



PRINCESS: Diana was not monitored by MI6, said ex-spymaster

Spy chief: Diana wasn't killed in a 'Bond' operation

By **Richard Palmer**
Royal Correspondent

THE former head of MI6 categorically denied yesterday that the intelligence service assassinated Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed in a James Bond-style operation.

Sir Richard Dearlove, operational director of the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) when Diana and Dodi died in a 1997 Paris car crash, was the first spy chief to appear at an inquest.

He insisted that claims of a criminal conspiracy suggested by Dodi's father Mohamed Al Fayed were absurd and said MI6 had never to his knowledge assassinated anyone in his 38 years of service.

Sir Richard, who was "C," the MI6 chief from 1999 until 2004, was called to the Diana and Dodi inquest in London to address allegations of an Establishment plot involving Prince Philip and MI6.

His appearance marked a rare exception to the rule that the intelligence services never confirm nor deny involvement in operations. He said: "In this instance, in this court, one can understand why an exception is being made."

Sir Richard, 63, said he felt personally hurt by accusations that MI6 murdered Diana and Dodi because the Princess was planning to wed her Muslim lover and have his child.

Asked about an alternative claim that Diana was murdered because she planned to expose British firms profiting from the international trade in landmines, he replied: "I am outraged that it should even be suggested.

"It is just, again... ridiculous, is the only word that I can use. And personal to me and to my senior staff in SIS, you know, really deeply offensive."

He told the inquest that use of lethal force is not ruled out in extraordinary circumstances but assassination was not part of the service's operations.

Ian Burnett QC, for the coroner, asked: "During the whole of your time in SIS, from 1966 to 2004, were you ever aware of the service assassinating anyone?" Sir Richard: "No, I was not."

He said the service didn't seek authorisation to carry out any illegal activities on Diana or Dodi in 1997.

"Frankly we did not take any interest in what she was doing. It's not a national security issue. My job was to con-

Stepping out of the shadows

HIS name could be straight out of a James Bond film – and Sir Richard Dearlove also looked the part as he stepped into the witness box yesterday.

As "C," he presided at the top of Britain's spy network and his public appearance was unprecedented.

The former head of MI6 provided a rare glimpse into what some would describe as the murky world of espionage. That he agreed to step out of the shadows surprised many, not least Mohamed Al Fayed who accuses MI6 – and therefore effectively Sir Richard – of killing Diana and Dodi.

Until now, only one picture has ever been released of the former spymaster.

Although Sir Richard gave evidence at the inquiry into the death of government scientist John Hutton, it was via videolink from MI6 headquarters and he was not seen.

The coroner said yesterday: "I do not think that it has ever previously occurred that a former head of the security services has given evidence in an inquest in this way." It is seen



SPY: Sir Richard yesterday

as a clear sign that MI6 wants to publicly deny the murder allegations.

Clad in a black suit, white shirt and tie, Sir Richard stoically defended the service.

At times his answers came out at barely above a whisper. At others, he gave strong, insistent answers, almost wanting to hammer home his point.

But rarely did the steely resolve, honed over a 38-year career as a spy, waver. Remaining poised and serious, he made only the occasional light-hearted quip.

But at times, what would once have been a ruthless streak glimmered through as he pulled no punches, demanding to know why he was being asked questions he deemed "irrelevant" to the inquest.

Sir Richard was almost certainly "talent spotted" for the service while at Cambridge. He began his MI6 career in 1966 in Nairobi and postings to Prague, Paris, Geneva and Washington followed.

He is married with three grown-up children and is now master of Pembroke College, Cambridge.

tribute to national security," he said. Mr Burnett asked: "Was there any operation of any kind made against or in respect of the Princess of Wales or Dodi Fayed that summer?"

Sir Richard: "Absolutely not."

Mr Burnett: "That includes all such things as eavesdropping, surveillance, bugging – anything that anyone could think?" Sir Richard: "Everything."

Mr Burnett said: "With what degree of confidence are you able to tell the jury of that fact?" Sir Richard replied: "Complete confidence."

In 1997 any plan to break the law would have reached his desk and strict management meant it would have been impossible for rogue agents or freelancers to kill the couple.

He said it was "utterly ridiculous" to claim that Prince Philip and Prince Charles were active members of MI6.

Mr Burnett said: "It is suggested that Prince Philip and the intelligence agencies really run this country and that we

are not a parliamentary democracy." Sir Richard said: "This is such an absurd allegation that it is difficult to deal with. It's completely off the map. I cannot think of any other way of saying it."

He said the idea MI6 could control a conspiracy involving French police, emergency and forensic services was "a mischievous and fanciful allegation."

Prince Philip's only contact with MI6 was during visits to their offices as the Queen's consort, he said.

Sir Richard said MI6 took no interest in the activities of Diana and did not hold a file on Mohamed Al Fayed nor Henri Paul, the acting security manager at the Ritz Hotel who drove the couple to their deaths. However, it emerged yesterday that the security service, MI5, did have a file on the Harrods owner, although the coroner, Lord Justice Scott Baker, said he had inspected it and found it of no relevance to the deaths of Diana and Dodi.

The hearing continues.



HANGED: David Dilling, 19

Suicides are linked, says grieving father

THE father of one of the Bridgend suicide victims yesterday confirmed the first three hangings were linked – and admitted they may have led to more of the 17 tragedies in the area.

Christopher Claypole told how his stepson David Dilling, 19, hanged himself, the second in the series of apparent suicides in the Welsh town.

David died six weeks after his best friend, Dale Crole, 18, was found hanged. A week later another close friend, Thomas Davies, 20, also com-

mitted suicide in the same way. Police deny the cases are linked but Mr Claypole said: "All three knew each other very well.

"I also think many of the others may have known them or each other because it is a small community."

Mr Claypole, 44, added: "I don't believe they arranged it or that it was a copycat thing. But they were all con-

nected because they knew each other." Dale, David and Thomas were the first three in the series of apparent suicides to have hit Bridgend since the start of last year.

Another of the later suicides, Liam Clarke, 20, knew all three boys – and was a close friend of Natasha Randall, 17, who was the first girl victim. Mr Claypole said: "I can't say that all 17

are linked but some of them certainly knew each other very well, it is a close-knit area.

"But I don't believe in a suicide cult or anything weird on the internet. The only people who can know the truth aren't here to tell us.

"I can't explain why they have done it – they can't have realised the grief and pain they have caused. I don't blame Bridgend because it is a good place to live. But more needs to be done to help young people."