

Exporting police death squads

From Armagh to Trincomalee

Phil Miller

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This research should be read as a supplement to the report *Britain's dirty war against the Tamil people 1979-2009*, as it significantly updates the section *Tackling the Tamil problem: 1979-1989*.

The report *Britain's dirty war against the Tamil people 1979-2009* can be downloaded from the website of the Peoples' Tribunal on Sri Lanka:
www.ptsrilanka.org

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Cover photo: Sri Lankan police Special Task Force in 2012
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Key findings

- Sri Lanka's police Special Task Force, a commando unit responsible for serious atrocities, was set up months after a similar UK armed police squad had shot dead six people in Armagh in late 1982 (known as the Stalker Affair). This development happened amid intensive advice from British security experts to Sri Lanka's police about counter-terrorism strategy in Northern Ireland.
- MI5 was spying on Tamil protesters in London as early as 1981
- Banned interrogation techniques (stress positions, hooding and white noise) were allegedly taught to Sri Lankan forces by British mercenaries in 1986.
- Brian Baty, who commanded the SAS squadron in South Armagh in 1976, was in charge of the British mercenaries from KMS Ltd who trained Sri Lanka's Special Task Force to fight the Tamil Tigers in 1986.
- Despite the UK government denying any involvement with the mercenaries in Sri Lanka, the company they worked for was extremely close to the British State. Declassified documents reveal that; MI5 regarded KMS as the only private security firm that could be trusted with guarding British embassies, and KMS was ready to train bodyguards for a Ugandan President within a day of British diplomats noting formal UK assistance could attract negative publicity.
- Although the company has long since vanished, Saladin Security Ltd describes KMS as its "predecessor". Saladin is controlled by the same director (working in the same London office) that ran KMS in the 1980s.
- Archibald Hamilton, who was a defence minister from 1986-1993, was a director of Saladin from 1993-1997. Hamilton now sits in the House of Lords.

Exporting police death squads: From Armagh to Trincomalee

By Phil Miller¹, March 2015

January 2006. Five Tamil students are shot by an elite Sri Lankan police unit, the Special Task Force. The dead men become known as the ‘Trinco 5’, named after the harbour city of Trincomalee where they were slain. Sri Lankan security forces claimed these students were members of the insurgent Tamil Tigers, who died when their own grenades detonated accidentally. But photographs of their bodies showed they had been shot through the back of the head. The policemen who were seen gunning down the students enjoyed impunity for seven years, before they were finally remanded in custody after an international human rights campaign.²



Remembrance of five murdered Tamil students



Six Catholic men killed by elite UK police squad in County Armagh

December 1982. Six Catholic men have been shot dead over the last four weeks by an elite UK police squad, the Special Support Unit, in County Armagh. The aftermath of the killings become known as the ‘Stalker Affair’, named after detective John Stalker who was tasked with investigating. The British government claimed that the dead were armed IRA and INLA members. But all bar one were unarmed.³ The deaths led to allegations that the police had a shoot-to-kill policy.

What connects these deaths, which happened decades apart and thousands of miles away? Beyond the familiar hallmarks of many state killings, where a prized police unit is shielded by its masters, this research reveals that there are more profound points of convergence. Those deaths in Armagh in 1982 foreshadowed the murders in Trincomalee in 2006.

¹ The author recognises that language has political connotations, and that the islands of Ireland and Sri Lanka are contested spaces. The author hopes this research can share understanding of the conflicts between affected communities from both islands. The author felt that using terminology such as North of Ireland, Six Counties or Tamil Eelam could have made the article less accessible to readers who are more familiar with one conflict than the other. For this reason, the author refers to Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka.

² For an example of the campaign, see Amnesty International, *Twenty Years of Make-Believe. Sri Lanka's Commissions of Inquiry* (London, AI Publications, 2009), pp16-21

³ One of the dead, Michael Tighe, had access to three old rifles. The police claimed Tighe aimed one at them, although no ammunition was found in the barn.

Sri Lanka's Special Task Force (STF) was set up between 1983 and 1984, months after the shootings in Armagh by the UK's Special Support Unit (SSU). Throughout 1983, British security officials advised senior Sri Lankan policemen on the UK's counter-terrorism experience in Northern Ireland, even arranging for them to visit Belfast. British mercenaries then trained the first batches of Sri Lanka's STF personnel, which reportedly included Kapila Jayasekara,⁴ who went on to command the STF unit accused of the Trinco 5 shootings over twenty years later. The mercenaries teaching him were retired Special Air Service (SAS) soldiers – the elite regiment that had trained the UK's Special Support Unit.⁵

Are these just coincidences? The UK government maintained that it had nothing to do with those British mercenaries in Sri Lanka, distancing itself from the STF's atrocities during the 1980s.⁶ But new evidence shows that the mercenaries had closer links to Whitehall than previously thought, and that they had served in some of the British army's most sensitive operations in Northern Ireland. Brian Baty, who commanded the SAS squadron⁷ that was deployed to South Armagh by the Prime Minister in 1976 and tasked with taking the fight to the IRA, was the most senior British mercenary in Sri Lanka⁸ in 1986, where he trained the STF to fight the Tamil Tigers. His men exported interrogation techniques (stress positions and sensory deprivation) that had ostensibly been banned in Parliament.⁹ And the English businessman who ran those mercenaries during the 1980s still appears to be operating out of the same London office today, raising the question of accountability for historic abuses.

This study brings out new evidence that suggests strong continuities in the British state security apparatus, linking policies and personnel between British rule in India, Malaya and Northern Ireland with its involvement in Sri Lanka. The investigation establishes that there was a particularly close connection between Britain's undercover counter-insurgency war in Northern Ireland and a similar campaign in Sri Lanka, along with a pattern of consciously constructed denial in both cases. British strategy was crucial in designing and nurturing Sri Lanka's elite paramilitary STF, which was responsible for massacres and torture of Tamils. To demonstrate this, the study traces the role that an apparently private mercenary company (KMS Ltd) played in training Sri Lanka's forces to implement the counter-insurgency plan.

The study begins by looking at British attitudes and approaches to the Tamil liberation struggle from the late 1970's and early 1980's, prior to the creation of the STF. Next, it examines the UK government's track-record on police commandos in Northern Ireland in 1982. Then, it contrasts this with British support for Sri Lankan police training during 1983, when the idea of a para-military police unit was discussed. After this, it turns to the British mercenaries who worked in Sri Lanka from 1984 to 1987

⁴ Hemantha Randunu, "STF: The name that frightened Tigers," *Sunday Divaina*, July 3, 2012. Translated by Bashana Abeywardane

⁵ SAS training of the SSU is referred to by Graham Ellison and Jim Smyth, "Legitimacy, Counter-Insurgency and Policing: The Legacy of the 1970s" in *The Crowned Harp. Policing Northern Ireland* (London, Pluto Press, 2000), accessed March 13, 2015, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/police/docs/ellison/ellison00b.htm>

⁶ For UK government statements on British mercenaries in Sri Lanka, see Hansard, HC Deb 22 May 1986 vol 98 cc303-4W and HC Deb 24 March 1987 vol 113 cc101-2W

⁷ Michael Asher, *The Regiment, the Real Story of the SAS* (London, Penguin, 2007) p436. Asher, a former SAS member, wrote that Major Brian Baty was "D Squadron's OC [Officer Commanding]" in May 1976.

⁸ Baty's role in Sri Lanka has been established by the author based on multiple sources and is detailed below.

⁹ For ban in Parliament, see Hansard, *HC Deb 02 March 1972 vol 832 cc743-9*.

and evaluate their influence on the STF's trajectory, comparing the unit with the *modus operandi* of the men who trained it. Finally, it addresses the most pertinent question: how close were the mercenaries to the British government?

British government attitudes to Tamil people

Since the British granted political independence to the island of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1948, the Tamil people have faced systematic oppression from the majority Sinhala controlled state. Their language rights were eliminated - excluding them from any state sector employment; discriminatory rules essentially stopped them from entering universities, and state organised 'colonisation schemes' placed Sinhala settlers in the north and east of the island, the place which the Tamils considered their homeland.

For nearly three decades, Tamils adopted strictly Gandhian methods to organise mass political protests, which were met with an increasingly violent and chauvinist Sinhala political backlash, resulting in a series of anti-Tamil pogroms by rampaging mobs, aided and abetted by the state's security forces. Met with escalating violence from an intransigent state, the Tamil's non-violent campaign eventually settled on clear support for their own independent state – of Tamil Eelam.

During the late 1970s, non-violence gradually gave way to sporadic armed resistance, until the pogrom of Tamils in Black July 1983 ignited a full scale civil war. It is important to note that even in this transition period, between 1979 to 1983, the British government was already spying on Tamil activists in London and sending senior counter-insurgency advisers to Colombo.¹⁰

Jack Morton: the colonial counter-insurgency expert

In 1979, Britain sent John Percival Morton CMG OBE (aka 'Jack' Morton), a former director of the Security Service (MI5), to furnish the Sri Lankans with "practical recommendations for the total reorganisation of the intelligence apparatus". He supplied them with a 'Morton Report', which was at the "heart of any discussion on Special Branch" (Sri Lanka's Police Special Branch was renamed as the Intelligence Services Division). His report lamented "the depressing picture of apparatus and morale in the security forces tackling the Tamil problem".¹¹ The report is not available to the public, so to gain some insight into its contents one must examine the career path of the report's author, Jack Morton, and consider what his visit to Sri Lanka signified. Morton was a Special Branch officer in the Punjab during anti-colonial uprisings, before joining MI5 at India's independence. He later worked as a senior intelligence adviser in the Malayan Emergency and in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. His experience of armed, covert police squads reappeared in Sri Lanka.

¹⁰ For spying on Tamil activists, see UK National Archives, PREM 19/1395, 'Sri Lanka: Visit of Foreign Minister', 21 December 1981. Visits by counter-insurgency advisers were disclosed in a Freedom of Information request by the author. The original FCO file reference is FSC 382/1, UK assistance to Sri Lankan police, 1983.

¹¹ FSC 382/1, UK assistance to Sri Lankan police, 1983. The Morton report is referred to in a paper marked 'Sri Lanka Police - visit by Overseas Police Adviser to Colombo 7-11 March 1983'.

Morton was born in India in 1911 to a colonial family: “Both my parents had also been born in India and the tradition of service in the Raj ran strongly in my family,” he wrote in his memoirs.¹² Morton’s upbringing is relevant here, because of how it shaped his sense of superiority. He wrote “Gradually it dawned upon me, and became



John Percival Morton CMG OBE (aka ‘Jack’ Morton)

*deeply ingrained, that the British were the rulers of India and that the **Indians were a sort of immature, backward and needy people whom it was the natural British function to govern and administer.***”

Reflecting on the global scale of the British Empire, Morton said, “It was inspiring to realise that I was born into this splendid heritage and that **to be British was to be a superior sort of person.**”¹³ Straight after school, Morton joined the Indian (Imperial) Police Service in 1930 and was assigned to Punjab Province. He arrived there at a turbulent time, in the aftermath of Gandhi’s salt marches. His colleagues were still on edge after the shooting of Lahore policeman John Saunders in 1928 by anti-colonial activist Bhagat Singh from the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA), an organisation which Morton described as “the Congress Party terrorist wing modelling itself on the IRA”.¹⁴ Morton served in Jullundur, Amritsar and Lahore districts, where he policed communal riots. He recalled one incident where the police had no tear gas available, and so “Fire was opened. A couple of Scots marksmen were detailed to ‘get’ two

of the more obvious leaders. It was sickening to see them fall.”¹⁵ He was later transferred to Lahore Fort, where he was appointed as Commandant of the Provincial Armed Reserve, a force whose “role was largely *paramilitary*”.¹⁶ This illustrates how Morton was heavily involved in the sharp end of colonial policing from the outset of his career.

At the end of 1937, Morton joined the Special Branch and became engrossed in intelligence operations.¹⁷ One incident made a particular impression on Morton. He helped the Director of Special Branch with an “anti-terrorist operation” on the HSRA in Amritsar City, where they found home-made bombs: “Some revolutionary literature was also recovered, including tracts about the Irish terrorist Michael Collins of Sinn Fein and his guerrilla tactics. I had never previously heard of Michael Collins. The Irish connection and the wider ramifications of the revolutionary movement made a deep impression on me at the time. My interest in Special Branch matters now quickened.”¹⁸ Morton said this experience was an “object lesson in the importance of secret penetration of dangerous subversive or terrorist bodies and of accurate intelligence in the planning and execution of operations.” Clearly Morton made a good impression on his superiors, and at the outbreak of the Second World War he was given a “special mission in Egypt”, to investigate a mutiny by Indian soldiers stationed there, who had succumbed to “‘Kirti’ communist inspiration”.¹⁹ Morton noted: “It would fall to me to examine any

¹² Jack Morton CMG OBE, *Indian Episode, A Personal Memoir*, given to British Library on 27 August 1982, p3

¹³ Morton, pp5-6

¹⁴ Morton, p35

¹⁵ Morton, p94

¹⁶ Morton p104

¹⁷ Morton p108

¹⁸ Morton p153

¹⁹ Morton pp123-126

subversive aspects, and to recommend any necessary extension of the intelligence organisation at Middle East Headquarters for adequate coverage of such threats”.

On return to India in 1940, Morton faced escalating anti-colonial unrest. His surveillance skills were now combined with armed force. He raided a mosque in Lahore to capture one subversive group, from the Khaksars movement: “My operational force consisted of about 100 regular Police for cordon duty, and an assault group of about 75 Reserve Police of the the *para-military force*, including a small tear gas squad.”²⁰ Morton personally led the assault, using raiding ladders and gas. In the ensuing clouds of smoke, Morton open fire and killed one Khaksar. By 1942, Morton was made “Central Intelligence Officer (CIO) for the Punjab and Delhi Provinces, based in Lahore”, reporting directly to the Bureau in Delhi.²¹ In the context of a crack down on the Quit India movement, Morton targeted leaders of the “left-wing Congress Socialist Party ... It became the prime responsibility of my staff in Delhi to develop penetration of this group.”²²

In 1944, Morton was transferred back to the provincial police and appointed Senior Superintendent of Police for Lahore District, Punjab’s capital.²³ At age 33, he was the “youngest Officer ever” to command its 4,000-strong police force. “My tenure spanned the years 1944 until the run up to Independence in 1947”, during which time there was severe communal rioting. Lahore had draconian ‘Section 144’ orders in place, banning more than five people from gathering.

As the horrors of Partition unfolded, Morton was offered a job with MI5, “to represent them in Baghdad as Defence Security Officer.”²⁴ At this point, Morton’s memoirs end abruptly. But they reveal the extraordinary experience he had gleaned in India of colonial riot control, para-military operations and secret intelligence, as well as the fact that he was a loyal servant of British imperialism. Morton must have done well at MI5, because he went on to become Director of Intelligence in Malaya from 1952-1954, during Britain’s long war against Maoist rebels.²⁵ Malaya’s Police Special Branch was split off from the CID, and turned into a counter-insurgency force, apparently at Morton’s recommendation.²⁶ He left Malaya having impressed the High Commissioner General Templer, who told Morton “You must ... know how much I personally shall miss you”, according to a letter found by MI5’s authorised historian, who had exclusive access to the Security Service’s archives.²⁷

The details relating to Morton’s later career are harder to trace, but it was reported that he helped counter the IRA’s border campaign of 1956-1962, before returning to Northern Ireland during the Troubles in 1973 to re-organise the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) Special Branch.²⁸ The RUC Special Branch would gain a reputation for being “a force within a force”, an opaque arm of the police

²⁰ Morton p137

²¹ Morton, p157

²² Morton, p160

²³ Morton, p166

²⁴ Morton, pp189-190

²⁵ Leon Comber, *Malaya’s Secret Police 1945-60, The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency*, (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008) p193

²⁶ Comber 2008, p185.

²⁷ Christopher Andrew, *Defence of the Realm, The Authorized History of MI5*, (London, Allen Lane, 2009) p 450 and p 948. Andrew cites MI5 archival material.

²⁸ Powerbase, Jack Morton http://www.powerbase.info/index.php/Jack_Morton (accessed June 21, 2014)

that colluded with Loyalist murders of Catholics.²⁹ A British government file from 1976, marked ‘Secret UK Eyes only’, reveals that Morton’s advice was treated as a key reference point for enhancing the intelligence capabilities of the RUC Special Branch.³⁰ At the beginning of the Troubles in 1969, the British army had taken the lead on intelligence gathering. By 1976, a policy of *police primacy* developed, which sought to scale back the size of the army in Northern Ireland. This created a scenario where the police took on some roles that had previously been reserved for the army, such as covert surveillance of terror suspects.³¹

To this end, the RUC proposed “a comprehensive system of collation and speedy dissemination of information, together with protection of Special Branch intelligence and sources and the development of specialist high level surveillance teams.” This provoked discussion among civil servants, who pondered “the question of the extent to which the RUC can assume the intelligence role at present undertaken by the Army ... Are the RUC organised properly to take over responsibility from the Army albeit with the limitations mentioned above? The *Morton Report* set out proposals to cover this and progress has been made by the RUC.”³² This ‘Morton Report’ is also not in the public domain, but the context in which it was discussed provides an indication of its content. The report was mentioned again in declassified Northern Ireland Office papers from 1977, during discussions about increasing the size of the RUC Special Branch. A civil servant commented that “The suggested Special Branch increase stems from the Morton Report of 1973”, to which a colleague replied “The figure proposed for Special Branch strength is indeed based on a specialist assessment which *although not sacrosanct is certainly of the right order*”, and lamented that Special Branch was “about 40% below the desired strength”.³³ The enduring references to Jack Morton in the Northern Ireland Office files shows how respected he was in British counter-insurgency circles, and demonstrate that Morton had a penchant for powerful and covert police units in India, Malaya and Northern Ireland. Therefore, his visit to Sri Lanka in 1979 signifies both the importance that the British government attached to “tackling the Tamil problem”, and the modus operandi that it sought to impart on Colombo.

MI5 spied on Tamil diaspora in 1981

As well as Jack Morton teaching Sri Lanka how to spy on the island’s Tamil People, the British government was also keeping a “close eye” on Tamils in the UK.³⁴ A confidential briefing paper, prepared for Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in December 1981, reveals that MI5 was already monitoring Tamils protesters in London:

²⁹ For more information about collusion and the RUC Special Branch in the 1970s, see Anne Cadwallader, *Letbal Allies: British Collusion in Ireland*, (Cork: Mercier Press, 2013).

³⁰ UK National Archives, CJ 4/3060

³¹ Mark Urban, *Big Boys’ Rules, The SAS and the Secret Struggle Against the IRA*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), pp17-24

³² UK National Archives, CJ 4/3060, letter from Mr Bampton to Mr Bourn dated 30 March 1976, and letter from Northern Ireland Office to Ministry of Defence, 11 May 1976

³³ UK National Archives, CJ 4/1785, ‘Security forces’ capability working group’, 21 and 22 September 1977.

³⁴ UK National Archives, PREM 19/1395, ‘Sri Lanka: Visit of Foreign Minister’, 21 December 1981.

“[Sri Lankan] President Jayewardene has sent his Foreign Minister urgently to London to deliver a personal message to the Prime Minister about the Tamil problem. We believe it relates to the activities in London of the ‘Tamil Coordinating Committee’ (TCC), a small group of Tamil residents in London who produce skilful propaganda but who, according to the Security Service [MI5], have little capacity to mount demonstrations.”³⁵

The Downing Street press office was primed to describe this as a ‘private visit’, concealing from the media the real agenda, which was to discuss the TCC’s imminent ‘declaration of independence’. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office noted that **“the importance to us of Sri Lanka’s stability and continued pro-western alignment** means that we should take President Jayewardene’s approach seriously.”³⁶

The briefing instructed Thatcher to tell the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister that her government “Regret that Tamil Co-ordinating Committee operates in London. We keep a close eye on its activities and shall continue to do so.” The documents show that the Sri Lankan dignitary was also granted a meeting with Home Office minister Timothy Raison, and that Britain was keeping intelligence on top Tamil activists in London:

“The son of the leader of the TULF [Tamil United Liberation Front], Amirthaligam [sic], lives in London and has established a UK branch. He has a personal feud with the leader of the TCC, K Vaikunthavasan, although he is also a member of the TCC. K Vaikunthavasan has Communist connections, but there is no evidence of Communist funding of the TCC. (The most likely source is wealthy Tamil businessmen).”³⁷

It must be stressed that this was happening in 1981, before the Tamil armed struggle had really taken off. The British state had already exported a top-tier counter-insurgency adviser to Colombo, and put Tamil residents under surveillance in London. To understand what Britain did next in Sri Lanka, one must turn first to the parallel situation in Northern Ireland, where Jack Morton’s penchant for a powerful police Special Branch was having profound effects.

The RUC Special Support Unit: A prototype of Sri Lanka’s Special Task Force

Between 11 November and 12 December 1982, six people, including a teenager, were shot dead in Northern Ireland by an elite RUC firearms squad, the Special Support Unit (SSU). Although five of the dead were IRA or INLA members³⁸, they were unarmed at the time of the killings. This led to allegations that the police were operating a ‘shoot-to-kill’ policy, where terror suspects were assassinated rather than arrested and put on trial.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ UK National Archives, PREM 19/1395, ‘Tamil Eelam’, 18 December 1981, and ‘Sri Lanka: Visit of Foreign Minister’, 17 December 1981

³⁷ UK National Archives, PREM 19/1395, ‘Sri Lanka: Visit of Foreign Minister’, 21 December 1981.

³⁸ The IRA and INLA claimed them as volunteers and they had paramilitary style funerals.

Four of the policemen were charged with murder (although they were all later acquitted).³⁹ At the trial of Constable John Robinson for the murder of one of the men (Seamus Grew), it was revealed that the RUC squad had been trained by elite SAS soldiers and that their rules of engagement were to use “firepower, speed and aggression”, according to the Deputy Chief Constable Michael McAtamney.⁴⁰ The existence of this squad was problematic, because the RUC was not supposed to have para-military units.⁴¹ It operated under the command of Special Branch, which meant a veil of secrecy was drawn over the unit and many details could not be disclosed because of ‘national security’. The SSU was working on the basis of intelligence gathered by Special Branch’s E4A, a ‘specialist high level surveillance team’, like the kind mooted in the Northern Ireland Office papers that touched on the Morton Report.

The controversy deepened because critics claimed crucial evidence was not passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions, as well as allegations that the SSU had crossed the border into the Republic of Ireland during its operations. The RUC brought in a senior police officer from another constabulary to investigate. John Stalker, Deputy Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, was given the task of investigating. He faced obstruction at almost every stage from RUC Special Branch officers who wanted to protect their colleagues.⁴² Stalker found that one of the shootings, which took place in an isolated barn, had been under surveillance and that the incident had been tape recorded. The recording could have proved whether the police had opened fire without shouting any warnings, as one survivor claimed. But the tape had been destroyed.⁴³

Stalker was abruptly taken off the investigation, just before he was about to interview the RUC Chief Constable Jack Hermon under caution. Allegations were made that Stalker had links to criminals back in Manchester. These were later found to be untrue. However, the damage was done and Stalker never finished his investigation. It was taken over by Colin Sampson, Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police. The Stalker/Sampson report was never released to the public. In Stalker’s biography, he compared the RUC unit to a “Central American assassination squad”.⁴⁴

Documents at the UK National Archives shed light on how the RUC planned these units from 1979, pushing a policy of police primacy to the extreme, where policemen could take on the roles of special forces soldiers: “covert Units are being set up which, to the layman at least, will perform a role which is hardly indistinguishable from that of the SAS, and there may be other similar developments in the

³⁹ Bill Rolston, “Shoot-to-Kill,” in *Unfinished Business: State Killings and the Quest for Truth*, ed Bill Rolston (Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 2000) accessed March 15, 2015, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/violence/docs/rolston00.htm#chap8>

⁴⁰ Pat Finucane Centre, “Fact File, Ronnie Flanagan”, accessed March 15, 2015, www.patfinucanecentre.org/policing/ronnie.htm#8Fk

⁴¹ Baron Hunt, *Report of the Advisory Committee on Police in Northern Ireland*, (Belfast: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1969). Hunt: “Our proposals offer a new image of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as a civil police force, which will be in principle and in normal practice **an unarmed force**, having the advantage of closer relationships with other police forces in Great Britain. Our recommendations further advocate some measures to make the Royal Ulster Constabulary more accountable to the public, and others which should enable it to develop closer relationships with the community. **As regards those tasks of a paramilitary nature** which the Royal Ulster Constabulary has shouldered since its inception, **we make proposals which would relieve it of this responsibility.**”

⁴² John Stalker, *The Stalker Affair*, (London: Penguin, 1988), pp53-54. Stalker: “It illustrated yet again how stubbornly defiant the Special Branch was towards my requests”.

⁴³ John Stalker, *The Stalker Affair*, (London: Penguin, 1988), pp66-68

⁴⁴ John Stalker, *The Stalker Affair*, (London: Penguin, 1988), p67

pipeline.”⁴⁵ In an annex on ‘paramilitarism’⁴⁶, the RUC Chief Constable Jack Hermon is recorded as having said that “Some training is provided in Great Britain, including surveillance training (by the Security Service [MI5]) and training for the 35 strong uniformed unit which supports those engaged on surveillance: this last training is a single course provided by the Army. This “military” training is justified by the role of the unit but we shall need to keep a close eye on any suggestion that the course should be repeated.”⁴⁷ The Chief Constable seems to be referring here to E4A and the SSU, describing how policemen were being turned into elite soldiers and covert operators.

Some of this paperwork was circulated among the same civil servants, such as Paul Buxton, who were later asked to arrange visits for Sri Lankan police to the RUC. One letter remarked that policemen in these specialist units saw themselves as:

“a little out of the run of things and tougher than most. There is a thinly disguised aggressive attitude towards all suspects, especially those of the minority community ...one is left with the feeling that the RUC have future plans for greater involvement and specialisation of these units ... In observing the RUC ... requests for equipment like helicopters, special clothing and equipment (as used by the SAS for covert type operations) and permission to observe the SAS in training at Hereford, all tend to confirm a heightening of aggressive posture in the force.”⁴⁸

By March 1982, just eight months before the controversial killings took place, alarm bells were beginning to ring but the units were allowed to continue. In one memo, an official wrote “Possible Danger: The greatest danger would seem to lie in ‘creeping paramilitarism’ ... the RUC may go too far down the paramilitary road.”⁴⁹ Officials were concerned that police in the elite squads “will see themselves as ‘hard men’.”⁵⁰ Paul Buxton commented that these units “could lead to a paramilitary condition, or at least the accusation of it.”⁵¹ Buxton had recommended that senior civil servants try to:

⁴⁵ UK National Archives, CJ 4/3448, *The Royal Ulster Constabulary: 1979 and onwards*, September 8, 1980, authorship unclear

⁴⁶ The term ‘para-military’ is used in this context to describe police who resemble soldiers, rather than armed non-state actors like the Loyalist UVF or Tamil EPDP.

⁴⁷ UK National Archives, CJ 4/3448, *The Chief Constable’s Presentation, The Future Development of the RUC and of Security Policy*, summary prepared by I.M.Burns, 25 September 1980

⁴⁸ UK National Archives, CJ 4/2909, *Security Policy in Northern Ireland*, 23 February 1979, from Northern Ireland Office to Cabinet Office, copying in Paul Buxton.

⁴⁹ UK National Archives, CJ 4/3940, *RUC Manpower review: DMSU’s*, D.A. Hill, Stormont House, 8 March 1982, copying in Paul Buxton.

⁵⁰ UK National Archives, CJ 4/3940, *Divisional Mobile Support Units*, D.A. Hill, Stormont House, October 1981, recirculated on 2 March 1982.

⁵¹ UK National Archives, CJ 4/3940, *RUC Manpower Review, Role of the Divisional Mobile Support Units vis a vis the Army*, Paul Buxton, 15 March 1982

“sound out the Chief Constable on the implications for the character of the RUC in their simply taking over more military-type functions in a situation where violence continues at the present level. Should all our eggs be in one basket? Would so large and multi-purpose a force bear any resemblance to forces in the rest of the UK? **Would it be properly controllable?** ... However, we cannot muzzle the CC [Chief Constable] and if he is set on this course, we had better fall in with it.”⁵²

Without any meaningful opposition from civil servants or ministers, the Special Support Unit (SSU) began to bite. On 11 November 1982, Gervaise McKerr, Sean Burns and Eugene Toman, were shot dead. The car they were travelling in was riddled with 109 bullets. A fortnight later, on 24 November 1982, 17-year-old Michael Tighe was shot dead inside a hay shed. His companion, Martin McCauley, who was injured in the attack, claimed that the police had opened fire from outside the shed without shouting any warnings, and then discussed finishing him off. A few weeks afterwards, on 12 December 1982, Seamus Grew and Roddy Carroll, both members of the INLA (Irish National Liberation Army), were unarmed when they were shot dead in their car.

The shootings exposed the existence of a para-military RUC unit, and Special Branch was placed under scrutiny over the next few years during Stalker’s investigation. The SSU was re-branded as the Headquarters Mobile Support Unit (HMSU), and some of the more controversial missions seem to have been assigned back to the SAS, who as special forces soldiers enjoyed greater secrecy. The policy of police primacy appeared to have reached its limits in Northern Ireland, and some specialist roles were given back to the army.⁵³ However, the discredited concept of covert police units with para-military powers soon took on a new life thousands of miles away. A British counter-insurgency blueprint from India, Malaya and Northern Ireland was about to be exported to Sri Lanka.

Designing the Special Task Force

Sri Lanka’s Special Task Force (STF) was formed between 1983 and 1984, months after the shootings in Armagh. The STF was part of the police, but members were trained as special forces personnel. Why did the Sri Lankan Police decide to set up a para-military unit at that time? Surely this job should have been left to the Sri Lankan army instead?

There is strong evidence that the initiative came from British diplomats, who urged Colombo to follow its Northern Ireland model of *police primacy*, even when that policy was in disarray after the Stalker shootings. The evidence to suggest this comes from a British Foreign Office file, called ‘UK assistance to Sri Lankan Police’.⁵⁴ It reveals a remarkable shift in Sri Lankan police perceptions of their role as policeman, following advice from British officials about how the police should deal with a counter-insurgency scenario.

A letter sent by the Sri Lankans to British diplomats in August 1982, titled ‘Training requirements for the Sri Lanka Police Department’, contains a list of requests for help with “training of dogs, riot

⁵² UK National Archives, CJ 4/3940, *Chief Constable’s Manpower Review and the Military/RUC Interface*, Paul Buxton, 20 October 1981

⁵³ Mark Urban, *Big Boys’ Rules*, pp158-160

⁵⁴ Obtained through a freedom of information request by the author. The FCO’s file reference is FSC 382/1

control, advance scientific criminal investigation, advance [sic] traffic planning and police communication systems”, all of which are the standard remit of policemen.⁵⁵ By February 1983, with Tamil attacks increasing, the police became desperate. The British High Commission said:

“the Sri Lanka police are baffled by the problems of security and intelligence in the Jaffna area. We have now been told by the Deputy Inspector General of Police (CID) that the Army and Police have been instructed by the President to re-organise their operations in the Jaffna area. They have now turned to this mission for help”.⁵⁶

Britain’s Overseas Police Adviser (OPA) was hastily dispatched on a special week-long visit to Sri Lanka in March 1983, three months after the last of the Stalker shootings. Sri Lanka’s highest-ranking policeman told the British adviser that “**police/army rivalry for supremacy in the counter-terrorist field** was the greatest stumbling block in respect of which he could see no easy answer. He said this was particularly disturbing because of the worsening situation in Jaffna.”⁵⁷ The adviser proceeded to explain “the organisation of Government, police and the army in the counter-terrorist scene in Northern Ireland, emphasising the essential dovetailing in respect of policy, strategy, intelligence and operations.”⁵⁸

According to the file, the police chief “found the Northern Ireland parallel with the Sri Lankan problem of particular interest, and had failed to realise that the Commissioner of the Royal Ulster Constabulary was responsible to Government for internal security and that the army there was in support of the police.”⁵⁹ The British adviser also “commended the lessons to be learned from the Morton Report” of 1979, and suggested that an MI5 officer visit Sri Lanka “to further the aims of the Morton Report” and “look at the structure of the Intelligence Services Division (ie Special Branch)”.⁶⁰

By the end of this meeting, the Sri Lankan police chief wanted to “speak to senior Home Office officials about UK police organisation and training, **the role of police in internal security vis-à-vis the military; get a special briefing on the role of police/military in Northern Ireland** (OPA’s unexpressed view is that if a visit to Belfast were politically/physically possible it would be of considerable practical help); ... and he would also like the opportunity to speak to Sir Kenneth Newman, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, and see something of the Special Branch and Anti-Terrorist Branch.”⁶¹ (Newman had been the previous Chief Constable of the RUC). During his trip, the Overseas Police Adviser also addressed “about 100 ISD officers [Intelligence Services Division i.e. Special Branch] on the role and functions of a Special Branch for an hour, followed by about forty minutes lively discussion, and another one hour with the senior officers on professional detail.”⁶²

⁵⁵ FSC 382/1, *Training Requirements for Sri Lanka Police Department*, 30 August 1982, from Ronnie Weerakoon, Director External Resources, to British High Commission (BHC)

⁵⁶ FSC 382/1, *Aid for Sri Lanka Police*, 11 February 1983, from BHC to South Asian Department

⁵⁷ FSC 382/1, *Sri Lanka Police – Visit by Overseas Police Adviser to Colombo 7-11 March 1983*, Robert P Bryan, 17 March 1983

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Ibid

On the next day, the British adviser was taken by the Sri Lankan police chief to see Mr Samarasinghe, the Cabinet Secretary who also had responsibilities for the Ministry of Defence. At this meeting, the adviser “was asked to describe the relationship between the Police and Army in Northern Ireland.” It transpired that the police chief had engineered this meeting because he and Mr Samarasinghe were “not quite of one mind about how the security operation in the north should be handled. Mr Samarasinghe implied that the Sri Lanka Police were not properly trained for the sort of work they are called upon to do in the north and that therefore the Army had been called in to do it for them. After further discussion, involving among other things a comparison of the problem in Northern Ireland with that in the Jaffna area, Mr Samarasinghe asked whether a senior **policeman** could visit Northern Ireland and sit in with officers on the job.”⁶³

As soon as this adviser had left Colombo, arrangements were made to give the Sri Lankan police new anti-terrorist capabilities. Two senior police officers were already booked on a trip to the UK in June 1983, for an MI5 terrorism course. However, as a result of the adviser’s visit, this trip was extended so the Sri Lankans could also visit the Metropolitan Police Special Branch “to discuss counter terrorist measures and the activities of organisations based in the UK agitating for a Separate State for Tamils in Sri Lanka”, as well as further opportunities to discuss “the role of Police and Army in counter terrorist operations”.⁶⁴ The adviser wrote to Paul Buxton, a senior civil servant at the Northern Ireland Office, to arrange for the Sri Lankan guests to “visit Belfast to see at first hand the roles of the police and army in counter-terrorist operations”.⁶⁵ The Sri Lankan police officers selected were Senior Deputy Inspector-General Herbert WH Weerasinghe, from the CID, and Assistant Superintendent KS Padiwita, from the Intelligence Services Division i.e. Special Branch. The choice of this pair suggests that their liaison in Belfast would have entailed contact with the RUC Special Branch.

In April 1983, a month after the adviser’s trip, the Sri Lankan diplomats wrote to the British police with a new list of training requirements. The change in priorities from the letter of August 1982 is stark. The top two items on the list requested police training in “para-military for counter-insurgency operations” and “commando operations training”.⁶⁶ The remaining items on the list were for the original courses such as traffic administration, dog handling and detective work. Therefore, within an eight month period, and after intensive advice from the British government, the Sri Lankans now regarded para-military training and commando operations as suitable tasks for policemen. This development took place in the aftermath of the Stalker shootings. Sri Lanka’s police would now gain the capability to carry out special forces style operations, using intelligence gleaned from the apparatus that Jack Morton had recommended.

In response to the Sri Lankan police request for para-military and commando training, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) commented that these courses “are of some political sensitivity and Tamil extremists in Sri Lanka could be expected to complain bitterly that HMG [Her Majesty’s Government i.e. Britain] was assisting in the training of the Sinhalese authorities, in order that they

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ FSC 382/1, *International Conference on Terrorist Devices and Methods, Deep Cut – June 1983*, from R.Rajasingham (Inspector General of Police) to Robert P. Bryan, 15 March 1983

⁶⁵ FSC 382/1, *Sri Lanka Police*, letter from Robert P. Bryan to Paul Buxton (Northern Ireland Office), 25 March 1983

⁶⁶ FSC 382/1, *Overseas training for Sri Lanka Police Officers*, 15 April 1983, letter from Sri Lankan High Commission London to Peel Centre, UK Police Training College

could continue their policies of ‘repression’ of the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Tamil people in the country. As you know, we should like to help the Sri Lankan Government (discreetly) as much as we can with these Courses”.⁶⁷ The Sri Lankans were told to ask the Defence Adviser⁶⁸ at the British High Commission about these courses. They duly did this in May 1983, with a letter enquiring about the availability of a course for Sri Lankan police officers, not soldiers, to cover “Para-Military Operations, Counter Terrorist Techniques, Guerilla Warfare and Internal Security Duties.”⁶⁹ And then there is a clear reference to the idea of the nascent Special Task Force. “The level of participation that we have in mind, is of the rank of Superintendent of Police/Assistant Superintendent of Police, *who would be responsible for training and administration of a Para-Military Unit to be set up here.*”⁷⁰

The Defence Adviser forwarded the request to London, saying he was “concerned that the police in Sri Lanka are entering into a field of warfare with which it might be *unwise for us to be associated* ... Is it politically acceptable that we should be associated with this form of training?”⁷¹ The FCO told the Defence Adviser that “Ministerial approval would be needed and the contact was not optimistic of this being forthcoming because of potential political objections within the MOD.”⁷² The file contains no further reference to training this new para-military unit. However, later in the year, a trip to the UK for Sri Lanka’s police chief himself was arranged. He was also scheduled to visit Northern Ireland, something that British diplomats in Colombo strongly recommended in a telegram, because it may “help towards (but only towards) meeting the President’s request for anti-terrorist training”.⁷³ (The file does not contain a copy of President Jayewardene’s request, just those from the Sri Lankan police department. This omission suggests that bi-lateral discussions with Britain were taking place at a higher level). The FCO also urged the Northern Ireland Office to make arrangements for the police chief to “visit Belfast for a discussion with the RUC”.⁷⁴ They explained that they had:

“urged the Sri Lankan Government to pursue a policy of reconciliation and hope that the differences can be solved by peaceful democratic means. **It is very much in Britain’s and Sri Lanka’s interests that such a policy should succeed to ensure internal stability and reduce the opportunities for Soviet interference.** The ability of the security forces to cope with terrorism while gaining the confidence of the Tamil community in particular will be crucial.”⁷⁵

⁶⁷ FSC 382/1, *Sri Lankan Police Training*, 3 May 1983, confidential FCO letter from the South Asian Department to the Overseas Police Advisor

⁶⁸ Ewan Sale, a Royal Marine Lieutenant Colonel

⁶⁹ FSC 382/1, *Para-military Training Course in the UK*, from R.Sunderalingham (Senior Deputy IGP), May 1983

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ FSC 382/1, *Sri Lanka Police Training*, from Ewan Sale to Robert Bryan, 1 June 1983

⁷² FSC 382/1, *Sri Lanka Police Training*, from Overseas Police Adviser’s Department to Ewan Sale, 21 June 1983

⁷³ FSC 382/1, *Sri Lanka: Visit of Inspector General of Police*, from BHC Colombo to FCO South Asian Department, 28 September 1983.

⁷⁴ FSC 382/1, *Visit to Britain of Mr Rajasingham - Inspector General of the Sri Lankan Police*, from FCO to Northern Ireland Office, 20 October 1983

⁷⁵ Ibid

The planned visit by the police chief to the RUC would:

“enable him to benefit from their experience and so contribute to our objective of a reduction in communal tension in Sri Lanka and a peaceful resolution of the current problems. We would be most grateful if the RUC were able to meet this request. We recognise that the RUC themselves stand to gain little from such visits but, as you will appreciate, there are *wider considerations*. As I mentioned to you, two senior Sri Lankan police officers visited the RUC earlier this year and it would be most helpful to build on this. Incidentally, we do not intend to give any publicity to the visit.”⁷⁶

Those ‘wider considerations’ were the export of particular UK counter-insurgency techniques from one conflict to another, wherever British interests were threatened. Such exports, for example of a police para-military unit, are recognisable in their appearance, but they had to be deniable in their provenance. The author’s requests to the FCO for further documents from this episode have so far been refused. However, the overall contours are clear. In February 1983, the Sri Lankan police were “baffled” by the security situation in Jaffna, and the Army had moved in. Following requests for UK help to “re-organise” army and police operations in Jaffna, a British adviser swiftly arrived in Colombo and lectured the security chiefs about the Northern Ireland strategy of police primacy and the importance of Special Branch. After this visit, Sri Lankan police suddenly asked for military-style courses, and announced that they were setting up a police para-military unit. Senior Sri Lankan police visited the RUC in Belfast, which had a remarkably similar unit. Although formal requests for training such a unit in Sri Lanka were denied, civil servants admitted that they wished to help the Sri Lankans “discreetly” and a further trip to Belfast for Sri Lanka’s highest-ranking officer was organised. By definition, liaisons of this nature are covert, however it is clear that MI5 had its own contacts with the Sri Lankan police, and MI5 paperwork is not released to the public after thirty years, unlike most other government departments. But the circumstantial evidence points very strongly to Whitehall being involved in the genesis of Sri Lanka’s Special Task Force. They certainly facilitated a transmission of lethal knowledge from Belfast to Colombo.

The mercenaries move in

By 1984, a British mercenary company, KMS Ltd, was providing Sri Lanka’s police with exactly the forms of military training that the FCO had pledged to provide “discreetly”, including setting up the Special Task Force. The Special Task Force’s website officially acknowledges the formative role played by KMS: “An Institution in the United Kingdom known as the “Kini Mini Service” [sic] (K.M.S.) comprising of British ex-SAS officers provided training to the STF officers **at the very beginning.**”⁷⁷

Downing Street was well aware of KMS’ activities in Sri Lanka but tried to deny any responsibility, whilst giving tacit approval for other mercenaries to operate there as well. In September 1984, Peter

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Sri Lanka Police, History of the Special Task Force, <http://www.police.lk/index.php/special-task-force-> (accessed June 21, 2014)

Ricketts⁷⁸, an aide to foreign secretary Geoffrey Howe, wrote to Margaret Thatcher's private secretary about a request from a security company (Falconstar Ltd) to provide senior counter-insurgency consultants for Sri Lanka. Falconstar's work in Sri Lanka did not advance much beyond some preliminary consultations with the island's National Security minister. Ricketts wrote:

"The Sri Lankan security forces have proved woefully inadequate in dealing with Tamil terrorist activities. In an effort to make good these deficiencies, the Sri Lankan Government have engaged another British company, KMS Ltd, to provide training in counter-terrorist techniques ... The presence of KMS employees, including some ex-SAS personnel, in Sri Lanka has aroused controversy in India, and the Indian Government have expressed concern to us about the firm's involvement. **We have made it clear that this is a purely commercial matter and that HMG are not involved.** Although we have little knowledge of Falconstar Ltd's capabilities in counter-insurgency or police training, we would have no objection to their seeking to obtain business in Sri Lanka. But that is a matter for them to pursue. If the firm succeed in their bid to secure a consultancy it is important for us to be able to maintain that any contract between Falconstar Ltd and the Sri Lankan Government is a purely commercial arrangement with which HMG has no connexion."⁷⁹

(Whitehall did not want to upset India, because Thatcher's government was trying to negotiate massive arms sales with New Delhi during the mid-1980's.⁸⁰ And since India was supporting Tamil armed groups, Whitehall could not risk overtly assisting the Sri Lankan state to crush Tamil militants. This could have been Whitehall's logic for needing 'discreet' mechanisms to train the Special Task Force.)

A Sinhalese newspaper article provides more detail about the creation of the Special Task Force:

"*The interview board consisted of British experts and some senior Sri Lankan Police officers including Senior Police Superintendent (SSP) Richard Wijesekara, Police Superintendent (SP) Darmasiri Weerakoon, Assistant Police Superintendent (ASP) Lionel Karunasena. 48 Police Sub Inspectors and 12 constables were selected accordingly, as the first batch of officers for the STF.*"⁸¹

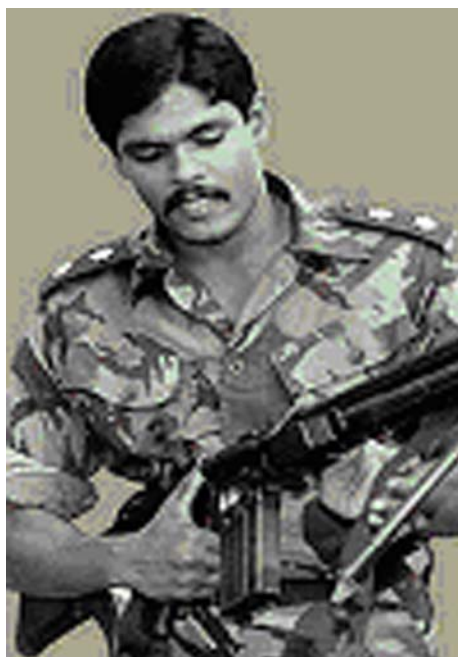
⁷⁸ Peter Ricketts would go on to have a long and distinguished Whitehall career. He was Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee from 2000-2001, Director-General (Political) of the FCO from 2001-2003, and then the UK's permanent representative to the NATO council until 2006. After that, he was appointed Permanent Under Secretary (PUS) at the FCO from 2006-2010. The PUS is the most senior civil servant in the FCO. Ricketts held this position during the climax of Sri Lanka's counter-insurgency campaign against the Tamil Tigers. He was then appointed National Security Adviser (a newly created post) to Prime Minister David Cameron. In 2012, Sir Peter Ricketts became UK Ambassador to France and is still in this post today. His career illustrates a degree of continuity within the British civil service over the three decades of conflict in Sri Lanka – staff who made critical decisions at the beginning were still in influential positions by the end of the conflict.

⁷⁹ UK National Archives, PREM 19/1395, 'Sri Lanka: Military and Police Training', 6 September 1984. Available at http://www.idslanka.org/images/art_img/news_features/politics_current_affairs/peter_ricketts_letter.jpg (accessed June 21, 2014).

⁸⁰ Phil Miller and Rajeev Syal, "Margaret Thatcher gave full support over Golden Temple raid, letter shows", *Guardian*, 15 January 2014, and Phil Miller and Rajeev Syal, "Britain allowed ex-SAS officers to train Sri Lankans as Tamil Tigers rebelled", *Guardian*, 16 January 2014.

⁸¹ Kapila Jayasekara - Sunday Divaina, 03 July 2012 "STF: The name that frightened Tigers" by Hemantha Randunu, translated by Bashana Abeywardane

The article further claims that Kapila Jayasekara, who went on to command the STF unit accused of the Trinco 5 shootings in 2006, was among this first batch. But one does not have to wait for the Trinco 5 massacre to see what direction the STF was headed towards. As early as September 1984, a telex from British diplomats reported that “Ten civilians were shot dead by *police commandos*” in Point Pedro, a clear reference to the STF.⁸² The British reaction was to note that such “undisciplined” actions by Sri Lankan security forces meant that “the government will continue to lose out in the propaganda battle”.



*Kapila Jayasekara circa 1980s
(JDS)*

Many Tamil people recall the arrival of the STF in Jaffna around late 1984 and early 1985. One source told me that as a teenager he saw them driving Land Rovers and wearing a distinctive green camouflage uniform, that marked out the STF from other units. The STF would round up 18-20 year old Tamil men, slapping and kicking them, and strip them down to their underwear. Then they would make them stand against a wall with their hands on their heads, or crouch down in an uncomfortable position for long periods, until the army arrived in trucks to take them away. Sometimes the men would be blind folded.

The crack down continued, with KMS remaining in Sri Lanka until at least 1987. As Tamils fled the conflict, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher took a hard-line on the refugees. In the first fortnight of May 1985, 150 Tamils landed at Heathrow Airport and claimed asylum. Minutes from the ensuing Cabinet meeting noted that “Despite the violence in Sri Lanka, there was no reason to believe that Tamils returning there would face persecution ... In discussion, the importance was noted of

making clear that Tamils arriving in the United Kingdom were likely to be turned back ... **There was no reason why Tamils should come to Britain.**”⁸³ Ironically, the UK Home Office’s own reports on Sri Lanka detail atrocities by the STF from this period:

“Instances of human rights violations by the Sri Lankan security forces were reported, such as the massacre of 150 civilians, nearly all Tamils, who were killed by the Special Task Force (STF) after 13 STF personnel had been killed at Kokkaddicholai in January 1987.”⁸⁴

The 1987 Kokkaddicholai Massacre centred on a prawn farm. “Seven of those killed were aged 12 years old”, according to the North-East Secretariat on Human Rights (NESOHR), a Tamil organisation. NESOHR interviewed Sellathurai Ravinathan, a watchman at the prawn farm, who recalled “that morning there were 2 or 3 helicopters circling in the air. I knew something was going to happen. ... At

⁸² UK National Archives, PREM 19/1395, ‘Sri Lanka: Internal Security’ 3 September 1984. Available at http://www.jdslanka.org/images/art_img/news_features/politics_current_affairs/british_embassy_cable.jpg (accessed February 26, 2015)

⁸³ UK National Archives, CAB 128/31, CC(85) 18th, 23 May 1985

⁸⁴ United Kingdom: Home Office, UK Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate Country Assessment - Sri Lanka, 1 April 2002, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a6b10.html> (accessed 1 March 2015)

the junction, there was a large military vehicle. Army started jumping off and running onto the road. This was the first time we knew what the STF looked like.” Ravinathan ran away as the shooting started and hid among the trees. “After a little while, I heard no noise from the direction of the Prawn Farm. I thought that I should return and have a look at what had happened. As I was about to do this, an old man stopped me and said, ‘Brother, please don’t go back they have shot every one’.”⁸⁵ NESHOR recorded the names of 133 dead. Three years of KMS training, after the Point Pedro massacre in 1984, had yielded a much more murderous STF.

With ministers turning a blind eye to the fact British mercenaries were involved in the repression of Tamils, KMS’ role in Sri Lanka expanded to include training helicopter gunship pilots and Army officers around 1986-1987. Tim Smith, a former British army helicopter pilot, said in his memoirs that KMS employed him as a helicopter ‘instructor’ for the Sri Lankan Air Force. However, instructors like Smith flew sorties in operational areas, constantly drawing them into the conflict. Smith concludes his tale about his first tour in 1986 by claiming that, “In five months I had been personally involved in the death of 152 Tigers. Well, to be totally accurate, at 152 I had given up counting. Perhaps the company in their comfortable offices in Colombo and Kensington would never know what it *was like in Jaffna. I had come to Sri Lanka to teach in Katunayaka, and would leave Jaffna having at least shown them how it was done.*”⁸⁶



Tamil detainees blindfolded inside Smith’s helicopter

I spoke to another ex-KMS employee, Robin Horsfall, who trained Sri Lankan soldiers from approximately February to April 1986. Horsfall is a former SAS soldier, who took part in the famous Iranian Embassy siege to rescue hostages. He told me that the pay with KMS was around £2,000 per month. Horsfall claims that at the time, KMS’ manager in Sri Lanka was Brian Baty, a retired SAS officer. Furthermore, KMS’ team in Sri Lanka included a former British Army Intelligence Corp officer who advised on intelligence gathering, and two helicopter pilots. According to Horsfall, Tom Morrell, a Fijian former SAS man, was in charge of KMS training at a Sri Lankan army camp for junior officers. Horsfall worked as a training officer at this camp, where he taught “standard Northern Ireland internal security programs and standard infantry tactics”. KMS taught the same psychological interrogation techniques in Sri Lanka as used by the British Army in Northern Ireland. These were two stress positions (1. Standing facing a wall with arms outstretched, leaning on fingertips, 2. a ski position), hooding, white noise and “humiliation”. KMS told the Sri Lankan soldiers not to use physical torture. However, troops trained by the company ignored this advice and carried out atrocities, such as putting burning tyres around the necks of captured Tamils.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ NESHOR, *Massacres of Tamils 1956-2008*, (Manitham: Chennai, 2010)

⁸⁶ Tim Smith, *The Reluctant Mercenary* (Sussex, The Book Guild Ltd, 2002), p173

⁸⁷ Correspondence between the author and Robin Horsfall

Horsfall quit KMS shortly afterwards. In his book (that was published seven years before the Mullivaikkal massacre), he wrote

“After three months, I came to the conclusion that I was working for the wrong side. The information that continually flooded in to me from other Britons working in the country painted a picture of a bigoted government, suppressing a minority in a similar way to how the Nazis treated the Jews before World War II”.⁸⁸

After returning to the UK, Horsfall told me that he was approached by a person claiming to represent the Foreign Office, who prevented him by coercion from training the Tamil Tigers. This is a strong indication that KMS’ work in Sri Lanka had the blessing of the British government.

Horsfall’s claims are highly significant because they reveal a common pattern of counter-insurgency techniques and personnel between Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka. The interrogation techniques taught by KMS as described by Horsfall seem very similar to the ‘five techniques’ that were used in Northern Ireland by the British Army during internment in 1971 to question the ‘hooded men’, a group of Irish nationalist detainees. These men were subjected to stress positions, hooding, white noise, as well as sleep deprivation and starvation. Although the fourth and fifth techniques were not mentioned by Horsfall, it is hard to conceive how a detainee can sleep while standing in a stress position and being subjected to white noise. Equally, it raises the question of malnutrition if a detainee has a hood tied over their head. The Irish government



A British soldier puts hooded detainees in stress positions in Iraq in 2003 (Baha Mousa Inquiry)

took the UK to the European Commission of Human Rights, which ruled in 1976 that these interrogation methods were a sophisticated form of torture. The British government told Parliament that its soldiers would no longer use these techniques, but objected to their definition as ‘torture’. In 1978, the European Court on Human Rights overturned the Commission’s earlier ruling and said the methods were not as severe as torture, and could only be regarded as “inhuman and degrading”. However, in June 2014, the Pat Finucane Centre and RTÉ released new evidence from the UK National Archives that showed the British government privately regarded the techniques to be a form of torture.⁸⁹ As a result, the Irish government has called for the case to be reopened, arguing that had this evidence not been withheld at the time, then the European Court could have arrived at a different decision.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Robin Horsfall, *Fighting Scared* (London, Cassell Military Paperbacks, 2002), 221.

⁸⁹ Ian Cobain, in his book *Cruel Britannia* (London: Portobello Books, 2012), p164, also flagged up the fact that a directive for the future use of these interrogation techniques had been concealed from the European Commission and the Court. This secret directive laid the basis for British soldiers to use the techniques again during the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

⁹⁰ RTÉ Investigations Unit, *The Torture Files*, broadcast on 24 November 2014, available at <http://www.rte.ie/news/player/2014/1124/10348178-rte-investigations-unit-the-torture-files/>

Horsfall's identification of Brian Baty as KMS' leader in Sri Lanka reveals the calibre of British counter-insurgency expertise that was being exported. Major Brian Baty was the commanding officer of the elite SAS squadron deployed to South Armagh in 1976 tasked with fighting some of the deadliest IRA operators.⁹¹ This deployment was ordered by the Prime Minister Harold Wilson following the Kingsmill massacre, a high profile IRA murder of ten Protestant bus passengers. The first few months of SAS activity in South Armagh were controversial. Although the rate of IRA attacks fell, critics point to several incidents where the SAS men in South Armagh appeared to break the law, either by crossing the border into the Republic of Ireland or by executing a captured IRA suspect.⁹²

In March 1976, the SAS allegedly abducted Sean McKenna, a suspected IRA commander, from his home in the Republic of Ireland and handed him over to British soldiers in Northern Ireland who arrested him. Then in April, the SAS arrested another IRA suspect, Peter Cleary, outside his fiancée's home 50 metres north of the border. While waiting for a helicopter to collect their captive, the SAS men allege Cleary tried to overpower his guard. During the ensuing struggle, Cleary was fatally shot by his SAS captors. The IRA allege that this was actually an execution. Later, on 5 May 1976, eight SAS men were arrested by Irish police, who found them inside the Republic carrying firearms, including an unauthorised pump-action shotgun and dagger. Their commander, Brian Baty, had to appear in Dublin's Special Criminal Court to defend his men, who claimed that they had made a 'map-reading error'. This explanation held little sway among Irish nationalists who believed the SAS were deliberately entering the Republic to stage covert operations. Despite the controversy, Baty was mentioned in Despatches "in recognition of distinguished service in Northern Ireland during the period 1st May 1976-31st July 1976".⁹³ Years later, in 1984, the IRA tried to assassinate Baty by posting a bomb through his letterbox in Hereford.⁹⁴ Baty survived and retired from the army that same year. He was awarded an MBE and given the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel.⁹⁵ We now know that Baty's retirement involved running the KMS operation in Sri Lanka.⁹⁶ **The man who led the secret war against the IRA in South Armagh took the fight to the Tamil Tigers.**

⁹¹ Michael Asher, *The Regiment, the Real Story of the SAS* (London, Penguin, 2007) p436. Asher, a former SAS member, wrote that Major Brian Baty was "D Squadron's OC [Officer Commanding]" in May 1976.

⁹² Urban 1992, pp4-10

⁹³ Supplement to the London Gazette, 11 January 1977, p378

⁹⁴ Glasgow Herald, "Doctor cleared of all charges in alleged bomb plot," 6 February 1986

⁹⁵ Supplement to the London Gazette, 31 December 1984, pp5-6

⁹⁶ Baty's work with KMS is triple sourced. A book by John K Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*, (Pluto Press, 2002) pp77-78, claims that Baty had "day-to-day control of KMS and all its activities", although he does not specify which countries Baty worked in for KMS. Baty's work for KMS in Sri Lanka is double sourced. Media reports from the 1980s called KMS' leader in Sri Lanka "Ken White" or "Ken Whyte". Ex-KMS employee Tim Smith wrote in his memoirs on page 64 "Ken Whyte, it turned out, was not Ken Whyte at all but **Brian somebody or other**. A Major or Lt Colonel in the SAS. The one that had hit the headlines with a letter bomb through his letterbox in Hereford." This is a clear reference to Brian Baty and reveals Baty used the alias Ken Whyte. Tim Smith makes (deliberate?) mistakes with names in his book. On page 65, Smith wrote, "The following day saw the arrival at KKS [military base] of the company's local man, Ken Whyte, and **the big man from the UK, Bill Walker**, both of them resplendent in tropical lightweights, like a couple of white planters." Bill Walker must be David Walker, KMS' boss, and suggests he personally visited the operation in Sri Lanka.

Baty's career prior to his time in the SAS is also worth noting. All SAS soldiers join the special forces from a parent regiment. Baty's regiment was the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, which had been involved in most of Britain's post-war counter-insurgency campaigns: Palestine, Guyana, Cyprus, Borneo, Aden and then Northern Ireland.⁹⁷ Baty served in Borneo as a Sergeant, where he was awarded the Military Medal in 1965 for ambushing Indonesian soldiers. The description from Despatches reveals Baty's experience in jungle warfare, which would be useful in Sri Lanka. Baty led a tracker team to locate an Indonesian army mortar position.

“On reconstruction it is believed that this position was occupied by about 30 enemy being the mortar party and their support group. The enemy party then ran into a **‘cut off’ ambush** which had by then been placed on the border crossing. Sergeant Baty searched the area, a considerable quantity of abandoned weapons, ammunition and equipment was recovered. The enemy suffered six dead, one wounded and several believed wounded. *The success of this operation was due entirely to the speed of movement in the follow up and to the determined leadership and aggressive action shown by Sergeant Baty.*”⁹⁸

The phrase “cut off ambush” was a term used in the British Army training manual for soldiers preparing to serve in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s, *Land Operations Volume III, Counter-Revolutionary Operations*. “The aim of an ambush is thus usually achieved by concentrating heavy accurate fire from concealed positions into carefully selected **killing areas** which the enemy have been allowed to enter, but from which their escape is prevented by fire and possibly obstacles.”⁹⁹ This tactic, although justified in warfare, is clearly the antithesis of arresting suspects using minimum force. Baty held a Military Medal for his execution of this tactic, but was it an appropriate skill for Sri Lanka's *Police Special Task Force* to learn?

After Borneo, Baty served as an officer in Aden, where the Argyll and Sutherlands were commanded by the notorious ‘Mad Mitch’.¹⁰⁰ The regiment retook the city of Crater in 1967 from Arab anti-colonial rebels, using tactics that caused widespread controversy. The *New Statesman* magazine claimed that Baty was one Mad Mitch's “special interrogators” in Aden.¹⁰¹ The torture of suspects by the British army in Aden was prolific.¹⁰² It is telling that KMS selected Baty, someone with a wealth of colonial counter-insurgency experience, to lead its operation against the Tamils. KMS was the vessel through which repressive measures, practised by British forces in places like Borneo, Aden and Northern Ireland, were silently transported to Sri Lanka. Even though a vessel can be privately owned, the question remains as to who was its navigator?

⁹⁷ Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders' regimental history available at <http://www.argylls.co.uk/museum/british-guiana-guyana1953cyprus-1958-1959borneo1964-1966/>

⁹⁸ Supplement to the London Gazette, 22 June 1965, p5969

⁹⁹ Urban 1992, p161-162

¹⁰⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Colin Campbell Mitchell

¹⁰¹ Duncan Campbell, “Army sets up new dirty tricks,” *New Statesman*, p6, 1983, available <http://www.duncancampbell.org/menu/journalism/newstatesman/newstatesman-1983/army%20sets%20up%20new%20dirty%20tricks.pdf>

¹⁰² Cobain 2012, pp99-109

What was KMS, and how close was it to the British State?

KMS Ltd was set up in the 1970s by a group of former SAS officers. The acronym is thought to stand for Keeni Meeni Services (also spelt 'Keeny Meeny' or 'Keenie Meenie'). Michael Asher, a former SAS soldier and fluent speaker in Swahili and Arabic, claims that Keeni-Meeni is a Swahili phrase "suggesting the movement of a snake in the grass", that was borrowed by Frank Kitson during the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya to describe Kitson's counter-insurgency concept of 'pseudo-gangs'. These were "white policemen, dressed African-style with faces blackened, [who] accompanied teams of 'turned' ex-terrorists into the bush."¹⁰³ The idea of deception and façade is powerful imagery for understanding KMS' modus operandi. Was KMS really a private company, or was it just a mask worn by the British State to carry out deniable operations?

The company vanished in the early 1990s¹⁰⁴, but another firm, Saladin Security Ltd, claims on its website that "Saladin, with its predecessor KMS Ltd, has provided security services since 1975"¹⁰⁵. This is important because it suggests that Saladin, which is still an active UK-registered company, was intimately and intricately intertwined with KMS. Both companies shared some of the same directors during the 1970s and 1980s. The accounts for Saladin Security Ltd show that when the company was incorporated in 1978, its directors included SAS veterans Major David Walker, Colonel Jim Johnson, Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Nightingale and Brigadier Mike Wingate Gray, all of whom were reportedly involved with running KMS as well. The profiles of these men indicate the depth of KMS' counter-insurgency expertise, as well as its modus operandi in terms of conducting covert operations for British intelligence.

Brigadier Gray had been in 22 SAS, "commanding the regiment from 1964 to 1967 with squadrons deployed in Borneo, Aden, and Radfan. For this he was awarded the OBE", according to his obituary in the Glasgow Herald newspaper.¹⁰⁶ Another of the directors, Colonel 'Jim' Johnson, was the son of a Ceylon tea planter (Ceylon being the colonial name for Sri Lanka). Johnson was a former commander of 21 SAS, the reserve regiment. He was "responsible for running Britain's clandestine war against Egyptian forces in Yemen during the mid-1960s, an experience that inspired him to set up Britain's first post-war private military company", according to his obituary in the Telegraph.¹⁰⁷ The Egyptian forces were supporting an Arab nationalist leader from the Yemeni military who had overthrown the British-backed royal family. MI6 supplied arms and intelligence to Johnson's mercenaries and Royalist guerillas, while Prime Minister Douglas-Home lied to Parliament in 1964, claiming "Our policy towards the Yemen is one of non-intervention in the affairs of that country. It is not therefore our policy to supply arms to the Royalists in the Yemen"¹⁰⁸. Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Nightingale had been a

¹⁰³ Asher, 2007, pp396-397

¹⁰⁴ The last trace of KMS that I have found is an announcement about its contract to guard the British Embassy in Dublin in 1993. Intelligence Online, *British Embassy Changes Guard*, Issue no. 227, 27 October 1993

¹⁰⁵ Saladin website, <http://www.saladin-security.com/about-us.php> (accessed June 21, 2014)

¹⁰⁶ Colonel Robert Gurdon, "Brigadier Mike Wingate Gray", *Herald*, 11 November 1995, <http://www.heraldsotland.com/sport/spl/aberdeen/brigadier-mike-wingate-gray-1.651557>

¹⁰⁷ Telegraph, "Colonel Jim Johnson", 13 August 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/2553726/Colonel-Jim-Johnson.html>

¹⁰⁸ Mark Curtis, "The covert war in Yemen, 1962-70", 13 February 2007, <https://markcurtis.wordpress.com/2007/02/13/the-covert-war-in-yemen-1962-70/>

former deputy head of SAS Group Intelligence¹⁰⁹, the regiment's liaison with MI6. He died in a car crash in Oman in 1981.¹¹⁰ The Sultan of Oman had been put on the throne by SAS officers in a palace coup in 1970, and kept in power with the help of SAS soldiers who put down a popular uprising which lasted until 1976.¹¹¹ KMS benefited from the spoils of this war, winning a contract to set up and train the Sultan of Oman's special forces. This explains Nightingale's presence in Oman, where he was reportedly the "stand-in C.O.", or commanding officer, of the Sultan's special forces at the time of his car crash.¹¹² Saladin later took over the Oman contract from KMS, which lasted for many years. (Saladin's accounts for the year ending June 1997 said "The group has seen a further decline in trading during the year with the Sultan's Special Forces in Oman".)

So KMS and Saladin's directors included two former commanders of SAS regiments, and a deputy head of SAS intelligence. But the most important of those early directors would be Major David Walker, also another ex-SAS man. He took full control of Saladin in 1991, becoming the majority shareholder of its parent company, Saladin Holdings. According to the firm's annual return, submitted to Companies House in September 2014, David Walker is still the majority shareholder of Saladin, with several of his family in key positions. The company even uses the same South Kensington office today as KMS did in the 1980s (7 Abingdon Road), from where Walker sent his men to set-up and train Sri Lanka's Special Task Force. This raises the question of corporate accountability for atrocities against the Tamils. But the British State might be culpable as well, if it can be proven that KMS was in fact its proxy.

During the 1980s, the relationship between KMS and the British government was the subject of controversy.¹¹³ One investigative journalist went as far as calling KMS "the military wing of MI6", implying that the company operated under direct control of UK intelligence.¹¹⁴ Newly-declassified Whitehall documents reveal that KMS did enjoy a unique position with the British State. By 1980, the company had a monopoly on supplying bodyguards for UK diplomats around the world. When Margaret Thatcher questioned if this job should be done by British soldiers or other firms instead of KMS, her cabinet was told: "There is only one British firm which the Security Service [MI5] consider suitable – KMS Limited."¹¹⁵ It is extraordinary that British intelligence only trusted one company to guard the embassies, at a time when private security was a booming industry with many special forces veterans setting up shop. What made KMS so special?

¹⁰⁹ Intelligence Online, British Embassy Changes Guard, Issue no. 227, 27 October 1993

¹¹⁰ Dix Noonan Webb Ltd, Decorations, Medals and Militaria, Including medals from the collections of James Spencer and Jack Webb, together with a collection of medals to the Special Air Service, 16 December 2003, http://www.dnw.co.uk/auction-archive/catalogue-archive/lot.php?auction_id=54&lot_id=38314

¹¹¹ Dr Abdel Razzaq Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution, Republicans, Sultans and Empires in Oman 1965-1976*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) pp267-306

¹¹² The same medal auction website claims that Lieutenant Colonel Julian "Tony" Ball also died in the same accident. Ball's involvement with Captain Robert Nairac in Northern Ireland was at the centre of "dirty tricks" allegations.

¹¹³ For example, see the *House of Commons debate May 22, 1986 in Hansard vol 98 cc303-4W*, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1986/may/22/sri-lanka#S6CV0098P0_19860522_CWA_402 (accessed June 23, 2014)

¹¹⁴ Nick Davies, "The Assassination Business," *The Scotsman*, 26 July 1988. Davies cites an anonymous 'intelligence source'. <http://www.nickdavies.net/1988/07/26/the-assassination-business/>

¹¹⁵ UK National Archives, CAB 148/189, Cabinet - Defence and Oversea Policy Committee, 'Armed protection for British government representatives overseas', 8 January 1980. (The papers also note that KMS bodyguards cost the British

I have found another example of KMS' special relationship with the British State, tucked away in a Foreign Office file on Uganda which covers events immediately after the fall of Idi Amin. A secret memo reveals that the new President Lule was "interested in acquiring a British expert(s) to train a Presidential Protection Unit in Kampala [2 lines redacted vertically]. It is obviously in our interests to help President Lule and to do what we can to maintain security for him and his Government. But the appointment of a British citizen to undertake this task in Kampala could attract press interest, [3 lines redacted vertically]. On balance I recommend that [1 inch redacted horizontally] should be authorised to offer help if approached eg, in steering the Ugandans in the direction of a suitable candidate, but only on the strictest condition such assistance should remain absolutely confidential and that there should be no public recognition that the involvement of British personnel in the training of a Ugandan Presidential Protection Unit had been arranged or endorsed by the British Government".¹¹⁶

Although the redactions are inconvenient, there are hand written notes at the bottom of the page that have escaped the censors' attention. An FCO official responded on April 20: "I agree. We might



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discuss at this afternoon's meeting. There are obvious pitfalls; & advantages. The latter outweigh the former." And a note below that, also dated April 20, says "We discussed. The question is being handled by KMS without any official involvement by us. There is no action we need take at present." It is remarkable that within one day of the Foreign Office running into a potentially awkward situation, KMS appeared on the scene. It is important to note that this memo is among other sensitive papers in the file which approved British training for a new Ugandan Secret Service, and that MI5 was copied into that correspondence.¹¹⁷ The impression one gleans from these British government papers about KMS is that the company enjoyed a unique position of trust when it came to protecting British interests abroad.

KMS was later dissolved, following bad publicity over the company's alleged involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal. Media pressure on KMS peaked in mid-1988, with a World in Action TV show claiming KMS had bombed a hospital in Nicaragua.¹¹⁸ However, KMS escaped prosecution, and Saladin quietly took over many of its activities, such

as the contract with the Sultan of Oman's special forces. Indeed, Saladin confidently refers to KMS as the company's "predecessor" on its website.

Although direct lines of control from the British State to KMS has been made deliberately hard to prove, there is an interesting political connection that must be highlighted. One of the directors of Saladin Holding's from 1993 to 1997 was Archibald Hamilton MP, who had served as a defence minister from 1986-1993, during some of KMS' time in Sri Lanka. Hamilton now sits in the House of Lords.¹¹⁹

government "£10,500 per man per year, plus overseas allowances and accommodation amounting to approximately £6,000 per man per year" and that "many of their staff have an SAS background".)

¹¹⁶ The memo is signed by A.J.Longrigg from the FCO's East Africa Department and dated 19 April 1979.

¹¹⁷ UK National Archives, FCO 31/2699, 'Uganda Presidential Protection Unit, 19 April 1979, see also 'Uganda Secret Services', 17 May 1979, 'Uganda – Secret Service', 21 and 24 May 1979, and 'Security Training' 25 July 1979

¹¹⁸ Nick Davies, July 1988

¹¹⁹ Lord Hamilton of Epsom, <http://www.parliament.uk/biographies/lords/lord-hamilton-of-epsom/100>

Conclusion

The declassified documents reveal Britain's hostile attitude towards the Tamil liberation struggle before the armed conflict had even begun, as evidenced by Whitehall's enthusiasm for teaching the Sri Lankan State surveillance and counter-insurgency techniques based on its colonial expertise in India and Malaya. At the same time, British security policy in Northern Ireland favoured empowering the police special branch to take on covert operations from the army, a message that was impressed upon the Sri Lankans. Despite its controversial repercussions in Northern Ireland, evidenced by the killing of six men in the 'Stalker Affair', a similar police commando unit was created in Sri Lanka months later, under the supervision of British mercenaries. Those former SAS soldiers had been entrusted with some of Whitehall's most sensitive operations in Northern Ireland. The mercenary company, KMS, was run by the top-tier of retired special forces commanders, one of whom had already conducted a clandestine war for the UK in Yemen. KMS enjoyed a unique position of trust with MI5, and took on jobs which the Foreign Office could not seem to be involved in.

The declassified files cannot provide a complete picture, given that Whitehall actively censors and destroys much of the documentation. As long as those involved in the deception, such as David Walker, keep their silence, then plausible deniability persists. But anyone can see through this crudely constructed smoke screen. Whitehall wished to help the Sri Lankan police "discreetly" with counter-insurgency training, and that is exactly what happened. KMS set up the STF according to a British blueprint that mirrored the thinking in Northern Ireland at that time.

The legacy of those decisions lives with us today. Although the RUC's Special Support Unit was reined in after those shootings in Armagh, the STF has grown into a commando force with almost 6,000 members. The twelve STF officers arrested in July 2013 for the Trinco 5 murders were released on bail in October 2013. Kapila Jayasekara, who allegedly commanded that STF death squad, has been promoted and made Deputy Inspector General for the Trincomalee area. Dr Manoharan, whose son was one of the Trinco 5 victims, is still campaigning for his killers to be brought to justice.

The inquests into the Stalker Affair victims are still unfinished, making them some of the longest cases in British legal history.¹²⁰ The government reportedly destroyed top secret files related to the killings just weeks before the inquests were due to reopen in April 2013.¹²¹ When the RUC killed Michael Tighe in that hay shed in 1982, they also wounded his friend Martin McCauley. He was arrested and convicted for possession of three ageing rifles that were found inside the shed. In September 2014, McCauley's conviction was overturned by the Lord Chief Justice, who ruled that police had deliberately destroyed crucial evidence, prejudicing a fair trial for McCauley.¹²² In January 2015, Northern Ireland's Director of Public Prosecutions called for an inquiry into the destruction of evidence.¹²³ John Stalker

¹²⁰ Barry McCaffrey, "Coroner launches unprecedented attack over delays in 'Shoot to Kill' inquests," *The Detail*, 14 May 2014 <http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/318/coroner-attacks-nio-doj/coroner-launches-unprecedented-attack-over-delays-in-shoot-to-kill-inquests>

¹²¹ Barry McCaffrey, "Government destroyed Stalker Sampson files weeks before 'Shoot to Kill' inquest was due to open," *The Detail*, 19 September 2014. <http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/347/stalker-sampson-files-destroyed/government-destroyed-stalker-sampson-files-weeks-before-shoot-to-kill-inquest-was-due-to-open>

¹²² Alan Erwin, "Martin McCauley arms trial: Judge accuses RUC of 'perverting course of justice'," *Irish Mirror*, 11 September 2014 <http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/crime/martin-mccauley-arms-trial-judge-4201874>

had compared the RUC Special Support Unit to a “Central American assassination squad”. The ongoing cover-up rather reinforces his judgement. If Stalker had investigated Sri Lanka’s Special Task Force, he would undoubtedly have reached the same conclusion. This research indicates that the British security establishment is continually developing deniable methods of counter-insurgency that rely on human rights violations. Moreover, it not only makes this expertise available to allies, but rather thrusts it upon them, cementing a continuing dependency between nominally independent state and the former colonial master, as evidenced here in the case of Sri Lanka. This phenomena is allowed to persist because of the secrecy and censorship that surrounds sensitive UK institutions (the intelligence agencies, police Special Branch and the special forces), which makes it so hard to hold to account the British state apparatus and its proxies for their complicity in atrocities across the world.

¹²³ Jilly Beattie, “Martin McCauley shooting: DPP calls for probe into alleged destruction of ‘evidence’”, *Irish Mirror* 14 January 2015 <http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/politics/martin-mccauley-shooting-dpp-calls-4979583>