

ESPIONAGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

As long as there are secrets to keep, there will be spies wanting to know them. In the information age, knowledge is power. It's also a commodity, and like any precious commodity, it has its traders, its entrepreneurs, and of course, its eager clients.

But just how real is the threat from espionage today? What fears does it evoke? Who, and what, are today's spies interested in? Who do they work for? Most importantly, could you be a target for a hostile foreign intelligence agency?



The United Kingdom has always been a prime target for foreign intelligence services. Many things make the United Kingdom, and its citizens, attractive to those eager to get their hands on sensitive information.

- The UK has always been at the forefront of scientific and technological research, both in the military and civilian sectors.
- The UK is seen as America's closest ally in Europe, and that relationship makes us particularly attractive to hostile foreign intelligence agencies.
- London's Square Mile is a world city in its own right.
- The UK's tradition of individual liberty and freedom of information provides an opportunity for intelligence officers.

The Cold War may be over but there are still countries that see us as a threat and spy against UK interests. The main espionage threat continues to come from Russia and China.

So, what is sensitive? What exactly do foreign intelligence services want? How do they operate today?



HOW DO FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES ACQUIRE INTELLIGENCE?

In our information age, much useful intelligence can be gained simply by accumulating, sifting and collating open source information. The intelligence officer whose remit it is to go further will probably employ traditional espionage techniques, such as developing human and technical sources in order to acquire the intelligence they want. They will cultivate confidential contacts and sources in order to obtain the information they need.

Both the Russian and Chinese intelligence services are well served in the most well established techniques of technical attack, wiretapping, interception of telecommunications and, increasingly, the various forms of electronic attack on computers via the internet.

When you are abroad, or in transit or pleasure, the local intelligence service in certain countries can afford to use more aggressive espionage techniques on their own home ground.

- Luggage and hotel rooms may be covertly searched and/or covertly bugged devices installed.
- Hotel personnel, barmaids and IT helpdesk staff may be coaxed into copying.
- Hotel and mobile phones, plus your hotel, may be wiretapped.
- Taxi drivers and hotel staff may be reporting back on your movements and contacts.
- Pubs, restaurants and bars patronised by foreigners are likely to be covered by wiretapping devices.
- Less sophisticated services may attempt blackmail. This can follow a familiar route: blackmail, abduction, being placed in a compromising situation or by allegations of criminal behaviour.

WHAT DO INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS WANT?

Espionage is the world's second oldest profession and many countries around the world will do it to fulfil their intelligence requirements. These requirements usually fall into one of the following categories:

- Political information
- Military activities and technology
- Economic and financial policies
- Cutting edge technologies and associated research and development.



Some countries will also use espionage to obtain information on their own domestic residents who have taken refuge in the UK. Sometimes their aim is simply to locate them if they then decide to return to their home country, but on occasion such intelligence gathering can have a more sinister objective.

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COULD YOU BE A TARGET?

Anyone with access to information which might help fulfil an intelligence officer's requirement can be an attractive target for cultivation.

Perhaps at the moment you only have the potential to acquire useful access - but you might still pose an enticing prospect to the determined intelligence officer. Intelligence services think long term. They're happy to let their cultivations develop, sometimes for many years. Who knows where you might be in five years' time?



Communication - Confidential Agent

Perhaps you have just retired from a job where you were handling high level or sensitive information. An enterprising intelligence officer might seek to capitalise on your knowledge while it's still fresh and current. He or she might take advantage of your appreciation of the sudden drop in your disposable income to get you on side.

Intelligence officers can be masters in the arts of flattery, persuasion and subtle coercion. They will seek vulnerability and exploit them for their own ends.

As the stakes of Post-Soviet Russian sovereignty, what starts off as a seemingly innocent friendship can so easily escalate into entrapment or an agent relationship.

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SECRETS AND SPIES THE KEY MESSAGES



- Be alert - espionage is still with us, and can be dangerous.
- Report any suspicious contacts or incidents to your Departmental Security Officer or Line Manager straight away. Don't wait until it's too late.
- Follow best practice in:
 - Personal security
 - Physical security
 - Document security
 - IT security



Napoleon believed that one spy in place is worth twenty thousand troops on the battlefield.

Watch out for that one spy.

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