

A Dirty Game

A David Hurst Story



David Lowe

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Dedication

To my wife, Kathleen
With heartfelt love and thanks for all your support

List of Acronyms

Abbreviations and UK Police Jargon

ACC Assistant Chief Constable

BKA The Bundeskriminalamt, Germany's national police force that investigate serious federal crime and counter-terrorism

BTP The British Transport Police who police the rail UK's rail network

CIA The Central Investigation Agency, the USA's agency that investigate external threats to the USA

CPS Crown Prosecution Service (equivalent of the USA's District Attorney)

DC Detective Constable

DCC Deputy Chief Constable

DCI Detective Chief Inspector

DI Detective Inspector

Drum Police slang for a house/flat

DS Detective Sergeant

Europol The European Union's policing agency, staffed by police officers on secondment. Main role - intelligence agency and assistance to member states' policing agencies in transnational crime and counter-terrorism

Eta Basque separatist terror group based in Spain and south-west France

FBI The Federal Bureau of Investigation, the USA's federal policing agency that investigates serious federal crime and internal terrorist threats

FSB Russia's security service that investigates threats to Russia, it is the former KGB

GCHQ Government Communications Headquarters - this agency listens to all communications around the world and intercepts those that they think pose a threat to the UK

GMP Greater Manchester Police

IPCC Independent Police Complaints Commission

ISB Integrated Special Branch

ISI Pakistan's national security agency that investigates terrorism

Jack Police slang for a detective

MI5 The UK's security service that investigate internal threats to the UK

MI6 The UK's security service that investigate external threats to the UK

MO Modus Operandi – pattern of behaviour, usually associated with criminal behaviour.

Obs Spot Police slang word for a location used by the police to conduct static surveillance

PIRA The Provisional Irish Republican Army, a faction of the IRA that broke away in the late 1960's from the IRA and was the main group active in acts of terrorism against Britain during the war in the north of Ireland 1969-1998

Reccie Police slang for when the police survey an investigation scene checking out possible observation points, population and any potential danger spots.

S013 Metropolitan Police's counter-terrorism unit, the Met's equivalent of the Special Branch

The Met the Metropolitan Police

Preface

Wednesday 30th August 02.15 hours Georgian/Chechnya Border

Being captured by the FSB or the Russian military was what Leonid feared the most. He knew if they found him, they would kill him.

The relentless rain hammered into his face. Being cold, wet and tired made it harder for him to remain positive. An optimist by nature, his resolve to remain upbeat was being sorely tested. His only possessions were the wet, muddy clothes he was wearing, a flashlight, a handful of roubles, an AK47 assault rifle and the few rounds left in its magazine. The numbness running through his body, brought on by laying still in the cold muddy riverbank intensified his impatience for Al Qaeda to turn up.

On hearing a rustling further down the riverbank, his instinct to survive took over. Leonid grabbed his rifle. Pointing it in the direction of the sound, he placed his finger on the trigger as a bird flew off the riverbank. 'Something or someone disturbed it,' he thought. Straining his eyes, he looked through the dark for any movement that might indicate someone was closing in on him. Not seeing anything, he reflected on how he ended up having to scabble down the side of a riverbank waiting for his rescuers.

'Too ill disciplined and they just don't fucking listen,' he muttered, thinking of the Islamic Ingushetian faction he helped to train over the last six months. After leading an attack on a Russian Army general on the outskirts of Nazran in Ingushetia four days earlier, he was the only Chechen fighter to survive.

Although he and his Chechen comrades killed a general and two senior army officers, it was a botched job. 'Why didn't they turn up at the escape route and provide covering fire like they were told to?' He kept running through the attack, trying to work out why the Ingushetian faction failed to support him and his now dead Chechen comrades.

Because of their incompetence he covered nearly a hundred miles, mostly on foot. It was no ordinary journey to the rendezvous point. Escaping from Nazran, he had to move mainly at night to evade the pursuing Russian military. This slowed his progress. He could not take the gamble and seek shelter as he made his way to the Chechen/Georgian border for fear of being captured. Spending five nights in the open, being permanently wet because of the unseasonal heavy rain and having not eaten for two days was starting to take its toll both physically and mentally.

His negative thoughts were disrupted by the sound of an engine in the distance approaching at speed. 'It doesn't sound like a heavy Russian army personnel carrier,' he thought. Cautiously, he raised his head over the top of the riverbank. As the sound of the engine got closer, Leonid carefully edged his way up and lay on top of the riverbank to have a clearer view.

Leonid took the flashlight out from the inside pocket of his rain sodden coat and switched it on to see what time it was. 'If it's Al Qaeda, they're early,' he thought, but reassured himself that in such a dangerous part of the world it was difficult to keep to a strict timetable. The driving rain was falling even harder causing him to squint as he looked in the direction of the approaching vehicle. Seeing only one pair of headlights coming from the direction of the border with Georgia, his spirits lifted. Al Qaeda had made it. He was finally on his way to England. As the vehicle got closer, the numbness and tiredness receded. Now his thoughts turned to his new venture in the fight for Chechen freedom from Russian rule.

He remembered his Chechen brigade commander telling him how important it was the fight is taken to Russians living in other European states. 'It's time those millionaire bastards that made their money from running their oil pipelines through Chechnya know what it's like to feel Chechen pain,' Leonid thought. Being selected to organize the new front in their war with Russia, Leonid felt proud to be the first to lead these operations. It was to start with an attack at a summit meeting in London in a couple of month's time. 'And with help from Al Qaeda as well,' he thought. The two groups assisting each other was also a first. Both Al Qaeda and the Chechens had been trying to get a foothold in Ingushetia to control the uprising in the Russian province. Key to the Chechens getting Al Qaeda assistance in Western Europe was the reciprocal assistance the Chechens gave Al Qaeda in getting into Ingushetia, the intelligence they exchanged and the realization they had some common ground.

When the approaching vehicle was a few hundred meters away, Leonid stopped thinking about what he would be doing in England. The vehicle, which he recognized as an Isuzu four-by-four, stopped roughly fifty meters away from him. No longer conscious of the cold, driving rain, Leonid's optimism returned. The front passenger and two rear passenger doors opened, illuminating the vehicle's interior. He saw the driver remain in the vehicle as three men got out of the Isuzu. With a flashlight, one of three men gave three short flashes followed by two longer flashes to signal to the waiting Leonid they were Al Qaeda. 'It's them,' he thought. Lying on the top of the riverbank, Leonid picked up his flashlight and returned the recognition signal of one short flash followed by three longer flashes and one final short flash.

Just able to make out their silhouettes, Leonid saw one of the men go over to the one who gave the signal and say something to him. The three men walked slowly in a line towards him.

Leonid rose up to his feet and slung his AK 47 over his shoulder. On seeing Leonid's shadowy figure rise up on the riverbank, the three men stopped. Even though his eyes were accustomed to the dark, it was still difficult to make out exactly what the man in the middle was doing. 'He can't be,' Leonid thought as he saw the man raise his hands. He was pointing a pistol at him. 'He's being cautious. He needs to be certain who I am'. With his flashlight he gave the recognition signal once more.

'He's over here,' Leonid heard the man shout out in Russian to the other two.

Leonid's heart sank. They were not Al Qaeda. They were FSB. Frantically he reached for his rifle from his shoulder. Shots were fired, but not from Leonid's rifle. Three bullets entered his chest throwing his body backwards. Lying motionless on the top of the riverbank, he became aware once more of the heavy rain as it fell on his face. He felt no pain, just a warm feeling running through his body. As the three men stood over him, no matter how hard he tried, he could not move. He looked up at them.

One of the men standing over him heard a rattling sound come from Leonid mouth. Blood hemorrhaging internally from his wounds was seeping out of his mouth. Mixing with the inhaled air in the short breaths Leonid took as struggled to breathe, it made a haunting sound. 'He's still alive,' he said.

The man who shot Leonid pointed his pistol at Leonid's head and pulled the trigger three times. Venomously kicking the lifeless body, his hatred of Chechens came out. He stopped kicking the body and said, 'The Muslim bastard's dead now.'

The driver of the Isuzu walked over to the three men as they stood over Leonid's body. 'Is the job done?' he asked.

Laughing, the man who shot Leonid spat on his body and said, 'The old Leonid Kashinov is dead, long live the new one.'

'Good, I'll get his papers,' the driver said. He knelt by Leonid's body and rifled through his pockets. He took an envelope out

of Leonid's coat pocket and switched on a flashlight to read the papers inside. As he took the papers out of the envelope, a creased photograph fell out on the ground. He picked it up and looked at it. 'It's a picture of his wife and children. That'll help my cover,' he said putting the picture back into the envelope. He read the papers. 'These are from his brigade commander. It's outlined the arrangements how he's to get to England to carry out his operation, but there are no details as to what the operation is. All it says is that once in England, an Al Qaeda operative called Sayfel has to be contacted to get further details.'

'Is there a contact number for this Sayfel?' one of the men asked.

'No, I'm to be taken to an Al Qaeda cell in Turkey where I'll get further details. Let's move the body before they arrive. We can't leave it here or dump in the river. We need the Chechens to believe Kashinov got out of the country as planned.'

The four FSB agents picked up Leonid's body and carried it over to the Isuzu. The FSB agent who was going undercover as Leonid looked at his lifeless face, now distorted with the three bullet holes. Having had to learn everything about Leonid before going undercover, he gained a grudging respect for the experienced Chechen fighter who had evaded them for so long. Unlike many of his colleagues, he did not have a deep rooted hatred for the Chechens. He had never suffered personal tragedy from a Chechen terrorist attack unlike the FSB agent that shot Leonid. 'I don't know how I'd cope if I lost both my parents and my eldest son in a Chechen bomb attack like he did,' he thought as he looked at his colleague who was still sneering at the dead Chechen.

As they got to the Isuzu, one of the agents opened up the boot as the other three dumped Leonid's body into the vehicle. The FSB agent going undercover shook hands with the three men. 'Go to the pre-arranged position and wait for Al Qaeda to turn up. If I think anything's likely to go wrong, I'll give you the

signal. Tell the military to hold off and give them a free passage back to Georgia. Once they've got me across the border to their safe house I'll contact you. With luck, while I'm in Turkey I should find out what the Chechens are planning to do in England. Once I know, I'll pass it onto Moscow.'

Monday, 23rd October

06.50 hours

Integrated Special Branch Office, Manchester

Detective Sergeant David Hurst locked his car in the staff car park outside the modern concrete building with large mirrored glass panels that housed Greater Manchester Police's Integrated Special Branch Office. Walking over to the entrance, he stubbed his cigarette on the floor while looking at the time on his watch. 'Made good time there,' he thought, swiping his warrant card in the security entrance to the department's suite of offices. Signing in, the security guard said, 'I didn't have you down as the early officer for your team this morning David.'

'I'm not. My DI rang me earlier. Apparently we're getting a visit from our new MI5 liaison officer and he wants me in early to meet him,' David said putting his pen back into the inside pocket of his jacket.

'It's not a he, it's a she and she's here already. She arrived ten minutes ago and she's with George now,' the security guard said pointing to her name on the visitors' sheet, 'that's her signature there.'

David looked her name written in block capitals next to her signature, 'Debbie Heron from MI5's regional office in Leeds. What's she like?'

'I'd say she's in her early thirties and very well dressed. Unlike you scruffy lot, she looks very professional. I noticed how immaculate her hair was. She's obviously got long hair but it's tied up and there's not a hair out of place. She was very pleasant, but then they all are when they're new to a post,' the security guard replied adding new 'signing in' sheets to the clipboard on his desk to be ready for the morning shift to sign in. 'She's certainly an improvement on that arrogant bugger we had as liaison officer before her.'

'Cheers Frank, I'd better get moving seeing how she's already in George's office. You know how he hates to be kept waiting.' David walked through the large open plan office to his desk. The atmosphere of the room had that first thing in the morning calmness about it, as the only staff in the office was those officers on the early shift that had to be in by six. Among the handful of officers in the room was Steve Adams, the senior detective constable on Hurst's team. Being his team's early man for that week, he was working on his computer on the desk opposite to Hurst's.

'Morning Davey,' Steve said, 'so you've been called in early as well? George was in before me and he whisked this attractive, very smartly dressed lady into his office about ten minutes ago without saying a word. So something's up.'

'It's good see your detective training's finally starting to pay off!' David said smiling. 'I'm not too sure what's going on, but that woman you saw with George is Debbie Heron. She's our new MI5 Liaison officer. All I know is, it's got something to do with an MI5 target coming onto our patch that's going to be meeting up with the two we're watching in Ashton. I'd better go to his office and see what it's about. I just hope this doesn't mean Five are going to start taking over and pushing their noses into our job. You know what it's like when they do.'

'I've got used to fetching and carrying for you, so it makes no difference to me who's in charge, be it you or some MI5 officer,' Steve said grinning. As Hurst was putting together the paper file

on his desk relating to the two Al Qaeda targets he and his team had been keeping under surveillance, Steve said, 'As your team lost again, I take it your day off yesterday was a bit of a bummer? You should be supporting United by now. You've been living and working in Manchester long enough now that you don't have to support Everton any more.'

'Just like the other glory hunters do? I don't think so. Once a Blue, always a Blue Stevey,' Hurst said picking up the file that now had some semblance of order. As he walked off to the DI's office, he said, 'Do me a favor, while I'm with George get the rest of the morning crew to come in early so we're ready for whatever it is that MI5 want from us.'

Walking up to Detective Inspector George Byrne's office, Hurst was wondering what Debbie Heron was like. During his many years as a counter-terrorist investigator, Hurst's mistrust of MI5 stemmed from working alongside them. Although they willingly passed on ninety-five per cent of their intelligence to the ISB, the five per cent they held back tended to be the most important. Hurst found that not knowing what that five per cent was, had on occasions nearly proved fatal to Branch officers. 'Give her a chance Hursty, she might be alright,' he said to himself as he approached the DI's office door that was slightly ajar. Hurst was about to knock when the voice that woke him up so abruptly at a quarter past six that morning boomed out, 'Come in David, we've been waiting for you.'

As Hurst entered the office, George walked towards him with a mug of steaming hot coffee, 'There we are David, strong and black with three large sugars, just as you like it. That should help wake you up and once again I apologize for disturbing your beauty sleep this morning.' After introducing Hurst to Debbie Heron, he added, 'Apparently your two targets are going to have a visitor that's of great interest to MI5.' Turning to Debbie he said, 'David's team is in Ashton-under-Lyne looking at the two Al Qaeda operatives you think your man is going to join up with.'

His team has been watching them for six weeks now. David, could you take it up from there?’

‘Yes sir,’ Hurst said applying the CID protocol when addressing a senior officer in the presence of people from outside the department where rank is recognized rather than use first names. ‘We’ve been watching two males, a Moosa Khan and an Ibrar Aatcha. Both are Manchester born. Khan’s twenty-seven, and first came to notice when he was at a terrorist training camp in Swat Valley in Pakistan eighteen months ago. Little is known of him before then. However Aatcha’s been known to us for a while. He’s thirty-five and first came to notice when he was in an Al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan nine years ago. He met Khan at the training camp in Swat Valley eighteen months ago. Aatcha’s also been active in France, assisting another Al Qaeda cell based just outside Marseilles last April. Since his arrival in Ashton eight weeks ago, he’s been working in a take-away pizza and kebab shop in Ashton owned by his cousin Mohammed Aatcha.

‘Aatcha and Khan are currently staying in a flat above a local convenience store owned by Aatcha’s uncle. There’s no intelligence to suspect that either Aatcha’s uncle or his cousin is involved with Al Qaeda. To date, we’ve struggled to gain entry into the flat to place any covert recording devices. The best we’ve been able to do is trace their mobile phone calls, tap into their landline and monitor their Internet traffic. Even that’s been difficult to do at times as they’ve been using pay-as-you-go phones and we think they change the SIM cards on a regular basis. We’ve been using a hand held tracer to try and listen in to what they’re saying in the flat, but there’s too much secondary noise to get anything of real value. From the phone calls and emails that we’ve managed to intercept, they’re in constant contact with a male we know only as Sayfel. We’ve worked out that Sayfel’s from an Al Qaeda cell based in London. He seems to be pulling the strings on whatever it is our two are up to.

‘There have been a few callers to the flat. I have the full

file here on whose been visiting it.' David passed the paper file over to Debbie. 'We've managed to identify most of the callers. Although at this stage we believe they're only innocent associates of our two targets. We've kept the information on the innocent callers on our intelligence system just in case they crop up in any other investigation. To date, we don't know exactly what it is Aatcha and Khan are planning, but I can take you through all the intelligence we have in greater detail now if you wish,' he said. Pushing to the back of his mind the thought that the MI5 officer had come to interfere with the investigation, and trying to sound as though he was welcoming her presence, he softened his voice and added, 'We'd welcome another pair of eyes to analyze the intelligence and spot something we may have missed.'

Debbie placed her hand on the file and said, 'Perhaps I could go through the intelligence with you later?' From the first impressions she made of the two officers, Debbie assessed that to get the fullest co-operation with Manchester's ISB, it would be best to directly address the older, grey haired, more portly George rather than the tall, fair haired DS who she noticed had a Liverpool accent, yet was working for the police in Manchester. 'We received intelligence late yesterday from one of our officers currently undercover in a London based Al Qaeda cell that a Chechen male, Leonid Kashinov has entered the country and is heading up from London to stay with your targets in Ashton-under-Lyne. We've been referring to him simply as Leonid. He's a leading member of a Chechen rebel group based in Argun, Chechnya. Of late he's been training and assisting Islamic groups in the neighboring Russian province of Ingushetia. With help from Al Qaeda, he escaped the FSB in Chechnya and stayed with one of their cells in Istanbul for a couple of months. Last Friday, the French Surete passed onto us that he arrived in Marseilles. We believe he's travelling using false documents supplied to him by Al Qaeda. We know he travelled onto Paris and caught the Eurostar train to London yesterday evening, but we've lost track

of him since he's arrived in the UK. Obviously they're reducing our ability to track his movements by avoiding any air travel.

'Last night both MI5 and GCHQ intercepted emails that your man Aatcha received from the same Sayfel you've been monitoring. The ISP was located at an Internet café in Camden Town. We also intercepted a call made by Sayfel from the London area to Aatcha's mobile phone. He gave brief, cryptic instructions for Aatcha to be prepared to meet Leonid today. Sayfel wasn't on the phone long enough for us to get an exact fix. MI5 officers from Thames House, with assistance from SO13, are checking out the location of the call in the Brent area as well as the Internet café in Camden Town.

'It's important we locate Leonid. According to the FSB, he's wanted for a number of bombings in Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well the assassination of a local Russian politician and military personnel in Grozny. Over the past few months he's been in Ingushetia, training local Muslim militants to attack the Russian military, mainly around its capital, Nazran. Intelligence reveals that only a couple of months ago he was involved in an attack on senior Russian Army officers on the outskirts of Nazran. Because he's such a dangerous man, it's important we find out as soon as we can what he's up to in the UK. We don't think he's here to lay low. He could have gone to any number of safer countries to do that. So based on that premise, we can only assume he's planning something to take place in the UK. For him to run such a risk in coming here, it's believed that it's going to be something big.'

For MI5 to take an active interest and share information openly with the Branch so early in his investigation, David realized they must see Leonid's presence as a serious threat to national security. He also adduced that if such a high profile Chechen terrorist was going to be the area, the FSB would also be sniffing around his investigation. He said to Debbie, 'I'm assuming that you won't be the only MI5 officer involved with Leonid. Also, if he's so dangerous, it sounds like the FSB would love to get their

hands on him before we do. Has MI5 been liaising with the FSB over Leonid since he entered the country?’

Debbie paused for a moment, her senior officer’s words ringing in her ears that there were aspects to the intelligence related to Leonid that the ISB did not need to know at this stage. Knowing that she was only to pass on intelligence directly related to Aatcha and Khan, she said, ‘Well I agree there’s a very strong possibility that the FSB could join in the activities, but we’ve no intelligence to confirm this. Naturally, there’ll be a higher profile of MI5 officers in and around your investigation once Kashinov joins your two targets in Ashton. For the moment, the only MI5 officer working on this job with your team is me. Once my colleagues from MI5 join us, I’ll make sure they don’t step on your toes and vice versa.’

‘You still haven’t answered my question,’ Hurst said. ‘I can see the possibility of the FSB also joining in the “activities” as you put it. I want to know if Five have been liaising with the FSB over Leonid. Did your intelligence come from them?’ he asked more forcefully.

Unlike most of the detective sergeants she had met in her short time as MI5’s police liaison officer, she could see that Hurst was more astute. From her psychological profile training, she sensed Hurst’s resentment at her presence. She also got the impression he was incisive and a thinker. Noticing she was in a quandary as how to answer the question, George said, ‘Let’s not embarrass Debbie and push her on this point David. We understand if you’re not in the position to tell us at the moment.’

Debbie said, ‘It’s alright George. Obviously if other agencies are going to be hovering around your investigation, it’s understandable that David would want to know what the bigger picture is. I’d feel the same way if I was in his position. All I can say at the moment, MI6 picked up reports about Leonid after he left Chechnya and was staying with an Al Qaeda cell in Turkey. They monitored his movements while he was there. Once it

looked like he was on his way to this country, they contacted us. I've no idea if MI6 had been liaising with the FSB during that time. Just like you feel about MI5, I feel there are times that MI6 don't fill us in on the whole picture. It was only yesterday evening that we got wind that Leonid was coming up to the Manchester area to meet up with your two targets.'

'That's an intuitive observation Debbie, but I'm only concerned for the safety of my team. The way I read it, my team will have to watch out for FSB and MI5 agents, as well as our two targets.' David said, looking at George as he spoke.

Debbie replied, 'I'm telling you straight. Initially, I will be the only MI5 officer anywhere near the Aatcha and Khan investigation. My role is to make an assessment of the situation once Leonid's arrived in Ashton and report back to my senior intelligence officer. Don't worry. I'll keep you in the loop if I request the assistance of other MI5 officers. Even if we get a whiff of the FSB coming anywhere near Leonid, you'll be the first to know.'

'That seems fair enough,' George said looking at Hurst. 'That leads me onto the fact that for the foreseeable future or certainly while this Leonid character is with Aatcha and Khan, Debbie will be heading the investigation with you David. That means that you will share everything with her. That includes what we have already as well as what we find out in the future. Debbie, all the resources we have at this ISB office are at your disposal.'

'Thanks George. I appreciate that,' Debbie said as she stood up out of her chair. 'I need to download some intelligence so I can update your team at the static obs point in Ashton-under-Lyne. Could I use your PC David?'

'It sounds like I don't have much choice do I?'

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