

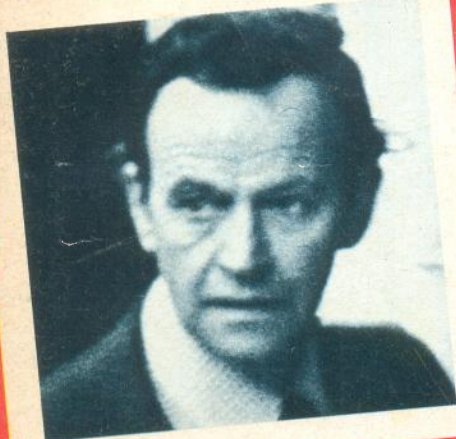
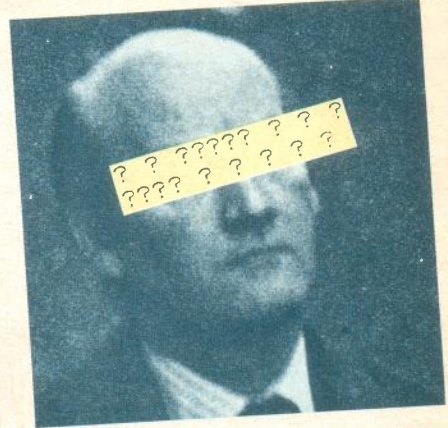
Time Out

EXCLUSIVE!

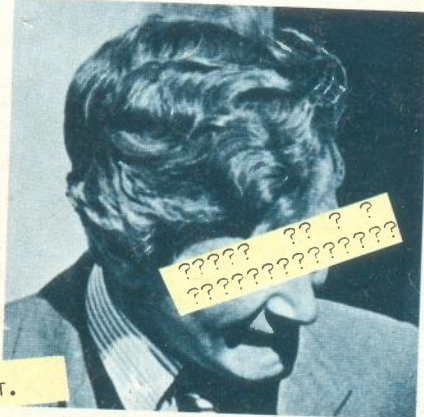
BRIGADIER MICHAEL WINGATE GRAY, OBE, MC
FORMER COMMANDING OFFICER, 22ND SAS REGT.



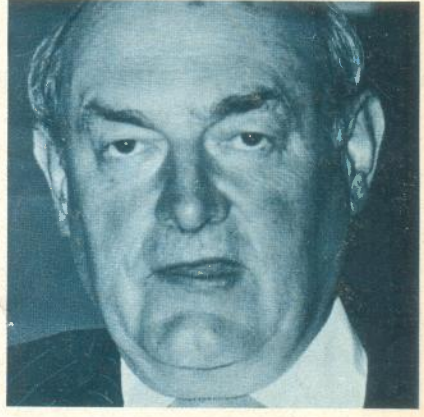
COLONEL JAMES JOHNSTON OBE, TD.
FORMER COMMANDING OFFICER, 21ST SAS REGT.



MAJOR RUSSELL WEST,
FORMER OFFICER, SAS AND ROYAL BRUNEI MALAY REGT.



??????????????????



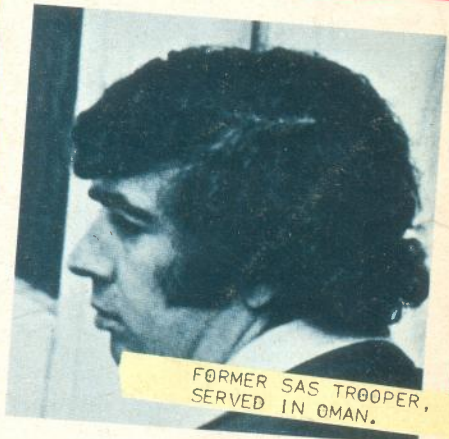
COLONEL DAVID STIRLING, DSO, OBE.
FORMER COMMANDING, SAS REGT.



HON. FIONA FRASER,
DAUGHTER OF 17TH BARON LOVAT.



FORMER SAS TROOPER,
SERVED IN OMAN,



FORMER SAS TROOPER,
SERVED IN OMAN.

Soldiers of fortune S.W.5.

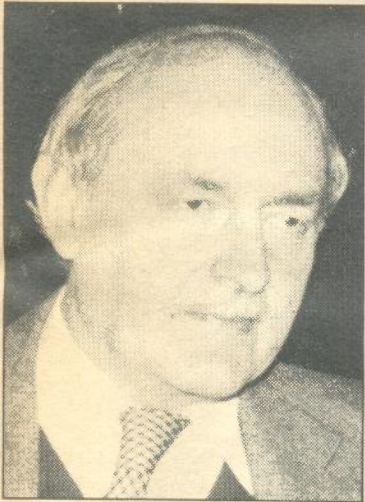
Inside, we name the mercenaries in old school ties.

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The Pedigree Dogs Of War

Not far from Gloucester Road tube station, at number 11 Courtfield Mews, SW5, is the organising office of an undercover mercenary recruiting organisation called KMS. To its doors have come all but one of the people pictured on our cover—most of them past or present associates of the British Army's elite Special Air Service. For more than

a decade, these and similar people have been involved in a private army service, supplying bodyguards, troops and invasion parties to despotic rulers and other wealthy interests. Freelance writer Duncan Campbell has documented the operations of the mercenary marketplace which KMS represents—for 15 years, over four continents.



Col David Stirling founded the SAS during World War 2 and continued his practice of setting up private armies for another thirty years. His last venture was GB75, a strike breaking force planned in 1974. After the collapse of GB75, he set up Truemid (Movement for True Industrial Democracy), a direct attempt at political intervention in trades unions.

Few people have heard of KMS Ltd. Fewer still know what the name means. But to soldiers and officers in elite British Army regiments—like the 22nd Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment, based at Hereford—the company and the individuals involved are well known as a recruiting office. To men about to leave the army, or those still in who are enticed to leave by lucrative mercenary 'contracts', KMS is wryly known as '24 SAS'. There are only three official SAS regiments, the 21st and 23rd being volunteer regiments. '24' SAS is the highly organised network for the employment of former SAS members—a network that many in the SAS itself fear is transforming the regiment into a training ground for other people's private armies.

The commanders of 24 SAS—the key

figures in KMS—are themselves former SAS commanding officers, Brigadier W M Wingate Gray and Colonel H J Johnson (no relation to Colonel Hugh A Johnstone, identified as 'Colonel B'). Mike Wingate Gray commanded the official 22nd SAS regiment from 1964 to 1967. Jim Johnson was the commander of the 21st SAS regiment from 1960 to 1962.

KMS stands for Keeni-Meeni Services we have been told. Keeni-Meeni is south Arabian slang, meaning 'under the counter' or suchlike. The phrase has also been used as a codeword for the SAS operations in south Arabia. At SAS HQ in Hereford, they have another name for undercover operations in the desert—'bucket and spade jobs'.

KMS Ltd is registered in Jersey, where taxation is less burdensome, and liberal companies legislation does not require the public disclosure of the names of directors or other company officials. From two independent sources in official organisations closely monitoring the mercenary trade, however, *Time Out* has obtained lists of those who have

been identified as the key figures of KMS. They are:

- Brigadier Mike Wingate Gray,
- Colonel Jim Johnson,
- Major David J Walker,
- Major Andrew M Nightingale.

Major Walker, to whom we spoke last week, denied that he or the other three ex-SAS officers were directors, shareholders, or employees of KMS. But *Time Out* has obtained considerable evidence that all four are intimately connected with KMS.

Time Out has photographed Johnson, Wingate Gray and other identified and as-yet unidentified ex-SAS men visiting the Courtfield Mews office. Johnson, Wingate Gray and Walker are each regular attenders, and park their cars in the mews garage. Courtfield Mews residents have also observed sporadic visits by groups of up to half a dozen young men (such as the two on our cover). These include ex-SAS troopers, and their apparent purpose is briefing or debriefing sessions before or after jobs.

We have also received, delivered anonymously, a bundle of letters



Col Henry James Johnson, OBE, TD, Insurance Broker turned private army organiser.

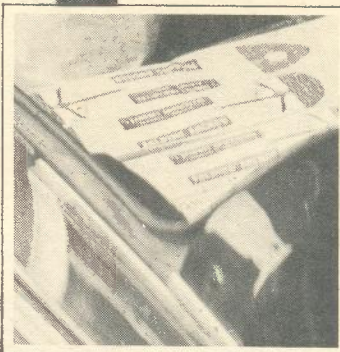
addressed to various individuals in the KMS organisation. These include official letters to Andrew Nightingale concerning his government service, and other letters to Wingate Gray and Johnson at KMS's Courtfield Mews office. The correspondence—which has now been returned to its authors—makes clear the continuing semi-official contacts of the KMS network.

Major Andrew Nightingale originally joined the Intelligence Corps as a subaltern, and was identified last year during an illicit arms deal trial as second in command of the SAS Group Intelligence unit at the Duke of York Barracks, beside Sloane Square. Last week, an associate of Nightingale's at the Duke of York's, Mr Dodkin, confirmed that he had worked there some months before. The Ministry of Defence say that he has left the Army 'in the last three months'. They refuse to specify the exact date.

The apparent involvement of serving and recently serving officers of the SAS and the Special Branch in the mercenary trade is an alarming feature of the evidence gathered during our enquiry. The case of KMS appears to breach the rule that overt public servants should keep at least at arms length from those



Brigadier Mike Wingate Gray, former SAS commander and Paris defence attache, humps life-jackets and sea anchors from his car into KMS' office.



MORNING STAR

they are observing. Here, such arms length official observation has the appearance of a tight embrace. Nightingale, at least, appears to have been in contact with KMS before he officially left the army.

The Insurance Cover

Jim Johnson is an extremely wealthy man—an insurance broker by profession, he is a Lloyd's 'Name'. The Names of Lloyds are a 14,000 strong corps who provide the basic capital to finance the enormous London insurance market. The minimum entry stake to be a Name is now £75,000.

A director of a city insurance firm Thomas Nelson (Insurance) Ltd, Johnson has freely used his company's name to provide 'cover' for the mercenary activities. When he started renting 11 Courtfield Mews in May 1975, he told the owners, Waldron Estates, that he wanted a flat. But he had then, and has now, a permanent home at 13 Sloane Avenue, one minute's walk from the SAS group HQ.

KMS Ltd was originally registered in Jersey as 'Executives International Ltd' during June 1977. Two months later, the name was changed to KMS. The shareholders of KMS are all apparently employed by Morgan Grenfell (Jersey) Ltd, a finance house which also provides KMS's registered office address at 12 Dumaresq Street, St Helier. The use of such nominee shareholders is a standard technique for concealing the identity of a company's true owners.

When Kensington and Chelsea Council and the owners investigated the use of Courtfield Mews, Johnson wrote from the city office of Thomas Nelson (Insurance) Ltd claiming that it was used by the firm. The telephone line at 11 Courtfield Mews—number 370 3942—is also, according to Post Office records, registered in their name. So too are two saloon cars used for KMS operations in London, a 3000 cc silver Ford Granada GL often driven by Johnson, and a 1600 cc blue Ford Capri GL sometimes used by Nightingale. According to the Vehicle Licence centre at Swansea, both these vehicles are registered for 'private' use by Thomas Nelson (Insurance) Ltd, of Mariner House, Pepys Street, EC3.

The Cafe Society Gangsters

For 15 years, Jim Johnson has been at the centre of mercenary recruitment operations. Ironically, but perhaps not untypically, it is doubtful whether he has ever heard a shot fired in anger. He joined the Welsh guards at the very end of the Second World War, in time to be demobbed and join the SAS territorial reserve then being formed. Johnson successfully rose through the territorial ranks to become in 1960, commander of the 21st SAS (volunteers), a reserve regiment based at the Duke of York's barracks.

The Service was itself the wartime brainchild of a Scots laird named David Stirling, who had been asked to leave the Scots Guards before the War. He



Courtfield Mews, SW5, the 1976-1978 operations base of the ex-SAS mercenary network. Where next? Inset: Fiona Fraser (left) and two ex-SAS troopers (right) arrive at No 11 (arrowed).

was accepted back at its start and established the 'Special Air Service' as a freelance raiding force. Its activities, often rash, spectacular, and even heroic, were resented by those in equally dangerous situations in the ordinary front line of battle. Although a number of authors have described the wartime SAS as 'cafe society gangsters' the myth of an elite corps was born. It thrives today as the SAS mystique is extended to the problems of combatting terrorism.

The disturbing successors to these 'heroes' are a group of semi-employed ex-soldiers, vigorously trained in the tradition of the Service to interrogate, sabotage, and silently kill. Such a pool of military talent is fostered and milked by recruiters like Johnson, who are able to offer lucrative pay packets—£300 a week has recently been mentioned as a typical figure for work in Arabia.

The photographs on our cover feature former SAS officers involved with KMS. One is Major Russell West, ex-SAS squadron commander and one time managing director of Thor Security Systems Ltd. Last July, the *Sunday Times* reported that Thor was offering for sale, in confidential brochures sent to overseas clients, secret details of security equipment. 'Most of this information is classified but can be available to Thor Security Systems for suitable government or civilian design contracts,' the firm's brochure stated.

Bodyguards Anonymous

Major David John Walker, an SAS reservist living in Twickenham, left the army in October 1974 to join a new company, Control Risks Ltd. Walker was a director from 1974 to July 1977, when KMS became established.

The activities of Control Risks Ltd were well known to ex-soldiers looking for employment. According to recruiter John Banks, Walker ran an organisation called HRS—'it is semi-official and

is used for body-guard work for people like (Sheikh) Yamani. They have a permanent contract with Argentina. The government pass money to HRS.'

The contract with Sheikh Zaki Yamani—the powerful oil minister of Saudi Arabia—is confirmed by items of KMS correspondence addressed to His Excellency, and seen by *Time Out*.

The Argentinian 'contract' is one among many contacts with South American governments and businessmen made by Walker. The Foreign Office have confirmed that Major Walker was posted 'on temporary duty' to British embassies in Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Colombia.

Two months ago, an article on the front page of the *Times* announced a new company—Saladin Security Ltd—said to be specialising in 'kidnap and ransom protection. From offices in the familiar territory of Sloane Street, SW1, they will take over the overt bodyguard services provided by KMS to middle Eastern rulers and businessmen. Security industry sources say that Detective Chief Inspector Ray Tucker of the Special Branch is involved with the new Saladin business.

Tucker refused to comment on these and other allegations. 'You don't ask a police officer that sort of question,' he said last week. But it is well known that Tucker is a specialist on Arab affairs within the Special Branch, charged with the onerous task of investigating and monitoring the growing tide of inter-necine Arab violence in London. He would also advise visiting Arabs on security services.

Scotland Yard admitted last week that Tucker was 'aware of' KMS and Saladin Security. But they added that Tucker's 'official duties do not involve him with KMS Ltd or Saladin Security Ltd'.

Secretaries at both companies, however, appeared to be very familiar with Tucker.

Detective Inspector Tucker was described by the Angolan mercenary

recruiter, John Banks, as the 'man you always meet first' in the Special Branch if you are organising mercenary activities. In a sworn statement presented in court last year Banks described how his three year contact with the



John Banks, notorious Angolan mercenary recruiter.

then Detective Inspector Tucker had enabled him to get his Angola-bound mercenaries through Heathrow airport without their passports. This statement was never denied—nor has there been any official investigation into Tucker's alleged role in allowing the mercenaries (many of them wanted in court) to pass unhindered.

The Warlords

The SAS Officer corps contains three main castes of British society: the English aristocracy and its traditional involvement with cavalry and guards regiments; the professional home counties upper middle class, strong in 21st SAS and typified by Jim Johnson; and Scottish lairds like David Stirling, with a strongly rooted tradition of private clan armies.

The latter caste is well represented in KMS. Jim Johnson's principal assistant in KMS, and a daily attender at Courtfield Mews, is the Hon Fiona Fraser, daughter of Lord Lovat. Lovat helped establish the Commandos during the last

war, and his family are strongly connected with the SAS.

The Honourable Fiona has been working with Johnson for 15 years. In 1963, David Stirling recruited Johnson to organise a mercenary force for Yemen. One retired ex-SAS officer recently recalled Johnson and Fraser's absurdly melodramatic method of recruiting: they had parked round the corner from the target officer's house, and then hailed him from their car as they drove slowly beside him as he left. Fiona continued to run the London office of the Yemeni royalists during the war. Fifteen years later, she is still Johnson's right hand person.

Mike Wingate Gray also springs from the Scottish caste. After service in the prestigious Black Watch regiment, he was sent in the early '60s to a Ministry of Defence job concerned with officer's postings. His ambition was to command the Black Watch; but the job was clearly never going to be his. He was posted to the 22nd SAS at Hereford as second-in-command, and commanding officer designate. Officers then with the SAS regard him as something of a usurper who selected the SAS as his second choice since the Black Watch was unavailable.

Wingate Gray is now a director of Solaris Marine Ltd, a Southampton based shipyard largely owned by Lichtenstein nominees.

The Mercenary Succession

Johnson's recruiting for the Yemen war did not escape official attention. One of the officers who left the SAS to fight in Yemen had been his adjutant in the 21st SAS at Chelsea. The next adjutant, Captain Arish Turle, has also now left the Army to work for Control Risks Ltd, with another ex-SAS colleague, Captain Simon Adams-Dale. In July 1967, Captain Richard Pirie—described by SAS colleagues as 'as straight as a die' took over the adjutant's job. Within a few weeks, Pirie hit the headlines in a Sunday newspaper. His office at the Duke of York's barracks was he said 'used as a clearing ground for mercenaries'. He passed 'names and military records to a man at a secret address.' 'The mercenaries usually heard something in a week or two,' he said. 'Most of the recent volunteers have asked to fight for the Royalists in the Yemen.'

The Ministry of Defence denied that the recruitment was official. But the description of a secret organisation recruiting mercenaries for the Yemen as well as 'underdeveloped countries in the Middle East and Africa' closely resembles the now well known mercenary forces which were organised by Jim Johnson and David Stirling.

Pirie was ordered to write a report for his commanding officer, and no more was heard of the affair. In 1973, Pirie was reported killed in a car accident during SAS 'escape and evasion' exercises in France.

As the Yemen war tailed off, David Stirling set up a new organisation which soon became recognised as the most prestigious private military organisation perhaps ever created—Watchguard (International) Ltd. Registered in

Guernsey, the company's Sloane Street offices included an operations centre for Stirling's military exploits. Like KMS, Watchguard's Channel Islands registration concealed the names of its directors. But it closely paralleled a British registered company, Kulinda Security Ltd. The original directors of Kulinda were Colonel John Woodhouse, a former commanding officer of the 22nd SAS, Stirling, and Viscount Lumley (now the Earl of Scarborough).

Woodhouse and Lumley have both left, and the company was dissolved in 1976. Other ex-SAS officers, including Captain Johnny McKay-Lewis and Captain the Lord Beresford joined Stirling as directors during the 1970s.

Watchguard was ostensibly designed to supply private bodyguards to overseas heads of state in Africa and the Middle East. But, as with KMS, this was the 'cover' beneath which was hidden more explicit military operations. Watchguard's brochure offered 'Military

Security and Surveys, Head of State Security, and Special Forces'. The special forces, the brochure claimed, would train others to 'combat insurgency and guerilla warfare'.

Watchguard's cover was effectively blown by the *Sunday Times*, which published in 1970 a proposal from Stirling to King Feisal offering a 'Task Force' to invade the Yemen and undermine its government. The force was offered to carry out 'destruction on a massive scale . . . using relatively sophisticated sabotage techniques' on major Yemeni roads. Stirling boasted that he had 'access to the Special Air Service Regiment of the British Army'.

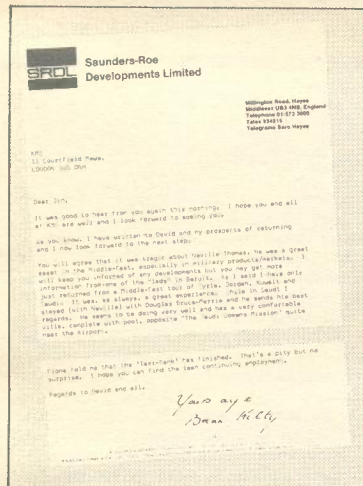
Indeed he did. Stirling's 'Director of Operations', mentioned in the literature, was a former SAS Commanding Officer, Colonel John Woodhouse.

A few months after this expose, however, Stirling was once again organising invasion parties. The target now was the young Colonel Gaddafi, the new ruler of

Libya. Wealthy businessmen exiled by Gaddafi's coup wanted to hire a military force to restore the deposed and somewhat corrupt monarchy. Stirling agreed, and set about planning 'The Hilton Assignment' from a specially rented flat in Montpelier Street, SW7, and another opposite Harrods. An SAS Major, John Brooke-Miller, had left the army to help with the operation, and other ex-SAS officers joined Stirling's group. They planned a sudden raid on the Tripoli prison, freeing 150 of Gaddafi's political prisoners, and sparking off an uprising.

The Hilton Assignment never happened. Stirling and his colleagues were just too much a part of the British establishment for international observers to accept—if anything went wrong—that the operation was genuinely private. For the first time, it seems, the British Secret Service decided that Stirling's military escapades were outliving their usefulness. Under heavy British and

Military Dispatches



Letter from ex-SAS officer Brian Kilty to his former KMS boss Jim Johnson: 'I hope you and all at KMS are well'.

An assortment of letters apparently originally sent to KMS was delivered recently for *Time Out*. They provide an intriguing insight into military wheelings and dealings in Arabia.

The letters include references to shipments of 'two cartons of rifle cleaning parts' to 'Project Services' an agency in Muscat, the capital of the strife-torn state of Oman. The shipping agency, Trandex, confirmed that the freight sent to Oman for KMS was collected from Courtfield Mews. A letter back to 'Dear Fiona' from Willy Wilson of 'Lawrence of Muscat' is written in the style of simple military operations code.

The letter, addressed to Fiona Fraser, says 'Many thanks your letter, also item No 15 by hand of Ben Casey . . . We managed to get Ben Casey plus the radios in with no problems at all, very smooth it was too'. A former senior Army officer to whom we showed the letters said, 'This is not an innocent letter—communicating like this is one of the first things you are taught.' Certainly, Ben Casey is more likely to be a code name than a TV star physician.

The letter continues, referring to 'items four and five', an adds: 'Yes, over the period of three years the 10 sheets each of Coloured Card will most certainly be used, but if the SSF request some urgently I will send some down'. 'Coloured Card' is clearly a code word for military supplies; SSF stands for the Sultan (of Oman)'s Special Forces, one of several groups of ex-SAS officers surrounding the Sultan and catered for by KMS.

A more comprehensive reference to military trading is made in a letter to Jim Johnson from another ex-SAS officer, Brian Kilty. Kilty was recruited by KMS from the SAS about two years ago, and left them to work for military manufacturers Saunders-Rowe early in 1978. His letter refers to an operation called 'Taxi-Rank' in Saudi Arabia. We were unfortunately unable to obtain further details of the mysterious 'Taxi-Rank'.

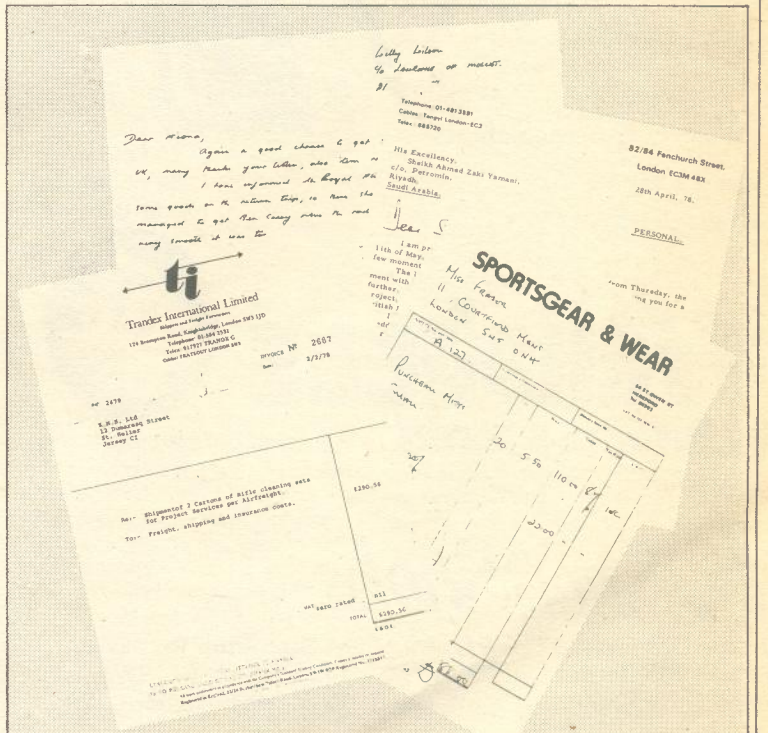
The letter from Brian Kilty mentions others in the wealthy and dangerous military tapestry of the Middle East. Neville Thomas was an arms dealer living in Beirut; on April 4, 1978, according to the Foreign Office, he and his wife were shot dead. Kilty's remark about the 'Lads in Beirut may refer to ex-SAS mercenaries known to be with the Christians in the protracted Lebanese conflict.

Douglas Bruce-Merrie, referred to in Kilty's letter, is a 'local Lt-Col' in the 1976 Army list, and is reportedly posted as an MoD adviser to the Saudi Arabian national guard—evidently a not over-arduous task. Kilty signs his letter 'Yours aye'—a quasi-masonic recognition: sign of the SAS stemming from the

strong contingent of Scottish gentry among its founding fathers.

An invoice from a Hereford sports shop for 20 pairs of 'Punchball Mitts, Small' may be connected with the need to help keep their 'teams' fighting fit. Other papers sent to *Time Out* deal with official payments to Major Andrew Nightingale, and the pension tax returns of other ex-SAS officers.

Another letter delivered to *Time Out* was sent to Wingate Gray by Steve Callan, a sergeant in the SAS' Operations Research Section at their Hereford base. Callan's name featured in the January 1977 honours list when he was awarded the BEM. Callan's letter from a sergeant to a Brigadier and former regiment commander—makes clear that Wingate Grays' '24 SAS' is not an official force. Describing a radio transmitter alarm system being built into a watch by a British company, he writes 'obviously I can only pass on information of a straight commercial nature as our interest in and intended use of this device are of a sensitive nature'. In recommending the device, he adds 'I do not wish to cast doubt on the effectiveness of your teams'.



Supplies for the troops: 'Punchball Mitts, Small', 'Rifle Cleaning Parts'; clandestine letters from Oman—'we will be ready to start on time 29 April'; and to the paymaster, Sheikh Yamani.

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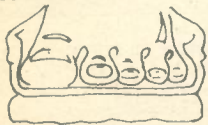
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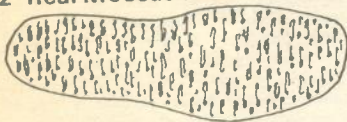
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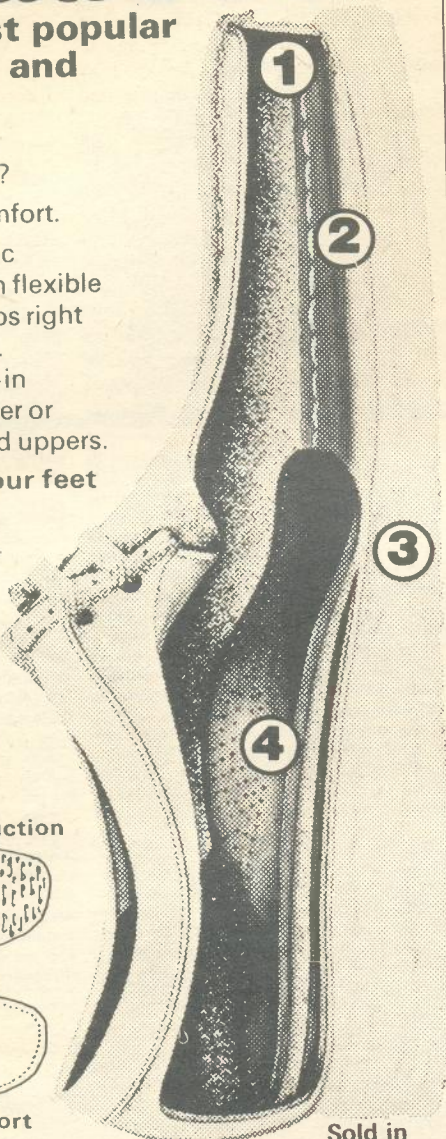
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American diplomatic pressure, the operation was abandoned. An attempt to use French mercenaries instead was successfully headed off.

Last week, David Stirling told us 'I stopped all that sort of stuff five years ago.' There is no reason to disbelieve this remark; indeed it seems that others have taken over his mantle as the grandee of British private soldiery.

There are, for instance, traces of Jim Johnson's continuing involvement in ex-SAS recruitment in the *Regimental Magazine*, *Mars and Minerva*. In the issue of December 1972, a short note listed employment with private companies available to soldiers leaving the SAS. Those desiring a transport job—with 'a gratifying SAS element'—were asked to contact Major Stuart Perry, a director of Jarvale Ltd. Major Perry's then co-directors at Jarvale include Colonel Jim Johnson, and the company shares the same city office suite as his insurance broking firm.

The Jarvale Ltd ad is oddly reminiscent of a similar advertisement placed in the *Regimental Orders* of 21st SAS by ex-trooper Philip Carte, for 'Middle East long distance drivers'. According to the June 1973 edition of *Mars and Minerva*, many who read the order took the ad as an 'intro to clandestine ops

and gun running'.

The Legacy Of Terror

But although Johnson and his colleagues may now have superseded Stirling as the main mercenary entrepreneur, the history of Stirling's Watchguard machine continues to haunt international soldiers of fortune. Like the previous Katanga mercenary 'commandos', the Watchguard operators and their operations were to leave scars on international affairs for at least a decade.

Among Watchguard's employees were, at one time or another, John Banks, Sgt 'Darkie' Davidson, and Chris Dempster. Banks, now notorious as the Angola recruiter, was dishonourably discharged from the Parachute Regiment, and claims to have been hired by Stirling for the 'Hilton Assignment'. 'Darkie' Davidson is a 22nd SAS veteran of Malaya and Oman. Dempster is another ex-SAS trooper, now, according to colleagues a member of its 'R' Squadron. R Squadron is groups of volunteers attached to the regular SAS regiment.

Last November, Davidson was a key figure in organising an assassination attempt against the President of the

Johnson's Secret War

In a series of *Daily Telegraph* articles in February 1970, the Yemen mercenary 'force leader, Colonel James Johnson' described how he had recruited ex-SAS officers to fight against the republican regime in the Yemen. The conservative Islamic regime of the Imam of Yemen had ended suddenly with his death in 1962. Egypt poured in financial and military support to a new republican regime, eventually including tanks and thousands of men.

A Conservative MP with close SAS links, Neil Maclean, made several trips to the Royalist forces which were holding the mountainous regions of Yemen. With the assistance of David Stirling and the 'cover' of his commercial television company, Television International Enterprises Ltd, Johnson and others recruited a force of French and British mercenaries.

Maclean soon visited the Yemen again with Colonel David Smiley, who had been in overall charge of SAS operations in Oman during a guerilla struggle in the late 1950s, which flared up again in 1965. Johnson, who retired from his job as a Lloyd's broker and his command of 21 SAS, ran the London recruiting office, while Smiley eventually became the field commander. A group of six ex-SAS officers, some recruited direct from the serving regiment, flew initially to Yemen via the British base in Aden.

Early in 1964, the *Sunday Times* published documents captured by the Egyptians which revealed the use of Stirling's Sloane Street offices for military organisation—and the involvement of a young RAF officer, Flight Lieutenant Anthony Boyle. Boyle had, it seemed, been seconded for the job by SIS, the secret service. It was entirely unclear whether he was intended to assist or to provide an official eye to monitor Johnson's activities.

Up to 100 British and French mercenaries had been involved in the war. During it Johnson became acquainted with well known French mercenary recruiters, Bob Denard and Roger Falques, both of whom ran separate parts of the Yemen operation. The French mercenaries, whose origins as an international force had been in Katanga and the Congo, were for the most part brutal men, often from the OAS—the right wing French army group which had planned to assassinate De Gaulle.

Falques is reputedly one of the most brutal torturers to serve in the French forces. Denard has recently been involved in several mercenary operations in the Indian Ocean. A few months ago he and 50 men invaded the tiny Comoros Islands, near Madagascar, and installed Denard as temporary 'President'. The Seychelles government fear they may be his next target, and have appealed for international help. Denard and his men also appeared in Biafra, and again in Angola on a lucrative CIA payroll, fighting for the FNLA.

Johnson and Smiley made frequent trips to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia to see the Saudi princes and ministers who were financing the mercenaries. Smiley later described the Yemen war in his book 'Arabian Assignment'. The mercenaries did well financially and were worth their pay, he wrote, 'but one fairly senior officer, in particular, was strictly on the make'. Colonel Johnson never went near the battle area itself. His status with the mercenaries sunk considerably lower after three British and two French men were killed in the closing stages of the campaign in 1967. All were married, with children, and Johnson had to be forced to pay compensation.

But the Yemen war paid off handsomely for Johnson: to the tune of an estimated £250,000. The Saudi defence minister, Prince Sultan had partially financed it by sending gold bullion to Johnson in London. Former colleagues recall absurd moments when the London office became almost penniless, whilst a stock of Saudi gold bullion stood around waiting to be converted.

At one stage, an astonishing secret alliance between Israel and Saudi Arabia was used to solve the perennial problem of parachuting supplies to the entrenched Royalist forces. The supply planes took off from Israel (known by the code name 'Mango') and flew secretly across Saudi Arabia to the Yemen. Johnson, in the *Daily Telegraph's* 'exclusive', was at pains to describe this route as a 'cover' story given to the mercenaries in Yemen.

The secret Yemen war and the Israeli airdrops were, however, frequent topics of discussion amongst ex-SAS officers in London. One group met regularly to discuss SAS policy at Thursday lunches at the Hyde Park Hotel, where former SAS CO Col Brian Franks had a private suite. Members of this group recall Johnson's boasts about the secret Israeli arrangements.

The advantage to Israel was clear. When the Six Day War with Egypt eventually came, many of their troops and tanks were still pinned down in the Yemen.

West African state of Togo. He was observed recruiting several times in the Hereford area. This (ultimately unsuccessful) venture also included an associate of John Banks, David Tompkins, in its organisation. Dempster was among the youthful shambles of a mercenary army that John Banks dispatched to Angola.

When John Banks set up his Security Advisory Services (SAS!) recruiting organisation above a laundrette in Camberley, he issued a brochure which was probably a better description of Watchguard than of his own organisation. In a recently published account of his mercenary career, 'The Wages of War', Banks mentions how he and his colleagues referred to Watchguard as 'Plan-A-War'.

Banks is still in the mercenary business; neighbours in Camberley report a constant stream of 'military types' visiting his flat opposite the Sandhurst Royal Military Academy.

The mercenaries roll up to the world's uglier conflicts like flies to a corpse. They are active now in Zaire and Angola, East Africa, Lebanon, Oman, Rhodesia, Sahara, and a host of other places. Among their number are many 'gentleman adventurers of the John Buchan type, but the rest are generally right wing thugs. The ruthless *machismo* of the mercenary creed does not easily lend itself to ideas of democracy, socialism or racial equality.



KMS have several clandestine radio equipped operations cars, including this 3000 cc silver Ford Granada. The cars are used for such jobs as bodyguarding Sultan Qaboos of Oman, on his recent informal visit to Britain last March.

The KMS operation in Kensington is closely connected with the 'Special Forces' ex-SAS mercenaries who have greatly assisted Sultan Qaboos of Oman in repressing the generally Marxist liberation movement in Oman's southern province of Dhofar. But KMS—as '24 SAS'—are known to handle recruitment for much other work in Kuwait, Bahrein, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and South America states such as Argentina.

The Banks Connection

Banks' shabby disreputability is a far cry from the elegant mercenary organisers in the Kensington Mews. But astonishing evidence of the close links between the ex-SAS corps and the grubbier Banks group is contained in a statement sworn to a London solicitor last year, later presented in an alleged IRA arms procurement trial.



Officials and 'provisionals'; the Duke of York's barracks, near Sloane Square, SW1, is now the home of the official SAS Regimental HQ. Inset: David Stirling's Mayfair offices, one time headquarters of the Watchguard private military organisation. The initials of his address, curiously, abbreviate to '22 SAS'.

In different parts of his lengthy statement, Banks talks about his three year long contact with Ray Tucker of the Special Branch. He refers to his acquaintanceship with David Walker. And he explains how he 'worked in close harmony with Major Andrew Nightingale', of SAS Group Intelligence. SAS Group Intelligence, he claimed, 'employs, controls and runs intelligence gathering and activities in alien paramilitary organisations in the UK. It runs assassination teams, snatch teams, infiltration teams and was run by Dare Newell, retired SAS officer.'

Banks is most likely confusing official SAS activities with those of their paramilitary associates. But he had, according to other sources, correctly identified the SAS Group Intelligence Unit as a lynchpin in the links between the official SAS and paramilitary groups. There is little doubt that the Duke of York's barracks—where retired Major Clarence 'Dare' Newell has notes on every ex-SAS man's army record—must be an Aladdin's cave of useful information for anyone interested in recruiting mercenaries.

Banks is admittedly a self-confessed liar, killer and cheat. But much of his statement is corroborated by other sources—not least the remarkable way that three of five key alleged KMS associates feature prominently in Banks' eight year tale of mercenary work.

The Telegraph Line

The true story of the secret war in Yemen was nearly told by the *Sunday Times* Insight team in 1970. But a determined and unfortunately successful attempt was made to prevent the story appearing. Last week identical tactics were attempted against *Time Out*. This time the manoeuvre has backfired.

A few days before the Yemen story was to be published, David Stirling was asked to reply to allegations that he and associates had organised the Royalist

mercenary force. Stirling did not reply, but managed to delay the article for a week. In the intervening few days, Johnson created his own version for the *Daily Telegraph*, carefully providing a cover story for each of the points in the unprinted article.

A week later, the *Sunday Times*—having lost their scoop and under severe pressure—could not use the story.

Two weeks ago, *Time Out's* final enquiries to various government departments about the activities of KMS inevitably alerted the group to an impending article. Last Tuesday, the *Daily Mail* published a 'Worldwide Exclusive' on 'The Bodyguards'. This piece claimed that ex-SAS 'hired armed bodyguards' from a Jersey based company with a Kensington 'interview centre' were supplied on a secret Foreign Office contract to protect British Ambassadors and other diplomatic staff abroad. Prominent in the article was a somewhat overstated apparent reference to Jim Johnson: 'A Lloyds underwriter—whose distinguished military record enables him to have continuing links with the SAS—(is) playing a leading role in the company.'

The story was dismissed the next day by the Foreign Office as largely untrue. No armed bodyguards are ever hired from private companies to protect Diplomatic Service staff—they are employed directly by either the British or the host governments. There were no such 'secret' contracts, said the FO—only a 'normally budgeted' arrangement for a specialist British company to send visiting teams to a small handful of embassies to train locally based staff in security practices.

The collection of unrelated facts, half truths and untruths in last week's *Daily Mail* article paralleled the articles planted in the *Telegraph* in 1970. But the bottom quickly fell out of the story this time—and the Foreign Office are justifiably annoyed at the deliberate leaking of details of confidential arrangements concerning the security of British staff abroad, in a clumsy attempt

to cover up KMS's other activities.

A reference in the article to a small arms training centre in Jersey used by the company even triggered off a Channel Islands search for the site of the secret shooting range. Such a range would be illegal, according to local authorities.

Last Wednesday, David Walker agreed to see two *Time Out* reporters to talk about military activities and bodyguard work. During a 25-minute statement in which he ignored any questions put to him, he presented a story designed to account for most of the information likely to be known to *Time Out*. He claimed that he, Johnson, Wingate Gray and Nightingale were all 'employed, in different roles' by Thos Nelson (Insurance) Ltd, and that none had any relationship with KMS except to sell it insurance. The Courtfield Mews address had, he said, been intended as a 'pied-a-terre' for west of London directors because it was close to Gloucester Road underground station. But it had become used as an office for the company, and had handled some of the insurance work for KMS.

Unfortunately this cover story directly clashes with the cover story planted in the *Mail*. This identified the Kensington office as the Jersey firm's 'interview centre' and remarked on the Lloyd's underwriter's 'leading role' in the company.

Walker acknowledged that he and the other ex-SAS officers had 'several business interests, separately and jointly', and that Saladin Security was initially set up by them from Courtfield Mews.

He then accused *Time Out* of 'promoting spurious ideologies'. This too is an intriguing echo of their response to *Sunday Times* articles on Yemen, which falsely accused the paper of being the tool of Egyptian intelligence agents.

The Pack Moves On

Within a week of this article's publication, KMS will have left Courtfield Mews for good. Johnson has been served with notice to quit by the owners, because of their improper use of the Mews for the mercenary business. According to David Walker, the staff will move back to Thomas Nelson (Insurance), or to Saladin Security. Their cover may be a little better then, but their work is unlikely to change.

The Special Air Service Regiment has grown enormously in military prestige and reputation over the last 20 years. Now its specialised, commercially valuable and entirely deadly skills are becoming an unsavoury international commodity, a process clearly fostered by a sizeable minority of former senior officers. Not least, they are offering the secrets and skills of the latest British military training to the highest bidder. Many officials view the process with alarm, but it continues to thrive among the nebulous crowd of secret agents, ex-SAS officers, and mercenary thugs who have cropped up in this account.

The SAS have a swashbuckling motto surrounding the winged dagger on their crest: 'Who Dares, Wins'. In Yemen, the mercenaries employed by KMS' Jim Johnson coined an apt replacement: 'Who Pays, Wins'.