

MI6 link to Lockerbie briefings - [Sunday Herald]

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MI6 link to Lockerbie briefings

IT'S a long way from Rothesay Academy to the art deco HQ of MI6 on the banks of the Thames at Vauxhall Cross. But Andrew Fulton did it. In fact, this gentlemanly, erudite son of a Scottish reverend rose so rapidly through the ranks of the Secret Intelligence Service that he became the sixth most powerful spy in the United Kingdom.

Today, Fulton faces losing his job as co-ordinator of Glasgow University's Lockerbie Trial Briefing Unit following investigations into his MI6 career. Revelations that he was one of the most glittering talents in MI6 have destroyed claims by the briefing unit that its self-appointed task of briefing the world's press over Lockerbie was carried out with the highest standards of impartiality and fairness.

Fulton was recruited into '6' while still an undergraduate at Glasgow University by a member of the academic staff. He was posted to Siagon in 1969 where he worked as a junior but operational MI6 officer.

In 1992, he took one of the most senior jobs in the Secret Intelligence Service - the Security Officer responsible for eastern European operations - codenamed SBO/T. He was one of the MI6 chiefs handed the plans to kill Serb president Slobodan Milosevic.

Fulton's last posting, which he held from 1995-99, saw him installed as head of station for MI6 in Washington - codenamed H/WAS. This is the sixth most powerful position within MI6. Only four MI6 directors and the service's chief, Sir David Spedding, were above him. Fulton officially retired from the Foreign Office in 1999.

When questioned by the Sunday Herald, Fulton denied that he had any "substantial" knowledge of Lockerbie prior to joining the university's briefing unit. One MI6 source described this claim as "rubbish", saying: "At one time, Lockerbie would have been right at the top of his agenda. He would have been up to his neck in discussions with the CIA about the bombing, and would have massive inside knowledge about the case.

"MI6 chiefs don't retire. They just step down, but they are in constant contact with their former colleagues, passing them information. MI6 has a vested interest in the outcome of this case. We act for Britain and Britain has taken this prosecution. Everything British intelligence knew about Lockerbie is contained in Fulton's head."

Former colleagues describe Fulton as "charming but ruthless and a devastatingly efficient operator".

Fulton claimed: "Whatever my diplomatic past may be, I am now part of this unit. We talk to the press strictly on legal aspects of the trial. There is no hidden agenda. Lockerbie was never a subject which came up in my diplomatic career. I was never involved with the Middle East. I knew little about it until I came to Glasgow.

"If I did have an intelligence background, it would not be something I could give a straight answer to." Referring to the Official Secrets Act, he said: "There are rules governing what government officials can and can't say. People can draw their own conclusion about my career, if it is being said I was a spy, that is something I can't comment on. I can't comment on intelligence matters."

Fulton said he considered it "naughty" that allegations were being made about his past. When asked if this was because the allegations were false, he replied: "No. It's because they are mischievous and are muddying the waters of a perfectly decent objective and endeavour. The unit is entirely unbiased and unpartisan. In no way are we pro-prosecution. My diplomatic past would have no negative impact on the trial briefings."

Prof John Grant, head of the briefing unit and an international lawyer specialising in the UN and human rights, said: "I knew nothing of Andrew's intelligence background. It's vital the unit is perceived by the press and public as independent and impartial. We're meant to exist to help the press report the trial fairly.

"I value Andrew as a friend and colleague, but if the allegations of his spying career are proved true then I'll have to speak to him about his continued involvement in the unit. I've no suspicion he has prejudiced our work, but perception is everything. This would not be a sacking. I'd just ask him to step down. Andrew is an honourable man and would do what I asked."

Fulton volunteered his services to the unit when he was asked by the university to join as a visiting professor to the School of Law. The work of the unit is funded by the university, although the US Justice Department's Office for the Victims of Crime and the Law Society of Scotland sponsored the production of a trial hand-book co-written by Fulton.

The unit has given hundreds of briefings to journalists and coached a variety of news organisations, including the entire Washington press corps, on aspects of the trial. So far its website has received 1.7 million hits.

Although Grant is to discuss Fulton's future with the briefing unit this week, he has no power to remove him as a visiting professor. That is a matter for the university's management. Last night, a spokesman for the university played down any need for an inquiry into the spying revelations, saying: "Why would there be any need for an investigation? Working for the intelligence services is not illegal."

Fulton, who has never practised law, is not listed as a certified lawyer in Scotland. Already backs are beginning to be turned on Fulton. The Law Society of Scotland said: "We helped sponsor the briefing unit's handbook but apart from that we have no involvement with the Glasgow University team. We don't want to be involved in this."

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