

South of the border (occasional snippets from)

Nick Must

* *new* *

Naming no names: 'HN58' and the Undercover Policing Inquiry

As has been referred to by Robin Ramsay in this issue's *View from the Bridge*, the inquiry into undercover policing in the United Kingdom continues to produce interesting tidbits. One such that I have come across is the case of the ex-Special Demonstration Squad officer who initially served in an undercover role but later left the SDS, rose through the ranks and came back to the SDS to act as its commander. He 'was the Detective Chief Inspector in charge of the Special Demonstration Squad between 1997 and 2001.'¹

All of the police officers who previously served in an undercover role with the SDS have been anonymised and given what are termed 'Herne Nominals' (HN numbers) by the inquiry. This particular officer is 'HN58'. There has been significant debate about whether, due to his latter position as a senior non-undercover officer, the name of HN58 should be made public. Regarding the prospect of his own identity being revealed as a part of the inquiry's process HN58 has declared, 'his own wish to avoid unwelcome intrusion into his private and family life'.² Oh, the irony!

Additionally, a part of the Special Demonstration Squad's Tradecraft Manual has been published online by the inquiry. In that, a casual reference is made to 'wearies' as a descriptor for some of the target groups. There is, however, no further explanation within that document as to the origin of this phrase and it seemed a little mysterious. A bit of digging, however, reveals a separate Met Police document (related to other aspects of the inquiry) that shows it to be a typically poor quality copper's joke:

'As a method of infiltrating these groups officers would invariably change their appearance. They would grow longer hair and a beard and this lead to them being referred to as "hairies". Over time, subjects of interest became known as "wearies". This was a slightly derogatory colloquial term for individuals that were viewed as hard work and tiresome. These titles which now seem archaic and inappropriate remained in use by the unit

¹ See the start of paragraph 4 on page 2 of the document at <<https://tinyurl.com/ydhqxd2k>> or <<https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/20180220-ruling-SDS-anonymity.pdf>>.

² See later on in paragraph 4 (at the top of page 3) of the document linked in footnote 1.

throughout its existence.³

Note, please, the attempt to make this use of language seem like something from the dim and distant past: 'titles which now seem archaic and inappropriate'. In light of that, it should be remembered that the SDS existed from 1968 until 2008 and that the word 'remained in use by the unit throughout its existence'. So they were still using the 'archaic and inappropriate' expression well into the 21st Century.

* *new* *

Betsy DeVos and her collection of yachts

The U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and her husband Dick own 10 yachts. They recently suffered the horror of one of their boats (the *SeaQuest*, worth \$40 million) being vandalised (to the tune of only \$5,000) while it was moored at the Huron Boat Basin,⁴ on the south edge of Lake Erie. The unknown perpetrator apparently untied the yacht from its moorings, setting it 'adrift on Lake Erie with the crew on board'.⁵ As well as the *SeaQuest*, Mr and Mrs DeVos also own *Legacy* which was built on the same style of hull and is, presumably, also valued at roughly the same amount. Fear not though, for the *Legacy* and their other eight boats are just fine.⁶

As one would expect from members of the filthy rich, Dick and Betsy also have a fleet of private aircraft at their disposal. These include *two* Boeing Business Jet 737s (retail value \$65-\$75 million each), *two* Gulfstream G550s (retail value \$55-\$57 million each) and a Bombardier Challenger 300 (retail value \$24 million). The DeVos family's net worth is currently estimated at US\$ 5.3 billion. You might wonder how they accumulated such an obscene wealth but you'll soon stop wondering when you know that Dick DeVos is the heir to the Amway fortune.⁷

³ See the first full paragraph on page 18 of the document at <<https://tinyurl.com/y9ezfu23>> or <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/foi-media/metropolitan-police/priorities_and_how_we_are_doing/corporate/operation-herne---report-2-allegations-of-peter-francis-operation-trinity>.

⁴ See 'DeVos' \$40 million yacht vandalized at Huron dock' from the *Toledo Blade* at <<https://tinyurl.com/y7ff2mf7>> or <<http://www.toledoblade.com/local/2018/07/25/DeVos-40-million-yacht-vandalized-at-Huron-dock-npr.html>>.

⁵ See the page at <superyachtfan.com> where, along with full details of the vessels dimensions and capabilities, the laxity of the crew is also mentioned at <https://www.superyachtfan.com/yacht_seaquest.html>.

⁶ Check the amusing end to this URL from *Slate*: <<https://tinyurl.com/y7yeklq2>> or <<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/07/betsy-devos-yacht-untied-her-other-nine-boats-are-reportedly-safe.html>>.

⁷ If you are unfamiliar with Amway, then a good place to start would be the article 'Amway: 5 Realities Of The Multi-Billion-Dollar Scam' at <<https://tinyurl.com/ptaq26s>> or <<http://www.cracked.com/personal-experiences-1620-amway-5-realities-multi-billion-dollar>>

Continues at the foot of the next page.

* new *

Not anyone for Dennis?

In July, the Thatcher foundation released to the public a huge archive of papers related to its synonymous Prime Minister. What first got my attention was how Dennis Thatcher had taken a very personal interest in filleting the list of guests to a No. 10 reception.⁸ The names of notable worthies, such as David Attenborough and Paul McCartney, received red marks from Dennis to signify 'those who, I believe, do not help'. In contrast, positive indications were left for golfing pals, such as Eric Sykes and Ronnie Corbett, along with golfing professionals Tony Jacklin, Nick Faldo and (ex-pro/golfing commentator) Peter Alliss.⁹

Ancillary to this it transpires that the Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors, Marmaduke Hussey (later Sir Marmaduke), was also removed from the list of guests for a No. 10 reception. In this instance, it was also *Mr* Thatcher who had the main hand in the decision. A BBC online news report on the events from 30 years ago detailed what had made Dennis so upset. An edition of the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme had, apparently, labelled Mrs Thatcher:

'The offence was caused by one of the runners-up in a competition organised jointly with the *Sunday Telegraph* to write a "mini-saga" in no more than 50 words, with an extra 15 words allowed for a title. There were 64,000 entries, including one from Vincent Hill of London entitled

Note 7 continued

scam.html>. Another good source for the realities of being an Amway distributor are, 'Tax Court Denies Amway Losses – Again' at <<https://tinyurl.com/yaxko2fk>> or <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/peterjreilly/2014/04/28/tax-court-denies-amway-losses-again/>> and the vitriolic blog <<http://marriedtoanambot.blogspot.com/>>.

Although Amway is a huge business, overall sales are falling. Revenues have dropped by more than 25% in the last five years. See 'Amway Corp. sales fell 8 percent to \$10.8 billion in 2014' at <<https://tinyurl.com/y9nk45o6>> or <https://www.mlive.com/business/west-michigan/index.ssf/2015/02/amway_corp_sales_fell_8_percent.html> or <<https://tinyurl.com/ybrmcdfn>> or <<https://www.amwayglobal.com/amway-announces-sales-8-6-billion-2017-emphasis-product-innovation-technology-leads-companys-future-focus/>>.

⁸ See 'David Attenborough and Paul McCartney rejected by Denis Thatcher for Downing Street party' by Sam Russell for *The Independent*, 21 July 2018 at <<https://tinyurl.com/y7l3j6bo>> or <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/david-attenborough-paul-mccartney-denis-thatcher-margaret-downing-street-election-party-a8458051.html>>.

⁹ See the correspondence and list at <<https://tinyurl.com/ydzawn8j>> or <<https://116ae215f57b47bc40bd-32276aa0a4a9ef306defd1327a583a38.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/880226%20ND%20DT%20notes%20SHOWBIZ%20RECEPTION%20THCR%206-2-5-54%20f17.pdf>>. Sykes, bizarrely, appeared twice on the list: the first time receiving two ticks, the second time four hearty ones. Also somewhat bizarrely (considering he is now a Conservative peer) Sebastian Coe received a question mark.

This is Hill's entry:

'Ingenious: individual choice must be paramount. With growing confidence she legalised hard drugs. Prices fell sharply. Legitimate outlets replaced bankrupt drug syndicates. Crime figures plunged. Crematorium shares surged. City populations thinned as the weak spirited succumbed. Unemployment vanished. Only the worthiest survived. Nobody could complain. The unfit died of freedom.'¹¹

Dennis Thatcher had even written to 'Duke' Hussey himself on this subject. The exchange of letters can be seen via the Thatcher archive¹² and reveal Mr Thatcher suffering a complete sense-of-humour-bypass and adopting a true 'Bufton-Tufton' style:

'The extent and depth of political bias in the B.B.C. is a matter of opinion, but this is a disgrace judged by any standard however low.

I cannot believe that the management of a public broadcasting system can continue to employ a producer who publishes so foul and deliberate an untruth against anyone on such a subject. Surely such gross professional mis-conduct can neither be excused nor condoned?'

Switching from full fog-horn mode, Thatcher's handwritten sign off then comically says:

'Regards to you both.
Yours ever, Dennis.'

* *new* *

Those new White House tapes

There has been significant coverage recently of the 'secret' recordings that Omarosa Manigault Newman made (or, at least, claims to have made) in various parts of the White House, including the supposedly ultra-secure Situation Room. What I have not seen any comment on, though, is the quality of the face-to-face recordings she has produced: e.g. her conversation with Generally John Kelly when she was sacked,¹³ as opposed to the recorded

¹⁰ See <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-36847893>>.

¹¹ See 'The Diary – John Street', *Tribune*, 10 August 2016 <<http://www.tribunemagazine.org/2016/08/the-diary-john-street/>>.

¹² For some deeply annoying technical reason, a link to this particular PDF hosted on the Thatcher foundation website does not always open properly. To ensure its availability, I have uploaded the document to the Scribd service and the link to access it is <<https://tinyurl.com/yahjycn9>> or <<https://www.scribd.com/document/390592006/880210-Duke-Hussey-to-Dt-Appalled-Bbc-Beh-Thcr-1-3-26-f70>>.

¹³ 'Omarosa releases a recording of her own firing', CNN, 13 August 2018 <<https://edition.cnn.com/videos/tv/2018/08/13/ip-omarosa-tapes.cnn>>.

phone conversations such as the President's daughter-in-law Lara Trump effectively offering Omarosa \$15k per month to keep her mouth shut.¹⁴

According to a report from Axios, Mrs Manigault Newman says she used her mobile phone (set to record) as the device that has provided all these juicy morsels.¹⁵ The recording of General Kelly firing her was so clear I think it highly possible that the phone was placed in plain sight (a breach of security for the Situation Room, where electronic devices from outside are banned) and that General Kelly might even have been aware that the recording was taking place.

new

How viable was the 'ISIS-inspired Theresa May murder plot'?

In August, 21 year-old Naa'imur Zakariyah Rahman was sentenced to a minimum term of 30 years for plotting to kill British Prime Minister, Theresa May. Initially, 'Rahman made contact with an FBI agent posing as an IS official online, who introduced him to an MI5 role-player.'¹⁶

The jury took thirteen hours to reach their decision and, after he was convicted, '. . . a probation report read to the court by the judge revealed that Rahman had admitted in prison he would have carried out the attack *had he been able to*.'¹⁷ (emphasis added)

Let us examine Rahman's connections and abilities. BBC news reported¹⁸ how the 'plot' was 'foiled' by the security services and stated: 'Last summer Rahman was homeless in London after falling out with both his mother in the city and close relatives in Walsall, where he grew up.' In addition to this: 'Despite his *total lack of skills or training*, MI5 was concerned that Rahman would press ahead' (added emphasis) Further still: 'As Rahman *kept asking for help*, the MI5 team introduced him to an undercover police officer in London posing as an Islamic State weapons fixer.' (added emphasis) Covert video of the meeting, shown to the court, revealed that Rahman had asked for, 'a truck bomb and firearms – *before conceding he could neither drive nor fire a gun*.' (emphasis added)

Thus far it would seem clear to me that Rahman, on his own and with no

¹⁴ 'Omarosa Manigault Newman Releases Tape of Lara Trump's \$15,000-a-Month Job Offer', *The New York Times*, 16 August 2018 <<https://tinyurl.com/y9achg83>> or <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/16/us/politics/omarosa-manigault-newman-lara-trump-tape.html>>.

¹⁵ See <<https://tinyurl.com/y9lc84od>> or <<https://www.axios.com/newsletters/axios-sneak-peek-d6db4e05-888c-4f73-b85e-3431ec9197f6.html>>.

¹⁶ See <<https://tinyurl.com/ybytv5hl>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/07/18/islamic-state-terrorist-found-guilty-plot-kill-theresa-may/>>.

¹⁷ See <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-45373487>>.

¹⁸ See <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-44872883>>.

help, posed absolutely no threat to anybody (except, possibly, himself). He was, however, encouraged in his fantasies regarding Jihad by the undercover officers involved in his surveillance. One of the more ridiculous aspects was that, 'Rahman said he couldn't fund the attack because he was "broke and homeless" – but he handed over a jacket and a rucksack, asking for both to be filled with explosives.'

So, he could never have managed to obtain (purchase) the explosives himself, nor did he have the knowledge to fit them into the jacket. The MI5 officers involved in the 'sting' were the only people who did anything to facilitate that aspect. The icing on the cake would seem to be that, 'He [Rahman] told jurors that one fantastical proposal [concocted with the MI5 sting team] had been to *build balloons to drop missiles from the edge of space.*' (emphasis added)

What about when he was arrested? Was he violent, trying to fight his way free and wholly intent on his intended mission? It would seem not because, according to a report from *The Independent*, he said: 'I'm glad it's over. I'm glad I'm arrested.'¹⁹

Is Boris Johnson the new George Brown?

The position of Foreign Secretary has occasionally been used by Prime Ministers to put trouble-makers in a position of power that keeps them away from home as much as possible. (Remember the Blair cabinet and Robin Cook?)

As the Foreign Secretary of Harold Wilson's first cabinet, George Brown was famous for regularly being the worse for wear following a liquid lunch. Indeed, a biography of Brown is titled *Tired and Emotional*²⁰ in tribute to the phrase that *Private Eye* derived from his frequently inebriated state. He is almost equally famous for attending a diplomatic reception in Peru, where – it is said – he espied a vision in purple wafting across the room and accosted her, asking for a dance.

"No", she replied. "For three reasons. Firstly I don't dance with drunks. Secondly, they are playing the Peruvian national anthem and you should be standing to attention. And thirdly, I am the cardinal archbishop of Lima."²¹

¹⁹ <<https://tinyurl.com/y8yrv7zv>> or <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/downing-street-terror-plot-theresa-may-behead-bomb-naaimur-zakariyah-rahman-a8406851.html>>

²⁰ Peter Paterson, *Tired and Emotional: The Life of Lord George Brown* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993)

²¹ This apocryphal anecdote could be taken from any number of sources, one being Jeremy Paxman's review of *Tired and Emotional* (see note 1) which was published in the *Independent*, 15 May 1993.

From insulting Nikita Khrushchev and coming close to fisticuffs with visiting American movie stars,²² to leaving a copy of 'Labour's National Plan for economic development' in the back of the Mini which had rescued him when his official car broke down,²³ George Brown was the premier comic political figure of his time.

When Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell suddenly died in 1963, George Brown was widely expected to be his successor. In the end Harold Wilson won the contest when his rivals could not agree upon a single candidate to challenge him and the anti-Wilson vote was split. During the build-up to the 2016 Conservative party leadership election, Boris Johnson was seen as the front runner, with Michael Gove as his 'dream ticket' deputy. Johnson was thus the closest he had ever been to achieving his lifetime ambition of becoming Prime Minister. His decision not to even put his name forward was influenced by Michael Gove reneging on the agreement the two of them had so obviously hatched at Scott's restaurant in Mayfair on the evening of Monday 22 July 2013.²⁴ Boris Johnson feared a split in their supporters and knew, in his heart of hearts, that he could not swing it alone as his entire act is just that: an act.

As Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson seemed determined to maintain his reputation as the class clown. In 2015 he led a trade delegation that visited Erbil in northern Iraq. Part of the tour included time at the Jaguar car dealership in the city. The group were shown the newly minted Jaguar F-Type sports car and Boris promptly got in one and drove it out of the showroom. As Angus McKee, the UK's Consul General in Erbil was quick to note following media reports of this incident, only swift action on the part of the present prevented Boris from actually driving off in the vehicle.

'In case anyone gets alarmed by the attached article, while it is true that the Mayor got behind the wheel of a [REDACTED] in the showroom, drove out of the door & onto the driveway, quick action by his PPO and me ensured he did NOT drive off.'²⁵

It is highly unusual that the Foreign Secretary's PPO (Personal Protection Officer – his bodyguard) had to intervene, as properly trained bodyguards would only do such a thing when the 'principal' places themselves (or,

²² See chapters 24 and 25 of Craig Brown, *Hello Goodbye Hello: A Circle of 101 Remarkable Meetings* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2011).

²³ See Matthew Parris, 'Another Voice', *The Spectator* 18 June 2008.

²⁴ <<https://tinyurl.com/yanaywta>> or <https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/07/23/boris-johnson-michael-gove_n_3639063.html>

²⁵ The story was in the *Daily Mail* at <<https://tinyurl.com/yb7xsxx5>> or <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2925110/BLACK-DOG-Racy-Boris-gives-gas.html>> and emails from the Consul General released under the Freedom of Information Act can be seen at <<https://tinyurl.com/y7g4ha7m>> or <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/485863/FOI-0260_Final_Pack.pdf>. (N.B. that the Erbil incident is dealt with on page 9 – and the fact that the make of vehicle is [REDACTED] from the email is ridiculous, as the newspaper clearly stated it was a Jaguar.)

sometimes, others) at risk.

In February of this year, Johnson held forth at Policy Exchange on the verdant uplands that await the United Kingdom post-Brexit. These included the claim that,

'... our exports to the EU have grown by only 10% since 2010, while our sales to the United States are up 41%, to China 60%, Saudi Arabia 41%, New Zealand 40, Japan 60, South Korea 100%. This country now has a £25 billion trade surplus with South Korea.'²⁶

Which is interesting because the United Kingdom was a member of the European Union when those trade increases occurred and it was not the least bit of a hindrance. The Policy Exchange speech was also the occasion when he made a quip about Brexit being an excellent opportunity for increased sex-tourism to Thailand.²⁷

Recently the *Daily Telegraph* (his part-time employer who pay him 'chicken feed') reported that he said 'Fuck business' in reply to concerns regarding the UK's trading future post-Brexit.²⁸ Johnson also twice literally ran out of the House of Commons chamber to avoid answering questions from Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry. The first occasion was in February regarding the Northern Ireland border. More recently, in May, he was faced with the issue of the continuing violence on the Gaza strip.²⁹ In June he further suggested that Donald Trump would handle the Brexit negotiations better than his colleagues.³⁰ When Jeremy Corbyn chided him for this in Parliament, BoJo had a good chuckle.³¹

In many ways Theresa May is the John Major *de nos jours*: perceived as weak by many within her own party and continually fighting the Eurosceptics. The difficult balancing act of nudging us towards a soft or non-Brexit, while holding the Tory Party together, must be exhausting. Alas for her, Boris Johnson is unlikely to follow in the footsteps of George Brown and flounce off to the backbenches to be safely ignored for the rest of time.

²⁶ 'The Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs, Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, set out his vision for a liberal Brexit in a speech at Policy Exchange.'

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amAAfBnVDfI>>

²⁷ From the Policy Exchange speech: 'As I have just discovered we have more than a million people who go to Thailand every year, where our superb consular services deal with some of the things that they get up to there – on which I make no comment.'

²⁸ <<https://tinyurl.com/ybk2kd5c>> or <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/06/23/eu-diplomats-shocked-boriss-four-letter-reply-business-concerns/>>

²⁹ Northern Ireland: <<https://tinyurl.com/y8545qs7>> or <<https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/emily-thornberry-calls-boris-johnson-absolute-disgrace-leaves-parliament-avoid-urgent-question/>>
Gaza: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5opIXq_V0cU>.

³⁰ <<https://www.buzzfeed.com/alexspence/boris-johnson-trump-brexit-leaked-recording>>

³¹ <<https://tinyurl.com/y9xa3vjb>> or <https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/boris-johnson-laughs-as-jeremy-corbyn-mocks-theresa-may-over-tory-brexit-divisions_uk_5b20ff2ce4b09d7a3d79019a>

Internet spying company employs ex-spy alert!

Palantir Technologies is the data analytics company that was founded by PayPal creator and venture capitalist Peter Thiel. Their software uses the same principle as the 'Five Eyes' Echelon system of keywords to trigger flags.³² Palantir software looks at, amongst other things, 'emails and browser histories, GPS locations from company-issued smartphones, printer and download activity, and transcripts of digitally recorded phone conversations'.³³ Once a communication is so flagged, a human analyst examines the data and will later, most likely, combine it with the analysis of other such data sets in producing a final report. It's really just a technologically assisted and advanced version of what used to be the traditional intelligence analyst's role, where reports from sources (both overt and covert) would be read, assessed and collated.

Considering that it uses techniques that are so close to those of state espionage, it should come as no surprise that Palantir Technologies has Sir Mark Allen (the ex-MI6 officer who is a suspect in rendition cases) as 'a senior adviser'.³⁴ Sir Mark is an honorary fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford, specialising in Arabic calligraphy, and his connection to Palantir is mentioned in the College's sanitised biography of him available online.³⁵ It should also be noted that Palantir's founder, Mr Thiel, is on the 'Steering Committee' of the Bilderberg Group – along with ex-MI6 chief Sir John Sawers.³⁶

Matthew Collins and the National Action trial

At the trial (ongoing at time of writing) of six men accused of being members of the banned group National Action, two staff of 'anti-racism charity Hope not Hate' were called to testify. One of these two witnesses, Robbie Mullen, had previously been a member of National Action himself. He had, however, recanted his beliefs and became an inside informer on the far-right organisation. The main person at Hope not Hate to whom Mr Mullen reported

³² A couple of early articles on the Echelon keywords come from *Wired* in 1999 at <<https://www.wired.com/1999/10/monitor-this-echelon/>> and *The Register* in 2001 <https://www.theregister.co.uk/2001/05/31/what_are_those_words/>.

³³ See 'Palantir knows everything about you' by Peter Waldman, Lizette Chapman, and Jordan Robertson for Bloomberg at <<https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2018-palantir-peter-thiel/>>.

³⁴ See 'Libya rendition case against ex-MI6 officer may be held partly in secret' in *The Guardian* 4 May 2017 <<https://tinyurl.com/ktml6n6>> or <<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2017/may/04/libya-rendition-torture-case-sir-mark-allen-abdel-hakim-belhaj>>.

³⁵ At <<https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/people/mark-allen>>. His Oxford University email address is <mark.allen@sant.ox.ac.uk>.

³⁶ See the Bilderberg openly published list of the Steering Committee at <<http://www.bilderbergmeetings.org/steering-committee.html>>.

was Matthew Collins – and he was the second witness at the trial.³⁷

Matthew Collins should be familiar to *Lobster* readers. He was previously a member of the 'fascist bootboy' Combat 18 during the late 1980s and early 1990s, becoming an inside informer on the violent far-right group for *Searchlight* magazine and Special Branch.³⁸ A case of the burned spy becoming a handler.

The Mormon Church and U.S. Intelligence agencies.

The current American government has made much of their successes in obtaining the release of U.S. prisoners being held abroad. One such event was that of Otto Warmbier, who had been held in North Korea. In a previous *Lobster* article I detailed the British connection to that young man's fate.³⁹ In late May of this year Joshua Anthony Holt, a 26 year-old American citizen from Salt Lake City in Utah was released from custody having been held in Venezuela for two years. According to the *Miami Herald*, 'Holt [was] the 12th U.S. citizen known to be in Venezuelan custody' ⁴⁰ and the circumstances of his arrest are intriguing.

Previous to travelling to South America Holt had been, according to *the Miami Herald*, 'a Mormon missionary in Washington State where he had learned Spanish'. He had, apparently, met Thamara Belen Caleño Candelo⁴¹ online and he had travelled to South America to continue his work as a missionary. They had married in the luxury coastal resort of Miranda state but the ceremony was 'described as "irregular" [by officials] – presumably because Holt was not in possession of a visa that made him eligible to wed in Venezuela'.⁴² Following their honeymoon, the couple settled in her apartment in the subsidized housing complex of Ciudad Caribia, which is 30 minutes drive north west of Caracas.

Early in the morning on Thursday, 30 June 2016, the area where they lived was subject to a search by Venezuelan security forces. Unrest in the country had been blamed on a paramilitary group that was believed to be based in the building where Holt and Caleño lived. The Venezuelan Minister for Homeland Affairs, Gustavo González López, said:

'The foreign couple were lodging in this residential complex, in a building

³⁷ See <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-44539518>>.

³⁸ See <<https://tinyurl.com/yc25cwe6>> or <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/i-was-a-fascist-boot-boy-63582.html>>.

³⁹ See <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster74/lob74-accidental-tourist.pdf>>.

⁴⁰ See <<https://tinyurl.com/ycketx8w>> or <<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/venezuela/article88243602.html>>.

⁴¹ She is a naturalised Venezuelan citizen who had been born in Ecuador.

⁴² See <<https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/12095>>.

which, according to information from intelligence tip-offs, was the headquarters of the criminal paramilitary gang, and was used as a holding centre for weapons of war and explosives.’

Señor López further claimed that, ‘Local residents had previously informed police that the couple were keeping high calibre weapons in their house’ and the search of the Holt residence produced ‘an assault rifle AK-47, an American assault rifle replica M4, ammunitions and a grenade’.

The previously referenced *Miami Herald* article quotes an anonymous female as saying that the weapons had been planted.

‘The woman said it was inconceivable that Holt, or anyone in the house, could have purchased the weapons. Caleño’s relatives hadn’t let the man out of their sights since he arrived in Venezuela, she said, fearing that his poor Spanish might get him into trouble.’

But, of course, the weapons might not have been purchased in country; they may have been stolen or brought in from an outside nation. The inference that Holt spoke poor Spanish is, also, a purely subjective one. The Mormon church could only be expected to send a missionary abroad once their language skills were established enough, and they were able to competently communicate unaided. The government minister, Señor López, further claimed that Holt seemed particularly suspicious because he was a ‘trained gunman’ and a ‘certified pilot’. The first accusation is hard to assess but it is true that the very same Joshua Holt qualified as a pilot at the age of 21 and was included on ‘the prestigious FAA Airmen Certification Database’.⁴³ Naturally, Holt and his wife have consistently denied they were involved in any espionage activities.

Writing in 2015 about ‘Why Mormons Make Great FBI Recruits’,⁴⁴ Sarah Laskow commented:

‘. . . there’s at least one place in American society where Mormons have found an unusual degree of acceptance – in agencies like the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI and the CIA, which see Mormons as particularly desirable recruits and have a reputation for hiring a disproportionate number of people who belong to the church.

While this comes as a surprise to most people, in Washington and particularly among people who work with or report on intelligence and law enforcement, it’s common knowledge.’

She continued:

‘. . . Mormons end up in these agencies for perfectly logical reasons. The disproportionate number of Mormons is usually chalked up to three factors: Mormon people often have strong foreign language skills, from missions overseas; a relatively easy time getting security clearances,

⁴³ See <<https://tinyurl.com/yak8cmjo>> or <<http://aviation-business-gazette.com.s3-website-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/A58/B14/Pilot-Joshua-Anthony-Holt-Riverton-UT.html>>

⁴⁴ See <<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/why-mormons-make-great-fbi-recruits>>.

given their abstention from drugs and alcohol; and a willingness to serve.’

This latter sentiment was predated by an Associated Press wire story that was included in multiple local newspapers across the U.S. in the autumn of 1981.⁴⁵ As well as detailing those same skill-sets that appeal to intelligence agencies, it was stated that the CIA had sent one of their recruitment staff to the city of Provo in Utah. Their specific task was to recruit from the Brigham Young University, which is wholly owned by the Mormon church. Even today, the Kennedy Center at Brigham Young has a CIA recruitment page on its website.⁴⁶ In the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, one of the ‘wild card independent candidates was Evan McMullin, an ex-CIA operative who was recruited while still a student at Brigham Young.⁴⁷

There is even a Mormon connection to the seven people indicted by the Grand Jury for the Watergate burglary (five of whom had been involved in some way with the CIA). This was the public relations firm (and CIA front) Robert R. Mullen and Company that worked for the Mormon church and who,

‘. . . employed ex-CIA Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt at the time of the notorious Watergate Hotel break-in. [. . .] In fact, Hunt and the others discussed their plans for the break-in in meetings at the Mullen company offices.’⁴⁸

President Trump is intelligent, but can’t understand complex issues?

A *New York Post* article in June claimed that ‘At least half of Americans believe President Trump is intelligent,⁴⁹ citing a Gallup opinion poll. Looking at the data sets from the poll some predictable facts emerge. On the issue of whether Trump is ‘intelligent’, the split according to political allegiance was Republicans 90%, Democrats 30%.

Digging even deeper one actually finds a striking contradiction. Asked if they believed he ‘understands complex issues’ 77% of Republicans agreed,

⁴⁵ See, for example, *Fort Walton Beach Playground Daily News* of Thursday, 1 October 1981.

⁴⁶ See <<http://kennedy.byu.edu/events/cia-careers/>>.

⁴⁷ See ‘Here’s what Evan McMullin did as an undercover CIA agent’ by Herb Scribner for *The Deseret News* at <<https://tinyurl.com/y8vkr6bc>> or <<https://www.deseretnews.com/article/865666068/Heres-what-Evan-McMullin-did-as-an-undercover-CIA-agent.html>> and ‘Inside Evan McMullin’s 10 years undercover in the CIA’ by Josh Rogin for *The Washington Post* at <<https://tinyurl.com/y79eo37j>> or <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/inside-evan-mcmullins-10-years-undercover-in-the-cia/2016/10/30/10347aa6-9d42-11e6-9980-50913d68eacb_story.html>.

⁴⁸ See p. 162 of John Heinerman and Anson D. Shupe, *The Mormon Corporate Empire: The Eye-Opening Report on the Church and Its Political and Financial Agenda* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

⁴⁹ See <<https://nypost.com/2018/06/25/at-least-half-of-americans-think-trump-is-smart-poll/>>.

whereas only 18% of Democrats did.⁵⁰ I may not be a qualified statistician but I can see the anomaly of 90% of Republicans saying he's intelligent but only 77% thinking he understands complex issues.

⁵⁰ See <<https://tinyurl.com/y7qz3eql>> or <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/235907/americans-evaluate-trump-character-across-dimensions.aspx>>