

# The origin of the mi5 and mi6 history essay



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We have chosen this subject because we were both interested in espionage. We've often watched interesting programmes about secret intelligence services. For example the MI6, MI5 and the American secret services. Also we have both read the following books: Secret wars written by Gordon Thomas. This book is all about the English secret services. So this is the main reason to choose this certain subject for the practical assignment. We want to outline different aspects of the English secret intelligence services. We first want to start with the origin of the secret service and what it represents today in England. MI6 is in fact the protector of the English civilisation. Everyone knows the MI6 because of the famous James Bond's movies. But intelligence aren't always dealing with gadgets and easy outcomes and a lot less action. It's all about countless hours of observation. We hope we can inform you a bit more and less Hollywood about the English secret services.

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## **The origin of the MI5 and MI6**

MI6 or Military Intelligence section 6 found its origin in 1909. Officially known as the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), MI6 is the chief British foreign intelligence organization, similar to the United States Central Intelligence Agency. The organization is even more secretive than either its American counterpart, or another well-known member of the British intelligence community, the Security Service, or MI5. Although their functions are quite separate, the MI6 and MI5 share origins, and much of their history in the world wars and Cold War. Yet, whereas MI5 has established a tone of openness with the British public since the early 1990s, MI6 remains guarded concerning the details of its activities a good example is the Iraq war.

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World War I and the antebellum era. In 1909, a parliamentary study found evidence of widespread German infiltration, and noted that there was “ no organization...for accurately identifying its extent and objectives.”[1]As a result, the British government established the Secret Service Bureau. The bureau was divided into a Home Section under Captain Mansfield Cumming, and a Foreign Section directed by Captain Vernon Kell. The two came to be known, respectively, as “ C” and “ K.” After World War I broke out, the Foreign Section became MI1(c), and in 1921 the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), or MI6. Directors of SIS have since then been known by the designation “ C” after Cumming, who remained the head of SIS/MI6 until 1923. (The “ K” designation, on the other hand, seems to have ended with Kell, first director-general of MI5.)

During World War I, MI6 conducted intelligence operations involving both Germany and Russia, and its operatives and agents included both the author W. Somerset Maugham and the legendary spy Sidney Reilly[2]. In 1919, MI6 took charge of the Government Code & Cypher School (GC&CS), formed from the remains of the British Admiralty’s Room 40, along with a smaller War Office program. GC&CS soon proved successful at breaking ciphers used by the new Bolshevik government. MI6 efforts against both Russia and Germany in the 1930s uncovered evidence of Nazi-Soviet cooperation in the development of weapons technology, but during this era, MI6 also suffered a number of failures, leaving the British government unprepared for such moves as Hitler’s reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1935.

World War II and the early Cold War. A new era began for MI6 in November 1939 when, just three months after the outbreak of war, Colonel Stewart

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Menzies became the new “ C.” In that same month, MI6 suffered a major setback when the Germans captured two of its officers in Holland, and obtained considerable information from them under interrogation. Yet, MI6 excelled in its cryptanalytic efforts against the Germans through GC&CS, which in 1942 became the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). Operating from Bletchley Park outside London, GCHQ successfully broke German ciphers on the Enigma machine[3]the single greatest cryptanalytic success of the war.

Despite the spirit of wartime cooperation with Josef Stalin’s Russia, Menzies in 1944 wisely established a section devoted to Soviet espionage and subversion. Less felicitous was his choice of a section head, Harold (Kim) Philby. In what proved to be a classic case of the fox guarding the chicken coop, Philby[4]would later be exposed as a Soviet spy, and he was not alone; among the many Soviet moles exposed in the two decades after the war were John Cairncross and Charles H. Ellis, both with MI6. Further misfortunes followed as MI6 attempted unsuccessfully to gain intelligence on a Soviet ship docked at Portsmouth, an effort that cost the life of a former navy diver named Lionel Crabb[5]. Yet, MI6 was not without successes in the immediate postwar years; it cultivated a relationship with Soviet intelligence officer Oleg Penkovsky[6], who would prove a valuable asset to both British and U. S. intelligence.

From the late Cold War to the present. By the 1970s, MI6 had turned its attention toward a number of areas other than the Soviet bloc. These included economic espionage, as well as efforts against terrorist groups in Northern Ireland. In the latter capacity, the agency found itself in a turf war

with MI5, which was already working on the problems in Northern Ireland. MI6 proved an invaluable asset in the conflict, establishing key links with top Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Sinn Fein figures. Unfortunately, MI6 suffered another embarrassment when two brothers claiming to be MI6 operatives conducted a number of bank robberies in Northern Ireland and claimed that they had been directed to assassinate IRA leaders.

During the 1980s and 1990s, MI6 recovered its reputation through successful operations in the Falklands War, Persian Gulf War, and the Balkan wars. It gained new statutory grounding with the 1994 passage of the Intelligence Services Act, which defined its responsibilities and functions, as well as those of its chief. The act also set in place a framework of government oversight for MI6 activities. In 1993, Sir Colin McColl became the first MI6 director to be publicly identified. He was replaced in 1994 by Sir David Spedding, and in 1999, Spedding was replaced by Sir Richard B. Dearlove.

## **Counterterrorism actions**

Before the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, counter-terrorism programs in the United Kingdom focused mainly on the Irish Republican Army (IRA), a militant group committed to ending British control of Northern Ireland. After the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, on its way from London to New York, by Libyan terrorists in December 1988, the British government redoubled its domestic counter-terrorist efforts against a broader range of threats. Parliament also responded to the rise of fundamentalist religious terrorist groups by passing the Anti-Terrorism, Crime, and Security Act in 2001, an action that was criticized by many civil rights groups.

Authorities in Northern Ireland detained suspected terrorists from the late 1950s onward during the IRA's "border campaign" of bombings. With a new wave of bombings under the IRA beginning in the late 1960s, including 153 bombings in 1970 alone, British authorities detained 2,000 suspected IRA members between 1971 and 1975. After bombs exploded in two pubs in Birmingham, England in November 1974, killing 21 and injuring 162 others, Parliament passed the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act of 1974. The act allowed authorities to arrest suspected terrorists without a warrant and detain them for up to a week without filing charges against them. Suspected terrorists could also be deported from England to Northern Ireland.[7]

The policy of internment raised international criticism, as did the practice of "hooding," in which detainees would be isolated and forced to wear hoods over their heads. After an investigation by the European Commission of Human Rights in 1976, the practices of food and sleep deprivation, noise bombardment, forced standing at attention, and hooding were condemned by the body. Despite the commission's decision, the practices continued. Some historians assert that the counter-terrorist policies contributed to an increase of IRA violence in retribution, as 2,161 people died in the 1970s in the conflict between the IRA and British authorities.[8]

Whereas the counter-terrorist campaign against the IRA relied on military force, surveillance, and other covert and overt measures, there was a notable emphasis on technology in the wake of the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing in 1988. Libyan terrorists had successfully hidden plastic explosives on the flight, which sent the aircraft plummeting into the village of Lockerbie, <https://assignbuster.com/the-origin-of-the-mi5-and-mi6-history-essay/>

Scotland, after they detonated. In response, the British Airports Authority (BAA) undertook an extensive enhancement of its security measures. The BAA reforms resulted in a five-stage system to screen all checked baggage at British airports, including x-ray machines and later, three-dimensional scanners and equipment that could detect trace elements of explosive devices. All passengers at BAA airports were also screened through x-ray machines and metal detectors and a predetermined number of passengers were individually hand searched by security officers. All carryon items were also x-rayed and articles that failed to pass inspection were individually inspected. Although the measures were sufficient to prevent terrorists from attacking a BAA facility or the planes that ran through them, a series of robberies in 2002 on BAA runways demonstrated that the system still had flaws.[9]

In December 2001, British Parliament passed the Anti-Terrorism, Crime, and Security Act. The law allowed authorities to detain suspected terrorists for up to six months without filing charges and for additional six-month periods after reviewing the suspect's case. It also retained provisions that made it a crime to fail to report information on terrorist activities. In order to please the fears of civil-rights advocates, a provision was added to limit the powers of police and other security services from looking through confidential records.

## **The difference between MI5 and MI6**

People often confuse the tasks of the two intelligence agencies. The biggest difference between the two is that MI5's main goal is to investigate, to act, to advise and assist[10] on national level to protect citizens of the UK. MI6

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gathers its information mostly outside the UK and its main goal is to protect the UK its government's security, defence, foreign and economic policies.

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### **Conclusion**