

= Richard Tomlinson =

Richard John Charles Tomlinson (born 13 January 1963) is a former officer of the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) . He believes he was subject to unfair dismissal from MI6 in 1995 , and attempted to take his former employer to a tribunal . MI6 refused , arguing that to do so would breach state security , although Tomlinson disputed this reasoning .

In 1997 , Tomlinson was imprisoned under the Official Secrets Act 1989 after he gave a synopsis of a proposed book detailing his career with MI6 to an Australian publisher . He served six months of a twelve @-@ month sentence before being given parole , whereupon he left the country . The book , named The Big Breach , was published in Moscow in 2001 (and later in Edinburgh) , and was subsequently serialised by The Sunday Times . The book detailed various aspects of MI6 operations , alleging that it employed a mole in the German Bundesbank and that it had a " licence to kill " , the latter later confirmed by the head of MI6 at a public hearing .

Tomlinson then attempted to assist Mohamed al @-@ Fayed in his privately funded investigation into the death of Diana , Princess of Wales and al @-@ Fayed 's son Dodi . Tomlinson claimed that MI6 had considered assassinating Slobodan Milo?evi? , the president of Serbia , by staging a car crash using a powerful strobe light to blind the driver . He suggested that Diana and Dodi may have been killed by MI6 in the same way , although that claim was dismissed at their inquest in 2007 . MI6 admitted that plans of that nature had been drafted regarding a different Eastern European official , but that the proposal had been swiftly rejected by management .

In 2009 , MI6 agreed to allow Tomlinson to return to Britain , unfreeze royalties from his book and drop the threat of charges . MI6 also apologised for his mistreatment . Since 2000 , staff at MI6 have been allowed employment tribunals , and have been able to unionise since 2008 .

= = Early life = =

Richard John Charles Tomlinson was born in Hamilton , New Zealand , and raised in the nearby town of Ngaruawahia . He was the middle child in a family of three brothers . His father came from a Lancashire farming family and he worked for the Ministry of Agriculture , and had met his wife whilst studying agriculture at Newcastle University . The family moved to Cumbria , England in 1968 . The young Tomlinson won a scholarship for the independent Barnard Castle School in County Durham , where he was a contemporary of Rory Underwood and Rob Andrew , who went on to become England rugby internationals . He excelled at mathematics and physics , and won a scholarship to Gonville and Caius College , Cambridge , in 1981 .

His fellow student , historian Andrew Roberts , remembers Tomlinson as " a bright and charming undergraduate , popular with the boys for his drinking and sporting prowess , and with the girls for his dark good looks . " His friends included Gideon Rachman , who wrote him a reference after his tutor refused to do so . Tomlinson completed flying training with Cambridge University Air Squadron and won a Half Blue for Modern Pentathlon . He graduated from the University of Cambridge with a starred First Class honours degree in aeronautical engineering in 1984 , and was approached by MI6 shortly afterwards , whose offer he turned down . Following his graduation he took examinations to join the Royal Navy as a Fleet Air Arm Officer , but he failed the medical examination due to childhood asthma . Instead he applied for and was awarded a Kennedy Scholarship , which allowed him to study technology policy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with full funding during 1986 @-@ 7 . Following this , he was awarded a prize from the Rotary Foundation , allowing him to study in the country of his choice for a year . Consequently , he enrolled in a political science course at the University of Buenos Aires , where he became a fluent Spanish speaker . He continued to pursue his aeronautical interests and qualified as a glider pilot with the Fuerza Aérea Argentina . From 1988 @-@ 9 Tomlinson worked in Mayfair , London , for management consultancy company Booz Allen Hamilton .

= = Military and MI6 service = =

Finding his desk job unsatisfying , Tomlinson joined the Territorial Army in September 1989 , and after passing selection , served as a reservist with the SAS in the Artists Rifles , and then 23 SAS , qualifying as a military parachutist and radio operator . He represented Britain in the 1990 Camel Trophy , competing in Siberia , and crossed the Sahara desert solo on a motorcycle . He enjoyed the experience , and subsequently applied to join MI6 , and officially joined the Service on 23 September 1991 . He completed his training with MI6 and claims he was the best recruit on his course , being awarded the rarely given " Box 1 " attribute by his instructing officers including Nicholas Langman .

Tomlinson worked in the " SOV / OPS " department , operating during the ending phases of the Cold War against the Soviet Union . He was posted to a diplomatic role in Moscow , and was one of the agents responsible for the retrieval of the valuable Mitrokhin Archive in 1992 . From March 1992 until September 1993 he worked in the Eastern European Controllerate . Whilst working there , it was discovered that the Conservative Party had been receiving donations from Serbian supporters . In November 1993 he joined the Balkans Controllerate , and was posted to Sarajevo for six months as the MI6 representative in Bosnia during the breakup of the former Yugoslavia . There he was a " targeting officer " , with a mission to identify potential informants and gather intelligence . A soldier who escorted Tomlinson to Bosnia described him as a " liability " , a " sulk " and " totally unprofessional " , although Tomlinson has disputed this .

From 1994 to 1995 Tomlinson worked in the operational counter @-@ proliferation department . His first posting in this capacity was to work as an undercover agent against Iran , where he succeeded in penetrating the Iranian Intelligence Service . He posed as a British businessman , and infiltrated a network of arms dealers that included Nahum Manbar . The British government supplied the Iranians with materials for chemical weapons in order to gain intelligence on Iran 's military programme . Tomlinson 's description of his Iranian activities are generally considered to be true , due to his personal involvement and knowledge of details that only an insider would know .

MI6 dismissed him on 22 May 1995 as he came to the end of his extended probationary period . Tomlinson 's probationary period had been extended over the standard six @-@ month duration due to his senior line manager 's doubts about his personality . Tomlinson claimed that he had become suicidally depressed following the death of his long @-@ term girlfriend from cancer and that he had been suffering from post @-@ traumatic stress after witnessing violence against a civilian during the Siege of Sarajevo , and that MI6 had been ill @-@ equipped to handle his condition . MI6 argued that he was dismissed for " not being a team player , lacking motivation and having a short @-@ term interest in the service " , but later conceded that he had experienced a " personality clash " with his senior line manager . Another reason given for his dismissal was for " going on frolics on his own " . Tomlinson claims that no formal reason for his dismissal was ever given , and that he was mid @-@ assignment when he suddenly found himself barred from entering MI6 headquarters . Friends suggested that he was sacked after he complained about MI6 's " unethical " tactics . Tomlinson argued that his supervisors had unfairly disregarded his personal circumstances . Tomlinson disputed the reasons for and legality of his dismissal and attempted to take MI6 before an employment tribunal . However , MI6 obtained a public @-@ interest immunity certificate from the Foreign Secretary , Malcolm Rifkind . Having no further legal recourse to appeal against his dismissal , Tomlinson left the United Kingdom , and pursued his arguments against MI6 by publishing articles in the international press protesting his treatment , whilst working on a book detailing his career in the Service .

In 1998 , the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee recommended that MI6 should be subject to UK employment law . Since 2000 , employees of MI6 have had the same employment rights as other British citizens , including written contracts and access to employment tribunals . However , MI6 refused to allow these procedures to be applied retroactively to Tomlinson 's case . MI6 have not succeeded in obtaining another PII certificate since the Tomlinson case .

= = The Big Breach = =

Tomlinson moved to the Costa del Sol in Spain for 18 months from early 1996 . Realising that a

disgruntled former spy could be problematic for the agency , the aide @-@ de @-@ camp to the head of MI6 was enlisted to attempt to appease Tomlinson in February 1997 . He offered him a £ 15 @, @ 000 loan and a marketing job with Jackie Stewart 's Formula One racing team , in return for a promise of silence . Tomlinson accepted the offer (he claims under duress) but retained the job for only a few months before he emigrated to Australia , where his younger brother lived .

Tomlinson returned to Britain , and in October 1997 was arrested and accused of breaking the Official Secrets Act 1989 , after delivering a seven @-@ page synopsis of The Big Breach to the Australian office of Transworld , a British publisher . On 18 December 1997 he was sentenced to 12 months in prison after pleading guilty .

In August 1998 , after serving six months in prison and four months on probation , Tomlinson left the UK to live in exile . He set about completing The Big Breach , which was published in 2001 in Russia . The book alleged that MI6 had infiltrated the German Bundesbank with a mole , and that the Service had a special means of writing in invisible ink . Other revelations were already public knowledge , such as that MI6 recruits are trained at Fort Monckton in Hampshire , and that agents in the field often use the cover of being a journalist .

After the Court of Appeal of England and Wales ruled in his favour , the book was made available in the UK . However following the publication , the British Government obtained a High Court order to confiscate all proceeds from the book , on the grounds that the government owned the copyright to anything written by Tomlinson . In September 2008 , MI6 ended all legal objection to the publication of The Big Breach , released the proceeds from the publication to Tomlinson , and admitted that the organisation 's previous legal actions against him were disproportionate . However , it still refused to reinstate him or compensate him for the loss of his career and pension . Since 2009 , Tomlinson can now travel freely to the UK .

= = = Reception = = =

The Economist criticised the " mess " that MI6 had made in failing to handle the Tomlinson case properly : " Recruiting Mr Tomlinson looks like a bad mistake , and his sacking seems to have been clumsily handled . " The newspaper 's reviewer complained : " there is little useful information in this breathless , whingeing and ill @-@ written volume that a diligent reader of books about spying would not know already . "

Jimmy Burns , reviewing the book for the Financial Times , speculated that it was plausible that " MI6 's senior management realised they had made a terrible mistake in recruiting someone who thought that espionage was just one big adventure . " He concluded , however , that the book " left me with the feeling that the spooks in Whitehall could have avoided a great deal of adverse publicity by agreeing to Tomlinson 's original proposal : an employment tribunal held in camera . "

Former President of South Africa Nelson Mandela reacted angrily to Tomlinson 's accusation in the book that he had a long @-@ standing relationship with MI6 , describing it as a " disgraceful fabrication " . Tomlinson removed the references to Mandela in the British edition of the book , conceding that Mandela was probably unaware that the officials with whom he spoke were affiliated with MI6 .

= = Other alleged breaches and assertions = =

= = = List of MI6 agents = = =

In May 1999 , a list of 116 alleged MI6 agents was sent to the LaRouche movement 's publication Executive Intelligence Review , a weekly magazine which published it online . Its names included Andrew Fulton , who had recently retired , as well as David Spedding and Richard Dearlove . MI6 biographer Stephen Dorril explained that most of the names were " light @-@ cover " sources who worked out of embassies or missions posing as diplomats . Dorril argued , " it is well known that rival intelligence networks know who these people are and accept them . " MI6 claimed that Tomlinson

had originated the list , which was something he had previously threatened to do , although he denied responsibility for it , and MI6 were unable to substantiate their accusation .

Tomlinson wrote , " If MI6 had set out to produce a list that caused me the maximum incrimination , but caused them the minimum damage , they could not have done a better job . " He also said , " It mystifies me why MI6 gave the list credibility . If they were really worried about the safety of their agents they could have denied it . " After The Sun newspaper called Tomlinson a " traitor " and published his email address , he received death threats , and fearing for his life , went into hiding for a time . Government officials later conceded that the list did not originate from Tomlinson .

= = = Diana , Princess of Wales = = =

During 2008 , Tomlinson was a witness for the inquest into the deaths of the Princess of Wales and Dodi al Fayed . He had suggested that MI6 was monitoring Diana before her death and that her driver on the night she died , Henri Paul , may have been an MI6 informant , and that her death resembled plans he saw during 1992 for the assassination of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević , using a bright light to cause a traffic accident .

At the Coroner 's Inquest into the death of the Princess , on 13 February 2008 , speaking by video @-@ link from France , Tomlinson conceded that , after the interval of 16 or 17 years , he " could not remember specifically " whether the document he had seen during 1992 had in fact proposed the use of a strobe light to cause a traffic accident as a means of assassinating Milošević , although use of lights for this purpose had been covered in his MI6 training . On being told that no MI6 file on Henri Paul had been found , Tomlinson said that it " would be absurd after 17 years to say I can positively disagree with it , but ... I do not think the fact that they did not manage to find a file rules out anything either " . He said he believed MI6 had an informant at the Paris Ritz but he could not be certain that this person was necessarily Henri Paul .

= = Post @-@ MI6 = =

In August 1998 , Tomlinson left the United Kingdom for France , and shortly afterwards moved to New Zealand . Later that month he was deported from the United States , and in October 1998 he moved to Switzerland , before being expelled in June 1999 after the Swiss authorities described his presence there as " undesirable " . He moved to Germany until he was hounded out by officials , whereupon he moved to Italy . In 2001 he left Rimini in Italy , where he had been working as a waiter and a snowboarding instructor , for the south of France near Cannes where he worked as a yacht broker for BCR Yachts . From 2006 @-@ 7 , Tomlinson maintained a series of blogs detailing his treatment . His Riviera home was raided by police in 2006 .

In 2007 government lawyers decided not to prosecute him for publishing The Big Breach . The Crown Prosecution Service said there was no real prospect of conviction in a jury trial , which would reveal " sensitive matters " . In 2009 MI6 agreed to allow Tomlinson to return to Britain , unfreeze royalties from his book and drop the threat of charges if he agreed to stop disclosing information about MI6 and speaking to the media . According to The Sunday Times , MI6 also apologised for its " unfair treatment " of him .

He now lives permanently in France and has retrained as a professional pilot . He has worked as a flying instructor with the Ghana Air Force , and in Nigeria , Kenya and Mexico as a surveillance pilot .

= = Personal life = =

In 1998 , Tomlinson was described as possessing " the air of slight arrogance that goes with good looks , a hard @-@ trained body and a sharp intellect " . The Geneva press reported that he had a " perfect command of [the] French [language] " .