

Team mercenary GB

Part 1 – the early years

Nick Must

Here are three questions:

- 1) How do governments cope with the need to covertly interfere in overseas territories?
- 2) How do governments cope with the shrinkage of armed forces driving niche-trained people onto the jobs market?
- 3) How do corporations ensure that their vested interests in foreign areas are maintained?

They all have the same answer: Private Military Contractors (PMCs).

Much media coverage in recent years has focused on American PMCs such as Blackwater – now known as 'Xe Services'.¹ However, in this article, I am going to focus on those companies that are based in the Great Britain because Britain was, once again, a leading instigator in the field. As I see it, the topic can be split into two sections: firstly, the personnel that staffed the mercenary companies and, secondly, the methods these companies used to transfer their expertise overseas.

Mercenary personnel

In the mid 1960s two ex-commanders of the Special Air Service, Sir David Stirling and John Woodhouse, formed a security company which they named Watchguard Interational (aka Watchguard). During their military careers, Stirling and Woodhouse had established extensive connections with the ruling families and governments of the major Middle Eastern and African states. This proved to be a fertile ground for the new venture. In a brief history of Watchguard, within his wider

¹ The name change was prompted by the overwhelming critical mass of negative publicity regarding incidents in the Middle East.

review of PMCs, Christopher Kinsey points out that, 'none of these services were undertaken without the consent of the British government'.²

During most of the 1960s, David Stirling and his associates in the British mercenary field were involved in operations in the Yemen that were, at the very least, covertly approved by the government of the United Kingdom. Stephen Dorril's book on MI6 has a chapter that details how both SIS and GCHQ provided what was, at times, significantly more than discrete assistance.³ The entire cadre of Stirling's assistant commanders in Watchguard appear to have been current or 'recently retired' members of either the regular 22nd Special Air Service (SAS) regiment (e.g. Lt-Col. John Woodhouse) or the Territorial 21st (e.g. Col. Jim Johnson⁴). Many of the regular mercenaries were also ex-UK special forces and, specifically, ex-SAS as well. A large number of Foreign Legionaries were also recruited.

Not everything that Watchguard touched turned to gold. At the very start of the 1970s, Stirling suffered an embarrassing setback with his involvement in what became known as 'the Hilton Assignment'. In the autumn of the previous year, Colonel Gaddafi had led a bloodless coup against the ruling royal family in Lybia. An essential part of Stirling's counter-coup plan was the freeing of political prisoners from Tripoli jail – an insalubrious institution which was ironically nicknamed 'the Hilton'. Over a period of almost two years there were at least three attempts to set the operation into motion. Each time, however, it seemed as if the usual unofficial sanction was not entirely forthcoming. From impounded arms shipments to stern warnings from the Intelligence community, the plot seemed doomed. Indeed,

2 See Christopher Kinsey, *Corporate Soldiers and International Security: The Rise of Private Military Companies*, (London: Routledge, 2006) pp. 46-49.

3 See Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Fifty Years of Special Operations* (London: Fourth Estate, 2000) chapter 31.

4 Colonel Johnson's obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* (13 August, 2008) has some details on their activities in the Yemen:

<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/2553726/Colonel-Jim-Johnson.html>>.

Stirling's own operational security was far from first rate as he, 'was telling all and sundry at White's [the London club] about the operation.'⁵

The uprisings, coups and general civil unrest in countries such as the Yemen, Angola, Congo, Oman and the Biafran War in Nigeria all provided work for British mercenaries in the '60s and '70s. In the post-colonial era into which most of the Middle Eastern and African states had emerged, there were tensions which organisations such as Watchguard could mitigate or – alternatively – instigate. As Abdel-Fatau Musah and J. 'Kayode Fayemi succinctly put it: 'The response by the colonialists was to use newly discharged soldiers from the metropolitan states to crush, sabotage, frustrate or delay the aspirations for self-determination.'⁶

Some of the mercenaries who fought in these conflicts were not even what one might call 'experienced soldiers' – i.e. professionals who might be expected to operate under some form of a code of conduct. A prime example was Costas Georgiou (the infamous, and psychotic, 'Colonel' Callan) who had served in the British Army but with a career that was far from lengthy, or illustrious. A prime example of Georgiou's unhinged behaviour was that he and Parachute Regiment comrade Michael Wainhouse robbed a Post Office near Bangor in January of 1972, using their army-issued weapons.⁷

Duly convicted, they were both sentenced to five years imprisonment. Following their release, they were involved in the Angola mercenary operation of 1975. Georgiou, by then affecting the title and name Colonel Callan, gained notoriety for his 'leadership', being overall commander with Wainhouse as his second-in-command or '2ic'. When the whole event finally went pear-shaped, Georgiou was captured and tried

⁵ The quote regarding Stirling's loose lips is from Dorril, *MI6* (see footnote 3) p. 738. See also both Patrick Seale and Maureen McConville, *The Hilton Assignments* (London: Temple Smith, 1973) and Kinsey (see footnote 2) pp. 48-49.

⁶ Abdel-Fatau Musah and J.'Kayode Fayemi (eds), *Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma* (London: Pluto Press, 2000) p. 20

⁷ For more detail see Chapter 6 of David Tomkins, *Dirty Combat: Secret Wars and Serious Misadventures* (London: Mainstream Publishing, 2008).

along with a dozen other soldiers; he was one of the four that were sentenced to death by firing squad while the other men were all given lengthy prison sentences.⁸

The man who acted as recruiter for the '75 Angolan enterprise was John Banks, another Parachute Regiment veteran – albeit one with a more decent seven years of service. Having apparently met David Stirling in 1970 during the drawn out Lybian build-up, John Banks went on to amusingly name his mercenary recruitment company Security Advisory Services (i.e. S.A.S.). Banks never was capable of any level of subtlety. Interviewed by an Australian newspaper following the trial of Georgiou and his compatriots, Banks spoke from 'his flat above an insurance office in the Surrey town of Camberly' to say that – all things considered – it had been a worthwhile venture.⁹ I suspect it was certainly a financially worthwhile venture for Mr Banks in spite of his claim, documented in the newspaper report, that a 'former business partner' had stolen virtually all of the money that was supposed to have paid the fighters on the ground.

Banks is a figure from this murky world about whom it is surprising to learn that he is still alive today. Following his attainment of notoriety from the Angolan recruitment, he authored a (shortish) book which, from its cover image, seems to have been aimed at the pulp readership end of the market.¹⁰ Since then he has continued to amuse and bemuse in equal measure with his antics. Convicted of 'demanding \$250,000' from the Nicaraguan embassy in London in return for information he claimed to hold regarding 'A contract

⁸ See the archived UPI report 'Seven British mercenaries, released unexpectedly after eight years' at <<http://www.upi.com/Archives/1984/02/28/Seven-British-mercenaries-released-unexpectedly-after-eight-years/5976446792400/>>.

⁹ *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia) 13 July 1976, archived at <<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1300&dat=19760713&id=9PFUAAAIAIAJ&sjid=Q5IDAAAIAIAJ&pg=5072,2878222&hl=en>>

¹⁰ John Banks, *The wages of war : the life of a modern mercenary*, (London: Cooper, 1978). The overly dramatic cover can be seen via the Amazon listing at <<https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/81yig-6M-SL.jpg>>.

to assassinate former President Somoza',¹¹ Banks subsequently disappeared while on compassionate leave from Coldingley prison in Surrey. He was recaptured in late 1981.¹²

Ever one to follow a trend, Banks was involved in a Customs and Excise drugs sting in the 1990s.¹³ Much more recently he has been touting a story that 'western intelligence agencies actually wanted the bombing to take place' of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa.¹⁴

Not all mercenaries were chancers and blaggers. There are the 'gentlemen' professional soldiers, who came to be exemplified by Mike Hoare. Demobbed at the end of WWII with the rank of Major, and an admittedly virulent anti-Communist, he led the mercenary force which fought in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from July '64 to December '65. In those intense 18 months he had, according to a biography by his son Chris, 'swept the Congo clean of savages, and made modern mercenary soldiering briefly but confusingly respectable'.¹⁵

The career of Mike Hoare was not without controversy, however, as he infamously led a failed attempt to instigate a coup in the Seychelles in the autumn of 1981. Arrested after hijacking a plane so his team could escape, Hoare became another mercenary that went to jail. Upon his release, aged 68, he vowed never to go to war again.¹⁶ This seems to have been a wise choice as he is still alive today and in his late 90s.

The City of London even saw the periods of tension in the 70s as an opportunity for new business. Several Lloyds

11 See <<https://theoldbailey.wordpress.com/2008/07/28/r-vs-john-banks-a-face-from-the-angola-civil-war-days/>>.

12 See the news clipping shown at <<http://www.mercenary-wars.net/angola/john-banks.html>>.

13 See *The Independent*, 5 April 1993 at <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/man-cleared-in-customsheroine-sting-operation-to-arrest-businessman-for-drug-smuggling-relied-on-1453561.html>>.

14 See <<http://www.cottrellsdarkworld.com/current.html>>.

15 See <<http://www.mercenary-wars.net/biography/mike-hoare.html>>.

16 See the archived *Chicago Tribune* article "'Mad Mike" Gives Up His Mercenary Life' at <http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-05-08/news/8501280609_1_south-africa-hoare-diego-garcia>.

insurance syndicates of the time began to offer kidnap insurance packages, which included both a level of anti-kidnap training and ransom negotiation. Hogg Robinson was a leader in this and they established a specific subsidiary, Control Risks, to manage the new portfolio.¹⁷ Being desk jockeys rather than 'action men', Control Risks asked a quartet of ex-SAS officers, which included Major David Walker, to handle the day-to-day operations. A further subsidiary was soon set up by Walker and co. and given the exotic name Keenie Meenie Services (hereafter KMS). All of the senior men in KMS were either ex-SAS and/or had been involved in Stirling/Watchguard's 1960s covert campaign in the Yemen.

The business model for KMS, plain and simple, was the acquiring of any government's security contracts wherever and whenever – as long as the price was right.¹⁸ This philosophy led to some questionable activities, such as the training of – Special forces for Qaboos bin Said, the Sultan of Oman (who had been advanced to the throne with the help of the SAS);¹⁹

– Mujahideen from Afghanistan²⁰ (some were trained in the

17 See: Robert D. Hershey Jr, 'Where Kidnapping Is Business', *The New York Times*, 29 December 1979 available online at <<http://www.nytimes.com/1979/12/29/archives/where-kidnapping-is-business-london-firm-takes-on-risk-and-ransom.html>> N.B. that the person named in the article as 'Arish R. Tulle' is actually Major Arish Richard Turle, a senior figure in the Special Air Service before retiring after a long career in the UK army. Still active in the security business today, Turle has most recently worked for Janusian Security Risk Management (which itself is a part of the much larger Risk Advisory Group). Janusian have been in Iraq since 2003.

18 KMS have even been overtly approved as a UK government contractor. For a short period of time their work included the 'Armed protection for government representatives overseas', as discussed in the Cabinet papers held in the National Archives at ref. PREM 19/1698 and available for paid download from the National Archives website at <<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C14568615>>.

19 See 'Britain, Oman and "Our kind of guy"' at <<https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/oman-our-kind-of-guy/>>. Four members of the SAS team sent to Oman to assist in the 1970 coup had defrauded the Sultan of 'thousands of pounds in a payroll scam', on which see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/232271.stm> and <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1998/dec/09/oman#S6CV0322P0_19981209_CWA_20>.

20 See John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1999) pp. 76-79.

Scottish highlands) which turned into the ultimate blowback; – Sri Lankan government officials (both police and military) who were viciously repressing the Tamil people.²¹

In the late 1980s, KMS had a couple of problems. The first became quite a personal embarrassment for Major Walker, as he was linked to Oliver North's highly questionable activities in Central America. Walker had allowed KMS to provide arms and general assistance to the Contras, as well as some rather harsh 'hands-on' assistance in the Nicaraguan capital, Managua.²² The media attention that this episode received prompted Walker and his colleague Jim Johnson to pass the management responsibility for KMS to two other ex-SAS men, Lieutenant Colonel Keith Farnes and Major Brian Baty.²³

Major Baty had previously come to the public's attention when he had appeared in a Dublin court during the 1976 trial of a group of SAS soldiers who due to a 'map reading error' had crossed the border from Northern Ireland.²⁴ One of those hapless map-reading novice squaddies was Corporal Ilisoni Ligairi – a Fijian. Having completed twenty years with both the regular 22nd and the territorial 21st SAS, Ligairi retired from the British Army. His extensive military training was still useful in his home country, however, as he later rose to be Colonel commanding the (rather unimaginatively titled) Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit of the Fijian Military Forces.²⁵ He was also party to the attempted Fiji coup in 2000.²⁶

With KMS now under their control, Johnson and Baty

21 See <https://www.tamilnet.com/img/publish/2014/07/britains_dirty_war.pdf> and also 'Britain allowed ex-SAS officers to train Sri Lankans as Tamil Tigers rebelled' in *The Guardian*, 16 January 2014.

22 See 'The assassination business' in *The Scotsman*, 26 July 1988 and 'The Army: The Years 1984 – July 1987' in *The Colombo Telegraph*, 9 May 2015 <<https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/the-army-the-years-1984-july-1987/>>.

23 Cooley (see footnote 20) p. 78

24 See 'Army sets up new dirty tricks' in *The New Statesman* 12 August, 1983.

25 The unit's name was pinched directly from the Special Air Service's own Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit.

26 See 'Fijian coup colonel took part in SAS blunder' in the *Daily Telegraph*, 22 June 2000.

were themselves a little bit careless and got caught out when, in April 1989, Ken Livingstone MP asked a question in Parliament about an advertisement KMS had placed in a publication titled 'Internal Security — Counter Insurgency'.²⁷ This 'brochure' as Hon. Tim Sainsbury (the Secretary of State for Defence) referred to it in his official Parliamentary answer, had been produced by International Military Services Limited, which had itself previously been known as Millbank Technical Services Limited.²⁸ Both International Military Services and Millbank Technical Services have had a long history of acting as broker for some of the biggest arms deals. As Duncan Campbell detailed in the *New Statesman* of 17 October 1980, this role included 'bribes' or, in the sanitised language, 'commission payments'.²⁹

Mercenary operations

I briefly mentioned earlier that KMS trained government forces in Sri Lanka for the repression of the Tamil people. This connection came about following input from MI5's Jack Morton, who used his extensive counter-insurgency experience from India, Malaya and Northern Ireland to help restructure the intelligence agencies of President Junius Jayewardene. Surveillance of Tamil separatists was carried out not only in Sri Lanka but also on those who were living in exile in the United Kingdom. Regarding the Tamil Coordinating Committee operating from London at the time, Thatcher was to tell the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, 'We keep a close eye on [them] and shall continue to do so.'³⁰

The Sri Lankan government pressed further and an arrangement was made for two senior Sri Lankan police

27 See <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1989/apr/04/keenie-meenie-services>.

28 See the Companies House online record at <<https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/00924462>>.

29 Campbell's article is online at <<http://www.duncancampbell.org/menu/journalism/newstatesman/newstatesman-1980/Arms%20sales.pdf>>.

30 See the December 1981 briefing paper prepared for Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher: The National Archives, PREM 19/1395, 'Sri Lanka: Visit of Foreign Minister', 21 December 1981.

officers to visit and observe the counter-insurgency policy that was being carried out in Northern Ireland.³¹ The influence of Morton in this process is unmistakable, as he had recently been operational in Northern Ireland himself – and his work there for MI5 had been integral to counter-insurgency. The visit duly took place in June of 1983, less than a year after the killings in Northern Ireland that led to the 'Stalker Inquiry'. This was a counter-insurgency policy that necessitated police investigation from the UK mainland but which was approved for close observation by visiting foreign police officers.

Having received such an encouraging 'come-on' from the British, it is of little surprise that there was a further request for some actual in-country training, on home turf, for the Sri Lankan police. The nexus of conflicting interests was, however, a complex issue for Thatcher's government. They were in the midst of long negotiations with India over significant arms sales while the Indian government of Indira Gandhi was supportive of the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka. It would be a shame if the arms sales would be lost if, or rather when, the Indian government found out about direct British training. A solution that pleased both sides of the argument was reached when KMS were contracted to run the courses. Confirmation of this fact comes directly from the Special Task Force of the Sri Lankan police. Like all modern institutions, they have a website that includes a bit of background history. This includes the (verbatim) statement:

'An Institution in the United Kingdom known as the "Kini Mini Service" (K.M.S.) comprising of British ex-SAS officers provided training to the STF officers at the very beginning. Among the subjects taught were tactics adopted by Riot squads, weapon training, firing practices, Counter Terrorism Search, Handling of Explosive, Mapping & Use of Compass equipment and

³¹ See the section 'Following in Thatcher's footsteps' in the Corporate Watch report 'FOR SALE: Top UK riot cops. EXPORT: To war zones and dictators' at <<https://corporatewatch.org/news/2013/oct/15/sale-top-uk-riot-cops-export-war-zones-and-dictators>> plus the papers on 'UK assistance to Sri Lankan police force' held in the National Archives at: <<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C15242720>> and <<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C16248223>>.

First Aid. Also the introduction of the world renowned American-made M16 Automatic Rifle.³²

Encouraged by the success of KMS, two other ex-SAS officers, Jeremy Trevaskis³³ and Peter Le Marchand, wanted a piece of the Sri Lankan pie for their own company Falconstar Limited, which had already secured similar work with the Ugandan police.³⁴ In the autumn of 1984 the private secretary to Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe wrote a letter to the Prime Minister's Office at 10 Downing Street regarding the issue of KMS and Falconstar being involved in Sri Lanka. In the letter, it was acknowledged that the Indian government were already aware of the situation and, as expected, had expressed some concern. The rather bland assurance was further given that 'this is purely a commercial matter and that HMG are not involved'.³⁵

The repression of the Tamils was soon very violent, with imprisonment, seemingly random beatings and targeted killings – a perfect copy of the British counter-insurgency campaign in Northern Ireland. The Amnesty International report for 1985 (covering the period January to December 1984) is stark in its criticism of the situation:

'Amnesty International was concerned about reports of

32 See <<http://www.police.lk/index.php/special-task-force->>.

33 Jeremy Trevaskis is the son of Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, who had been Britain's High Commissioner for Aden from 1963 to 1965. It would seem that Trevaskis Jnr. is still in the intelligence world, as he was one of the Stratfor subscribers exposed by Wikileaks in 2015. See <https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/57/579228_re-welcome-tostratfor-.html>).

34 See 'Thatcher backed Ugandan crackdown' by Phil Miller at <<https://corporatewatch.org/news/2014/may/29/thatcher-backed-ugandan-crackdown-worse-amin-era>>.

35 A scan of the letter is at <http://www.jdslanka.org/images/art_img/news_features/politics_current_affairs/peter_ricketts_letter.jpg>. The letter's author was Peter Ricketts, later knighted, and chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee 2000-01 and the UK's first National Security Adviser 2010-12. After a long career in the spook world, his final diplomatic posting was the most agreeable position as Ambassador to Paris (see <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/10931316/Too-many-cooks-for-Our-Man-in-Paris-Sir-Peter-Ricketts.html>>). He is now Visiting Professor at the Department of War Studies, Kings College London (see <<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/warstudies/people/visiting/ricketts.aspx>>).

random killings of non-combatant Tamil civilians by members of the security forces. It also remained concerned about the detention of Tamils, members of left-wing opposition parties and students under legislation permitting long-term detention without charge or trial. It continued to receive reports of widespread torture of detainees. Several reports of deaths in custody, allegedly as a result of torture or shooting, were received.³⁶

Confirmation comes from the autobiography of one of the ex-SAS trainers, Robin Horsfall, who quit after only three months on the job, having reached the conclusion that he was 'working for the wrong side'.³⁷ Further to this, he has confirmed to journalist Phil Miller that Major Brian Baty³⁸ from the KMS management team was present in country to provide the overall supervision of the training. Of even more interesting note is that Tom Morrell, one of a number of Fijians³⁹ recruited into the British Army who further passed selection for the SAS, 'was in charge of KMS training at a Sri Lankan army camp for junior officers'.⁴⁰ I mention this fact, as I believe that Fijian soldiers would have been deliberately selected not only for their counter-insurgency experience, but also because they were not the average Caucasian who would stand out in a Sri Lankan community.

Another instance of British counter-insurgency being exported to an ex-colony came in the form of India's internal conflict with militant Sikhs and their occupation of the Golden Temple at Amritsar. A set of papers released to the National Archives in 2014 showed that the government of Indira Gandhi

36 See p. 242 of the Amnesty International Report 1985, available at <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/POL10/002/1985/en/>>.

37 Robin Horsfall, *Fighting Scared* (London: Cassell Military Paperbacks, 2002) p. 221

38 See footnote 24.

39 Morrell was a fellow countryman of Ilisoni Ligairi (of whom, see footnote 26).

40 On Baty and Morrell working for KMS, see p. 20 of Phil Miller, 'Exporting police death squads: From Armagh to Trincomalee', available online at <http://www.ptsrilanka.org/images/documents/exporting_police_death_squads_web.pdf>.

requested military advice and/or assistance from the British government early in 1984. True to established form, PM Margaret Thatcher was quick to oblige. A Special Air Service officer was dispatched to India and wrote up a plan for the storming of the Temple; if the Indian government had asked for additional assistance, the SAS would have been willing to provide it. Following media coverage of the papers released under the thirty year rule, a report by Cabinet Secretary Jeremy Heywood revealed that:

'There does appear to have been some internal UK military consideration, immediately after the UK military adviser's visit to India, of whether to offer training for the potential operation, if requested by the Indian authorities, and if agreed by UK Ministers.'⁴¹

The plan that was eventually carried out by Indian military forces lasted a total of ten days. The BBC's long-serving India correspondent Mark Tully was present in Amritsar during the four days leading up to the attack. In the *Daily Telegraph* thirty years later, Tully wrote: 'Sikhs in India, and in the West, were outraged by what they saw as the defilement of their holiest place. And that anger remains 30 years later....'⁴²

The Cabinet Office report does clarify that the operation, as carried out by the Indian military, was somewhat different from that suggested by the SAS officer. Nonetheless the British government were willing to provide advice from British special forces to a foreign government in relation to the internal suppression of religious-based dissent. Both Downing Street and Foreign Office documents relating to UK approval

41 See page 5 of 'Cabinet Secretary report to PM on allegations of UK involvement in the Indian operation at Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar 1984', at <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277292/Cabinet_Secretary_report_to_PM_on_allegations_of_UK_involveme....pdf>.

42 See 'Operation Blue Star: How an Indian army raid on the Golden Temple ended in disaster' at <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/10881115/Operation-Blue-Star-How-an-Indian-army-raidon-the-Golden-Temple-ended-in-disaster.html>>.

Those who have heard any of the general news reports filed by Mark Tully, on either BBC Radio 4 or the World service, will know that he is a measured and peaceful man. In his *Telegraph* piece, however, one can feel the huge disappointment.

for SAS involvement in the planning can be seen online.⁴³

British mercenary operations continued apace in the 1990s. Simon Mann, co-founder of Executive Outcomes and Sandline International was, true to form, an ex-SAS officer. Executive Outcomes was hired by the Angolan government in 1993 and tasked with the defeat of the UNITA rebels. A civil war had been ongoing within that country since the mid-to-late 1960s and this contract was worth \$40 million per year.⁴⁴ Mann gave an account of Executive Outcome's work in Angola as part of a Chatham House lecture in 2011.⁴⁵

'Brigadier General' Mann, as he was known in the Angolan army,⁴⁶ is known in the United Kingdom for his part in the Equatorial Guinea coup attempt of 2004. A spectacular failure, it led to a 34 year jail term for Mann, a \$500,000 fine and four-year suspended jail term for Mark Thatcher⁴⁷ and the production by the BBC of a rather good satire. Simon Mann first met Mark Thatcher in 1997 soon after he (Mann) had moved to live in Cape Town. It's in chapter seven of his book *Cry Havoc*⁴⁸ that Mann starts to really lay into Mark Thatcher, and this makes for a most enjoyable read. 'Scratcher', as he later came to be known amongst the military men who played a part in the coup, was their final bail-out option if all else had failed. Predictably, everything else did fail... as did Thatcher to

43 See <https://stopdeportations.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/prem-19-1273_binder.pdf>. The *Guardian* also had two articles of interest in January 2014: 'Margaret Thatcher gave full support over Golden Temple raid, letter shows' at <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/15/margaret-thatcher-golden-temple-raid-support-letter>> and 'Sikhs demand inquiry into claims of British role in 1984 Amritsar attack' at <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/13/sikh-inquiry-british-1984-amritsar-india-golden-temple>>.

44 Sean McFate, 'The Evolution of Private Force' (chapter 6, p. 72) in Joakim Berndtsson and Christopher Kinsey (eds.), *The Routledge Research Companion to Security Outsourcing*, (London: Routledge, 2016).

45 Available online at <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/021111mann.pdf>>.

46 His highest rank in the British Army had been as Captain. Accounts differ as to whether he was 'given' the Brigadier General rank or whether he 'demanded it' as a part of his package. Either way, he didn't refuse it.

47 See 'Thatcher fined over "coup plot"' at <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4169557.stm>>.

48 London: John Blake Publishing, 2011.

honour his position.

Mann was released from prison having served just over a year of his jail sentence. This followed a Damascene conversion and the provision of security advice to Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang Nguema (the target of the 2004 coup attempt). In 2011 Mann was working with Moda Solutions⁴⁹ (a 'security company', naturally) of which Lord Des Browne (a former Defence Secretary) has been a past director and Lord Brennan (a QC at the influential Matrix Chambers) is a current one.

As I hope I have shown in this history of British mercenary operations, there has been significant business for Britain in the exporting of military expertise to foreign regimes who need some help with awkward elements of their indigenous populations. This is as nothing, however, compared to how the 'war on terror' has enabled the PMC industry to really take off and start to draw in truly obscene amounts of money... and Britain is represented at the highest level.

In part two I will cover the period following the second invasion of Iraq in 2003.

*Nick Must is an independent researcher
with a particular interest in Special Forces.*

⁴⁹ See Simon Mann, 'My biggest mistake was approaching Mark Thatcher' in the *Independent*, 31 October 2011 at <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/simon-mann-my-biggest-mistake-was-approaching-markthatcher-6255035.html>>