

Spying on Iran

How MI6 infiltrated IAEA

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INVESTIGATION

Leaked confidential files indicate the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was infiltrated by a veteran British spy who has claimed credit for sanctions on Iran. The documents lend weight to the Islamic Republic's accusation that the nuclear watchdog secretly colluded with its enemies. A notorious British MI6 agent infiltrated the International Atomic Energy Agency on London's behalf, according to leaked documents reviewed by The Grayzone. The agent, Nicholas Langman, is a veteran intelligence operative who claims credit for helping engineer the West's economic war on Iran.

Langman's identity first surfaced in journalistic accounts of his role in deflecting accusations that British intelligence played a role in the death of Princess Diana. He was later accused by Greek authorities of overseeing the abduction and torture of Pakistani migrants in Athens. In both cases, UK authorities issued censorship orders forbidding the press from publishing his name. But Greek media, which was under no such obligation, confirmed that Langman was one of the MI6 assets withdrawn from Britain's embassy in Athens. The Grayzone discovered the résumé of the journeyman British operative in a trove of leaked papers detailing the activities of Torchlight, a prolific British intelligence cutout. The bio of the longtime MI6 officer reveals he "led large, inter-agency teams to identify and defeat the spread of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons technology, including by innovative technical means and sanctions."

In particular, the MI6 agent says he "worked to prevent WMD proliferation through... support for the [IAEA] and Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons [OPCW] and through high-level international partnerships".

Langman's CV credits him with playing a major role in organizing the sanctions regime on Iran by "[building] highly effective and mutually supportive relations across government and with senior US, European, Middle and Far Eastern colleagues for strategy" between 2010 and 2012. He boasts in his bio that this achievement "enabled [the] major diplomatic success of [the] Iranian nuclear and sanctions agreement".

The influence Langman claimed to have exerted on the IAEA adds weight to Iranian allegations that the international nuclear regulation body colluded with the West and Israel to undermine its sovereignty. The Iranian government has alleged that the IAEA supplied the identities of its top nuclear scientists to Israeli intelligence, enabling their assassinations, and provided critical intelligence to the US and Israel on the nuclear facilities they bombed during their military assault this June.

On June 12, under the direction of its Secretary General Rafael Grossi, the IAEA issued a clearly politicized report recycling questionable past allegations to accuse Iran of violating the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The next day, Israel



attacked the country, assassinating nine nuclear scientists as well as numerous top military officials and hundreds of civilians.

Iranian former vice president for strategic affairs Javad Zarif has since called for the IAEA's Grossi to be sacked, accusing him of having "abetted the slaughter of innocents in the country". This June 28, the Iranian government broke ties with the IAEA, refusing to allow its inspectors into the country. While Iranian officials may have had no idea about the involvement of a shadowy figure like Langman in IAEA business, it would likely come as little surprise to Tehran that the supposedly multilateral agency had been compromised by a Western intelligence agency.

Under official UK censorship order

In 2016, Langman was named a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George, the same title bestowed on fictional British spy James Bond. By that point, the supposed secret agent held the dubious distinction of being publicly "burned" as an MI6 operative on two separate occasions.

First, in 2001, journalist Stephen Dorril revealed that Langman had arrived in Paris weeks prior to Princess Diana's fatal car crash in the city on August 31, 1997, and was subsequently charged with conducting "information operations" to deflect widespread public speculation that British intelligence was responsible for her death.

Then, in 2005, he was formally accused by Greek authorities of complicity in the abduction and torture of 28 Pakistanis in Athens. The Pakistanis, all migrant workers, were suspected of having had contact with individuals accused of perpetrating the 7/7 bombings in London, July 2005.

Brutally beaten and threatened with guns in their mouths, the victims "were convinced their interrogators were British". When Greek media named Langman as the MI6 operative who oversaw the migrants' torture, British news outlets universally complied with a government D-notice — an official censorship order — and kept his identity under wraps when reporting on the scandal.

London vehemently denied any British involvement in torturing the migrants, with then-foreign secretary Jack Straw dismissing the charge as "utter nonsense". In January 2006, though, London admitted MI6 officers were indeed present during the Pakistanis' torture, although officials insisted the

operatives played no active part in their arrests, questioning, or abuse.

Following his withdrawal from Athens, Langman returned to London to head the UK Foreign Office's Iran Department, a shift which highlights his importance to MI6 and suggests the British government had no qualms about his allegedly brutal evidence-gathering methods.

Britain's Foreign Office collaborates closely with MI6, whose agents use it as cover just as the CIA does with State Department diplomatic postings.

Taking credit for 'maximum pressure' strategy

While leading the Foreign Office's Iran Department from 2006–2008, Langman oversaw a team seeking to "develop understanding" of the Iranian government's "nuclear program".

It's unclear exactly what that "understanding" entailed. But the document makes clear that Langman then "generated confidence" in that assessment among "European, US, and Middle Eastern agencies" in order to "delay programme [sic] and pressurise Iran to negotiate". The reference to "Middle Eastern agencies" strongly implied MI6 cooperation with Israel's Mossad intelligence service.

In April 2006, Tehran announced it had successfully enriched uranium for the first time, although officials denied any intention to do so for military purposes. This development may have triggered Langman's intervention.

The Islamic Republic has rejected any suggestion it harbors ambitions to possess nuclear weapons. Its denials were corroborated by a November 2007 US National Intelligence Estimate expressing "high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted" any and all research into nuclear weapons. This assessment remained unchanged for several years and was reportedly shared by the Mossad, despite Benjamin Netanyahu's constant declarations that Iran was on the brink of developing a nuclear weapon.

Langman's IAEA support work

International governmental attitudes towards Iran changed abruptly between 2010 and '12. During this period, Western states and intergovernmental institutions initiated an array of harshly punitive measures against the country, while Israel ramped up its deadly covert operations against

Iran's nuclear scientists.

This period precisely overlapped with Langman's tenure at the Counter-Proliferation Centre of the UK Foreign Office. His bio implies he used this position to influence the IAEA and other UN-affiliated organizations to foment a campaign of global hostility towards Iran. In June 2010, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1929, which froze the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' assets and banned overseas financial institutions from opening offices in Tehran. A month later, the Obama administration adopted the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act. This set off a global chain of copycat sanctions by Washington's vassals, who often imposed even more stringent measures than those levied by the UN and US.

In March 2012, the EU voted unanimously to cut Iranian banks out of the SWIFT international banking network. That October, the bloc imposed the harshest sanctions to date, restricting trade, financial services, energy, and technology, along with bans on the provision of insurance to Iranian companies by European firms.

BBC reporting on the sanctions acknowledged European officials merely suspected Tehran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons, but lacked concrete proof. And behind the scenes, the MI6 operative Langman was claiming credit for helping legitimize the allegations against Iran.

Nuclear agreement lays foundations for war
Following the Western-led cam-

aign isolation of Iran from 2010–2012, over its purported nuclear weapon program, the Obama administration negotiated a July 2015 agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Under the JCPOA's terms, the Islamic Republic agreed to limit its nuclear research activities in return for sanctions relief. In the years that followed, the IAEA was granted virtually unlimited access to Tehran's nuclear complexes, ostensibly to ensure the facilities were not used to develop nuclear weapons.

Along the way, IAEA inspectors collected vast amounts of information on the sites, including surveillance camera photos, measurement data, and documents. The Iranian government has since accused the Agency of furnishing the top-secret profiles of its nuclear scientists to Israel. These include the godfather of Iran's nuclear program, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who was first publicly named in a menacing 2019 PowerPoint presentation by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The following year, the Mossad assassinated Fakhrizadeh in broad daylight with a remote-controlled machine gun. Internal IAEA documents leaked this June indicated that IAEA Secretary General Rafael Grossi has enjoyed a much closer relationship with Israeli officials than was previously known, and suggested he leveraged his cozy ties with Tel Aviv to secure his current position.

During a June 24 interview with Fox News' war-crazed anchor Martha MacCallum, Grossi did not deny making the inflammatory claim that "900 pounds of potentially enriched uranium was taken to an ancient site near Isfahan." Instead, the IAEA director asserted, "We do not have any information on the whereabouts of this material."

Well before Grossi rose to the top of the IAEA with Western and Israeli backing, the agency appears to have been penetrated by a British intelligence agent who took responsibility in his bio for engineering the West's economic attack on Iran.

The IAEA has not responded to an email from The Grayzone seeking clarification on its relationship with Langman and the MI6.

The article first appeared on The Grayzone.

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A banner in Tehran, Iran, shows pictures of some of the Iranian nuclear scientists (R), top military commanders (C), and children who were killed in Israeli strikes.
● WSJ

