, as well as reports on their activities and photographs. The other two organisations are the National Extremism Tactical Co-ordination Unit, established in 2004, and the National Domestic Extremism Team, set up in 2005.

The “Mark Stone” operation cost £250,000 a year,

including his £50,000 salary. Kennedy “took part in almost every major environmental protest in the UK from 2003, and also infiltrated groups of anti-racists, anarchists and animal rights protesters,” according to a *Guardian* investigation.

“Using a fake passport, Kennedy visited more than 22 countries, taking part in protests against the building of a dam in Iceland, touring Spain with eco-activists, and penetrating anarchist networks in Germany and Italy.”

In a phone recording between Kennedy and a member of the environmental group obtained by the BBC’s *Newsnight* programme, he revealed he was not the only police officer active as an undercover agent. “I’m not the only one by a long shot,” he said, adding the police operations were “like a hammer to crack a nut.”

In the *Mail on Sunday* interview, he said he was aware of at least 15 agents who had worked undercover in the environmental movement, with 4 of these still active.

When his cover was blown, Kennedy confirmed to the environmental group that a female protester based in Leeds, whom several activists had suspected of being an undercover police officer, was also a spy.

As well as the two police agents identified in his case, another undercover police spy, known as “Officer B”, was revealed in Saturday’s *Guardian*, who had spent four years with an anarchist group in Cardiff.

These are only the latest cases to come to light exposing the massive police spying network infiltrating left-wing organisations and environmental and anti-racist groups. In March 2010, it was revealed that a secret police operative spent years spying on the Socialist Party of England and Wales’s predecessor organisation, the Militant group, and its youth organisation, Youth Against Racism in Europe, in the mid-1990s. “Officer A” reported to the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS), a secret unit within Special Branch.

In 2009, Strathclyde police force in Scotland admitted that it had spent a total of £762,459 between 2004 and 2008 on what it called “covert human intelligence services”. Strathclyde spent £145,198 on informants in 2004.

Kennedy’s activities point to his possible collusion with German police in spying on anti-fascist groups. It

also raises questions about his relationship with the Left Party (Die Linke) in Germany. Andrej Hunko, a Left Party MP, stated in the January 12 *Guardian* that Kennedy had been “operating on the border of illegality” in Germany. He said, “Kennedy wanted to infiltrate anti-fascists, and [act] as an agent provocateur to instigate actions together with them. I suspect, then, that it wasn’t Scotland Yard that focused his interest on the ‘hot spots’ of the German anti-fascist scene. I see proof instead of the opposite: that the German police were involved in the operation of this British agent.”

The *Guardian* reported that Hunko’s researcher, Matthias Monroy, “said he had met Kennedy three times in Berlin over the past nine years.”

Monroy said, “He visited friends in Berlin regularly.” Right up until he was exposed as a police officer, Kennedy was still seeking information, including details about “what the plans were for the G20 summit in France in 2011.”

While Kennedy clearly has grievances with the police regarding his time as an undercover operative, he has denied that he “went native” or became a “rogue”. He told the *Mail on Sunday* that, on the contrary, he was passing his superiors information regarding the activist network in Europe right up until he ended his undercover role in October 2010.

Kennedy told the *Mail*, “My superiors knew where I was at all times—my BlackBerry was fitted with a tracking device—and they sanctioned every move I made. I didn’t sneeze without them knowing about it. I feel I’ve been hung out to dry.”

He added, “Every action I took had to receive something called an ‘authority’ which covered me to infiltrate activist groups and be involved in minor crime such as trespass and criminal damage”.

So important was the spying operation being conducted by Kennedy, he recalls that “My superior officer told me on more than one occasion, particularly during the G8 protests in Scotland in 2005, that information I was providing was going directly to [former Prime Minister] Tony Blair’s desk.”

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