



Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on December 19, 2010

Russian Espionage Plot Uncovered in London

Another Russian espionage plot has been uncovered, this time in London, involving controversial British Liberal Democrat MP Michael Hancock and his parliamentary aide, Russian national Katia Zatuliveter, a suspected sleeper agent who is being deported on charges that she is a threat to British national security, according to the MI5 intelligence service.



This latest episode comes in the wake of the [arrest](#) and deportation of 10 Russian sleeper agents in the United States in June 2010, including former British citizen Anna Chapman.

Officials also believe that there may be as many as 35 other Russian spies presently working in Britain on behalf of the SVR (successor to the KGB) under false identities.

Zatuliveter, 25, is currently appealing her arrest and deportation to Russia, on grounds that British authorities cannot prove that her work with Hancock was “not conducive to national security,” according to her attorney Tessa Gregory, a former English teacher in Havana, Cuba, and UN Human Rights Committee advocate in Nepal.

Zatuliveter’s detention and deportation have the full support of Theresa May, Britain’s Home Secretary, as well as Yvette Cooper, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, who believes that this incident necessitates strengthened security checks on incoming parliamentary employees.

The aide was questioned on August 8, 2010 by British security officials, along with a friend at Gatwick Airport, upon returning from her birthday celebration in Croatia. She was allegedly interrogated about her activities in Britain and Russia, as well as a sexual rendezvous with an unnamed NATO official. This relationship between Zatuliveter and a NATO official carries special significance owing to her role in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War.

She was previously a researcher at the [UK Defense Forum](#), a non-partisan advisory think-tank, where she published several papers on security in the Caucasus region, before and during the conflict. Among these is one critical of what she perceived as the “misguided US role in the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia,” which expressed her view that NATO and the United States had “provoked” Russia to the point of having to “intervene in her neighbor’s affairs.”

In the paper, she condemns Georgia, NATO, and the United States, and believes that the immediate cause of the conflict was NATO’s invitation of Georgia to attend the military alliance’s Bucharest Summit in February 2008. Zatuliveter believes that the conference’s tacit goal of Georgian membership in the organization constituted an “inexcusable” act of hostility against Russia.

The then-researcher also accused the U.S. State Department of embarrassing and provoking Russia, and stated that placing U.S. Missile Defense facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic were part of a grand State Department’s conspiracy to provoke Russia into war with Georgia. □Zatuliveter states that



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these facilities constitute an antagonistic presence that will bring about “another deadlock in the east-west relations,” as the United States, through NATO, schemed to “build a ring around Russia.”

British MP Michael Hancock had met Zatuliveter in Russia, on one of his numerous Russian diplomatic missions. Ironically, the rabidly anti-NATO Zatuliveter was employed by the former chair of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Later, in 2008, Hancock and Zatuliveter reunited at a Council of Europe meeting in Strasbourg, France — where Zatuliveter was an intern and Hancock continues to serve as a member of the influential [Monitoring Committee](#), and also where the Russophile MP has oversight over the “honoring of obligations and commitments by member states.”

Zatuliveter has been in the UK since 2005, when she enrolled at Bradford University, and was described as an ambitious employee, with broader aspirations, and a deep interest in British naval policy. She had previously studied at St. Petersburg State University, the same institution where Russian Prime Minister Putin and President Medvedev studied. St. Petersburg State University is regarded as a prime recruiting ground for Russian security officials, and is known for being a bastion of the Russian security elite.

She likely became Hancock’s aide because he was a pro-Russia MP with access to critical defense-related information and resources. Hancock’s district includes a Royal Navy base in Portsmouth, which constitutes a great source of his office’s legislative focus. In addition, Hancock’s position on the Commons Defense Committee allowed Zatuliveter unrestricted access to privileged information.

And so did his former leadership of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Russia, through which Hancock effectively controlled all regular contact between Parliament and the Russian Duma, and led the facilitation of political exchanges between the two countries. Hancock was removed from that position by Labour’s Europe Minister Chris Bryant, who believed that Hancock was a dangerous element who had to be removed due to his “pro-Putin and pro-Medvedev position.” According to [Bryant](#), Hancock had always been “too soft on Russia for my liking,” and is ostensibly “pro-regime.”

“I couldn’t understand why an MP from somewhere in the southwest (of England) had a Russian researcher,” Bryant said of Zatuliveter. “She was only really interested in doing Russia stuff. She seemed slightly odd.”

A foreign national serving as a parliamentary aide on a national security committee, Zatuliveter had access to at least three years of classified documents on British defense policy.

According to [John Cole](#), a visitor to Parliament who was given a tour by Zatuliveter, the aide laughed when asked if a British national would have such intimate access to Russian politicians.

Hancock’s office had requested so much information on nuclear weapons and sensitive defense topics during Zatuliveter’s appointment that answers to his questions had to be vetted by MI5 agents. Among these requests for information were the locations of submarine berths, permission to publish an inventory of Britain’s nuclear arsenal, and the the locations of strategically placed British nuclear missiles. Since 1984, Hancock has asked over 227 questions on classified nuclear information.

It was also revealed that Zatuliveter’s father, Andrei, has a stake in the plot. The entrepreneur served in the Soviet Red Army and was a KGB operative, and has access to the highest elements of Russian society as the owner of a gas-trading company in Dagestan.

Katia Zatuliveter’s brother-in-law, 43 year old Andrew Cowburn, a British native, directs the Choices Company, an agency that recruits wealthy international students to come study at British universities.



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Her father is listed as the company's Russian representative, and Katia's elder sister, Polina Cowburn, worked as the director of Bradford University's international office while Katia studied there. Cowburn is now the senior international admissions officer at the [University of Central Lancashire](#), home to an increasing number of Russian students, where she has a direct hand in admitting Russian nationals and bringing to fruition her father's goals of filling British universities with the sons and daughters of Russian oligarchs.

The elder Zatuliveter, regarded as a shining example of Russia's "post-communist elite," used his wealth, influence, and lofty social ties to recruit a steady stream of Soviet intelligentsia for study in Britain. And his daughter Katia, a child of intelligentsia, was intimately connected with a British parliamentarian widely known for his unconditionally pro-Russia positions.

[According to Hungarian parliamentarian and Council of Europe member Matyas Eorsi](#), a former colleague of Hancock, the British MP is undoubtedly "the most pro-Russian MP from among all of the countries of Western Europe." Eorsi continued:

When it came to debates on Putin, freedom of the media, or the war with Georgia, Michael always defended Russia.

Among the Liberal bloc in Strasbourg we were all stunned by his position. According to him, Russia really is a fully-fledged democracy.

Eorsi also recounts that Hancock, a widely known womanizer, would only hire Russian or Ukrainian "long-legged, good-looking blondes, never older than 25" aides in his Council office, and that he breached the security of the Council's computer system by granting unlimited password access to his Soviet aides.

Hancock, a denier of the Armenian Genocide, of course, denied responsibility for this, and also [refused](#) to disclose how many trips he had taken to Russia, claiming that his passport had fallen into the sea.

He also declares that his former aide is innocent, despite public protests from MI5 Chief Jonathan Evans regarding the imminent threat of Russian subversives infiltrating Parliament, claiming, "There were no dodgy deals, no favors and no shortcuts. I'm not naive."

Hancock's response to the arrest mirrors that of Russia's response to this arrest, as well as the arrests of the 10 Russian sleeper agents in June. Russian Charges d' Affaires Alexander Sternik claims that the arrest is a British public relations stunt intended to deflect attention away from WikiLeaks revelations about Britain's failed bid to host the 2018 World Cup. Sternik also threatened retaliatory expulsions of British officials, "if deemed necessary."

Sternik also claims that Hancock is the subject of political persecution, because he "showed sympathy and understanding for the modern Russian state." [He hails Hancock](#) as one who is "known to have a balanced objective and sympathetic approach towards the modern Russia and its foreign policy."

The Russian Foreign Ministry referred to the arrest of Zatuliveter as "vaudeville of the worn-out spy plot," ignoring its severity, while Oleg Gordievsky, former KGB London Chief (now defected), believes that Zatuliveter "asked important military questions, and passed them to the MP, who then pushed them up the chain."

"Once answers arrived, she read them, re-wrote them, copied, and passed the copies to KGB agents," a most [egregious example of subversion from within](#).

It is unknown why Hancock was able to carry out his subversive activities unfettered for so many



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decades.

Photo: Mike Hancock



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