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A Latter Day Judas? Security, Diplomatic Protection, and the Foreign Office Security Department, 1955–1987

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ABSTRACT

This article looks at the response of the British Foreign Office to security threats to HMG diplomats and diplomatic posts, placing security at the heart of the study of UK diplomacy. It explores the response of the Foreign Office's Security Department to the threat of espionage by hostile states, and the increasingly violent threats posed by terrorist groups and other non-state groups to diplomats and diplomatic premises overseas. It seeks to build on earlier work on the development of the Security Department, suggesting that security within the Foreign Office was taken increasingly seriously as the lives of officials came under threat. It also looks at the broader role that security plays in diplomacy, and the tensions between public diplomacy and the protection of officials serving overseas.

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Introduction

'Nothing could be further from the truth today', former ambassador John Ure wrote, 'than the conventional image of a diplomat as one who leads a pampered and protected life exclusively in the elegant drawing rooms of sophisticated capital cities'.[1] The study of diplomatic security has been limited[2], despite the importance of it being widely recognised.[3] One of the few international studies of the subject notes that coverage has been 'sporadic'.[4] The study of the 1961 Vienna Convention[5], the origins of what G.R. Berridge calls the 'compound system',[6] and the privatisation of Embassy security[7] are all subjects that have been studied to some degree, as has the technical surveillance of overseas missions[8]. Yet wider factors such as personnel or protective security, and the development of internal organisations to oversee this, have often been wholly neglected, especially from a UK perspective.[9]

This article has three aims. It expands the theme of diplomatic security as a subject to be examined itself, building on existing work on the early history of the Foreign Office's Security Department.[10] For the study of UK diplomacy, the work of the Security Department and its successors has not received the attention it deserves, in contrast to studies of US diplomatic security. The history of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, written by the State Department Historian's Office, runs to over 400 pages from 1916 to the present.[11] It is no surprise that the literature is predominantly US focused, both in light of the size of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the notable number of attacks on US diplomatic posts from Tehran (1979), Beirut (1983) and Benghazi (2012).[12] The article, therefore, seeks to address the imbalance by turning attention to the UK.

Second, and more significantly, it seeks to examine the Foreign Office's responses to the growing threat environment facing UK officials. 'Embassies, legations and other diplomatic centres …

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are often at the cutting edge of political violence and revolutionary changes of regime', historian Martin Thomas observes.[13] For Alyson Bailes, who joined the Foreign Office in 1969, rising to become HM Ambassador to Finland in 2000, the most profound change in her career was the security environment UK diplomats operated in, from the Cold War exposing officials to ideological and physical pressures to 'conflict, crime and terrorism'.[14] Bailes knew first-hand the risks diplomats faced; in March 1979, while serving at The Hague, she had been sitting next to HM Ambassador Sir Richard Sykes when he was assassinated, along with his valet, by Irish terrorists.[15]

Thirdly, and more generally, the article lays out the importance of security to diplomacy, and the tensions it creates. If diplomacy is the 'conduct of relationships, using peaceful means … among international actors', then security is – despite its clear importance – often seen to get in the way.[16] There is a natural tension between security and the day-to-day work of officials that requires a careful balancing act. In his study of diplomatic practice, Sir Harold Nicholson went with the definition of diplomacy as 'the management of international relations by negotiation'[17], whereas the process has been summarised as one of 'communication between professional diplomatic agents'[18]. Diplomacy involves, therefore, 'communicating, interacting, maintaining contact, and negotiating with states and other international actors'.[19] Too much security restricts contact and the development of these relationships. Too little, and diplomats are threatened. Diplomats are the 'front door'[20] representing their countries in the international system, yet security officials could, if thought about at all, get in the way of relationship building. Security was, to echo a former Permanent Under-Secretary, an important, if ancillary, function: 'Their members may be likened roughly to the engineers and stokers in a ship'.[21] Other officials cited in this article saw security as contrary to the aims of the Foreign Office.[22] The tension between diplomacy and security means that, while diplomats have continued to be the front door of their country, their door is not always open, or as flashy, as it has been in the past. The 1983 suicide bombings in Beirut marked, a former official recalled, the end of the 'architectural showpiece' Embassy. Instead, '"stand-off" became significant security factors in the design of new diplomatic premises, and played a part in decisions whether to keep on old ones'.[23] In the early 1990s, Embassies had ceased to be 'user-friendly'. As a Foreign Office supported book noted, 'Guards quiz you at entrance gates; receptionists, consular officials and visa clerks sit behind reinforced glass; passes are worn by everyone and at all times; impregnable doors inside cannot be opened unless you have coded cards or know the combination … ambassadors travel in armour-plated cars'.[24] A later review of security warned of the dangers of turning Embassies 'into "fortresses" and "bunkers", arguing that 'operational capability would not benefit if contact with the public were decreased'.[25] Security should not be, the article suggests, an anathema to good diplomacy.

The subject of diplomatic security has been underexamined, despite the long history of threats to ambassadors. Diplomacy, Ure says, 'was never a particularly safe profession'.[26] M.S. Anderson notes that in the sixteenth century, even Ambassadors from Europe's greatest states could not be 'confident of physical security'.[27] In the eighteenth century, foreign couriers were attacked to gain access to secret despatches.[28] Diplomats were always the target of spying activity in successive centuries[29], necessitating the security of diplomatic communications[30], and Embassies were far from being safe spaces in a host country.[31] Nonetheless, despite the significant threat, the study of diplomatic security on a national level has only really been studied in the United States, with the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service (DSS or DS), tracing its origins back to April 1916.[32] The growing diplomatic footprint of the US after 1918 left US diplomats vulnerable to foreign espionage, highlighted by the failings of the inter-war State Department to protect its secrets.[33] In Moscow, the Soviet secret police (the NKVD) 'generously provided' young women to fraternise with US Embassy staff, while one senior US diplomat, having given into such efforts, was described as 'captive of the NKVD'.[34] After 1945, the State Department's security apparatus significantly evolved thanks to the threat to US officials. The Cold War 'Embassy wars' saw diplomatic posts transform from 'elegant salons peacefully advancing their nations' interests' into ugly 'technical fortresses from which espionage was both launched and repelled'.[35] Such vulnerabilities

were applicable to European counterparts, yet the study of diplomatic security in European states has focused mostly on the contemporary post-9/11 world.[36]

Today, the study of modern-day Embassy security has the green shoots of progress, yet the history of the diplomatic in-house security teams has been little explored.[37] For UK diplomatic history, there are a few well-known cases of Soviet intelligence activity against British Embassies, notably the case of Admiralty Clerk John Vassall, blackmailed into spying for Russia having attended a homosexual orgy in 1950s Moscow. The absence is all the more surprising given the multifaceted threat environment that western officials have conducted diplomacy in from the 1970s onwards. The Iranian crisis at the end of the 1970s, provided, G.R. Berridge writes, confirmation that the resident embassy could itself become a target for hostile actors.[38] One study has found that between 1979 – 2019, there were thirty-three successful seizures of western diplomatic posts.[39]

There is a daily reminder of the threat UK diplomats face. At the bottom of the Foreign Office's Grand Staircase is the memorial to the victims of terrorism listing the names of Christopher Ewart-Biggs, Sir Richard Sykes and Percy Norris, who are explored more in this article.[40] Nearby is a newer memorial to Consul General Sir Roger Short and Lisa Hallworth, his personal assistant, killed in an attack on the British consulate in Istanbul.[41] Separate plaques list the names of other officials – Graeme Gibson[42], Charles Morpeth[43], Brigadier Stephen Saunders[44] and Rebecca Dykes[45], as well as locally recruited staff killed overseas. These are remembered annually in the Foreign Office memorial gathering. 'We owe them a great debt of gratitude', said one Foreign Secretary, 'and we pay tribute to their memory, to their important work and to their undoubted bravery'.[46]

Stokers in a ship? The place of the FCO security department

The British Foreign Office (from October 1968, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office) has had a formal Security Department since 1946[47], though, of course, concern with 'security' existed before this. Such matters were handled on an ad-hoc basis, shifted around from department to department. From 1923, security in the Foreign Office fell to the Communications Department.[48], yet security was afforded a low priority resulting in a series of major scandals, somewhat embarrassingly, in the Communications Department itself. From 1929, the Soviet Union was able to access highly secret Foreign Office cables from Ernest Oldham, a cipher clerk who was later dismissed for drinking in 1932.[49] In 1939, MI5 discovered another Foreign Office cipher clerk, John Herbert King, had been passing documents from the Communications Department to the Soviets.[50] The first steps towards an independent security team stem from early 1940, when a temporary Chief Security Officer was appointed, supported by a small team of security officers.[51] The arrangement proved unsatisfactory and security leaks continued, notably from the British Embassy in Turkey thanks to the poor handling of documents and the German recruitment of the Ambassador's personal valet.[52] Although responsibility for security was in a state of flux at the end of the war, the decision to establish a formal Security Department was taken in the summer of 1946, headed by Wing-Commander George Carey Foster.[53]

The department was the 'co-ordinating centre for collating information and for the provision of directives and expert advice on all security matters'. Nevertheless, its work was '*primarily advisory rather than executive*'[54], causing significant problems going forward. Despite Carey Foster's best efforts, the department faced staffing shortages, while the attitude of officials to security was heavily shaped by Foreign Office culture, which retained the 'atmosphere of an exclusive club'.[55] Arthur de la Mare, Carey-Foster's successor, recalled how colleagues 'looked upon me as a latter day Judas … they would not have been displeased if I had come a cropper'.[56] The consequences of insufficient funding and adverse departmental culture lay at the heart of the scandal surrounding the defection of officials Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean in 1951. An internal inquiry, chaired by Sir Alexander Cadogan, recommended changes to security vetting, the

management and reporting of security issues, while also leading to a number of recommendations in relation to the 'personal conduct' of members of the Foreign Service, with a particular focus upon homosexuality, beginning a bar to 'homosexuals' in the Foreign Office that would only end in 1991.[57] The early history of the Security Department highlighted enduring issues; the deeply engrained organisational culture of the Foreign Office mitigated any security mindedness, and lapses in security would continue as security officials advised lower-level officials within the Foreign Office and overseas in diplomatic establishments on best practice.[58]

Changes in the security apparatus of British diplomacy followed the recommendations of the Plowden Committee[59], unifying the Foreign Service with the Commonwealth Service into the HM Diplomatic Service from January 1965.[60] The head of Security Department continued to be drawn from the Diplomatic Service, working in close collaboration with MI5. The merger had immediate security implications; as a fully positively vetted Department, the Security Department had to check the credentials of all members of the new Diplomatic Service transferring from the Commonwealth service, with a considerable backlog after the launch of the unified service.[61] These issues continued following the merger of the Commonwealth Office (created in 1966) and Diplomatic Service, creating the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.[62]

The accounts of Carey-Foster and de la Mare's successors show that a degree of ambivalence, if not downright hostility, towards security continued. For some, appointment to the department was considered 'odd'.[63] Others saw it was a relative backwater, away from the real day-to-day work of diplomacy, and not the ideal 'fit' for anyone viewed as a high-flyer.[64] Others saw some of the security measures as 'punitive', rather than educational.[65] Veronica Sutherland, who ended her FCO career as Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland, and one of just two female heads of Security Department between 1946 to 2007, returned from a three-year posting to UNESCO in 1984 'expecting to be a Head of Department'. Sutherland found herself, she recalls, 'Head of the Security Department, about which I absolutely knew nothing'. Her colleagues 'fell about laughing'.[66]

There were undoubtedly disadvantages; the Security Department was responsible for overseeing the Positive Vetting (PV) of staff in the Foreign Office, an 'arcane, elaborate and lengthy procedure'[67] with a heavy workload thanks to the Foreign Office being a fully positively vetted Department.[68] Vetting gradually took up much of the Department's time; it had, at one stage, a team of twenty staff for interviews (retired members of the armed forces reporting to a retired Ambassador) overseen by head of the Security Department, with contentious cases passed to the Permanent Under-Secretary to decide.[69] Security Department also conducted five-yearly updates to PV clearance and often re-checked personnel files before promoting staff to security sensitive posts.[70] Given the Foreign Office's bar to homosexuals until 1991, Sutherland reflected that such cases caused distress. 'I felt very uneasy', she said, 'when I had to tell some poor young man that, I'm sorry, we couldn't continue his employment, which I didn't like doing'.[71]

There were advantages, and attitudes softened over time. Dame Judith Macgregor, the second female head of the Security Department (2001-03), initially believed the job was 'a Cinderella job … this job was not considered a fast route to further promotion, but I decided to go ahead with it'. Macgregor recalls it was 'the wisest decision I ever made', she was 'back in business, big-time'.[72] The increasingly hostile climate that UK diplomats operated in meant that for younger generations of officials, security work was important. Another head of department, serving long after de la Mare, noted there was little hostility, and talk of an FCO 'Judas' was overblown, even if officials remained a little 'wary', given that security officials had access to personnel files including private information from vetting ('Everyone has something to hide').[73] Sutherland saw her time as 'one of my areas of greatest success'.[74] The tenure marked 'four years when I really felt I was improving an area which I saw was sorely in need of improvement'.[75] Indeed, it was an 'extremely important' career move highlighting that running a relative 'backwater' was not necessarily career ending.[76] Heads of Security Department had to be 'good with people' and able to argue their corner against often senior FCO officials. Being head of department gave 'right of access' to the Permanent Under-Secretary, 'bypassing the normal chain of command if the matter

was of sufficient importance'.[77] The Foreign Office-wide remit gave heads a wider knowledge of Departmental practices, policy and organisation.[78] The reticence of colleagues around security compliance could also be fickle; one official recalls demands for thick anti-blast curtains increased following the 1991 IRA mortar attack on Downing Street, despite initial complaints they reduced the amount of natural light entering the offices.[79] Of the twenty heads of Security Department up to 2007, twelve went on to become Ambassadors, with a further four becoming Consul-General. Another became FCO's Director of Communications/Communications and Technical Services, 1985-1989.[80]

Beleaguered forces: counter-espionage and HM embassies

As the early history of the Security Department illustrates, the Foreign Office's overseas missions were naturally targets for hostile intelligence agencies, either behind the 'Iron' or 'Bamboo' curtains. Former Ambassador Sir Douglas Busk divided the threats into the 'palpable' ('everyday things as doors with locks'[81]) to the 'human' ('subtle and dangerous … attacks on the human front'[82]). Busk wrote that any 'failing is observed and exploited, sex, drugs and drink … Financial embarrassment is another weakness, eagerly seized on'.[83] The espionage risks and general harassment of British officials is a staple experience in the recollections of officials who served in Eastern Europe especially. The constant need to be on one's guard added to the feeling that Moscow was 'spiritually depressing', a feeling expressed by others.[84] 'Any contact', recalls Sir Bryan Cartledge, 'could be exploited by the KGB [the main intelligence and security organisation of the Soviet Union[85]] to get us into trouble'.[86] In the late 1940s, there were security cases in Belgrade and Bucharest, and cases of attempted penetration continued.[87] Sent to Budapest in 1963, Hugh Carless said the Hungarian secret police were 'everywhere, the Hungarian staff in the embassy, the domestics supplied by the foreign ministry to foreign diplomats all had to report to the secret police'.[88] The Security Department made sure that officials received a 'sensible security briefing', including examples of where officials had been subjected to 'eavesdropping, provocative visits to his hotel room and tampering … with luggage'.[89] One official recalls being on the end of a 'clear briefing on the aims of Sov Bloc intelligence services' and officials ran a 'tape measure over your security file' to protect officials.[90]

The Soviet KGB were especially adept at picking out officials who displayed characteristics ripe for recruitment, now widely accepted within studies of insider security threats.[91] William Codrington, The Foreign Office's 'Chief Security Officer', had already identified, in August 1945, three classes of recruitment 'ideological, avaricious, and sexual' used by foreign intelligence agencies. The ideological was, he suggested, the 'most dangerous type' but there had been an example of a foreign service willing to pay £20,000 and wait two years 'to find a suitable "inside agent"'.[92] Soviet intelligence was especially good at exploiting MICE[93] – money, ideology, coercion, ego – to recruit sources, as evidenced by the case of William Martin Marshall, a member of the Diplomatic Wireless Service posted to the British Embassy in Moscow, arrested in London while meeting a Soviet official in June 1952. 'Marshall was a perfect example of the type who should not be sent here', one official wrote to Carey Foster from Moscow, 'He was [an] introvert, anti-social to a degree I have never seen before. At staff cocktail parties he would be found in a corner behind a screen, if he turned up at all … He was most difficult to draw into conversation, and he had a meanness to which it would be difficult to surpass'.[94] Further investigation revealed a friend of Marshall, Reginald George Bartholomew, a garage attendant in the embassy, received 'large sums of money far in excess of his salary from unknown sources', likely black market activity that made him vulnerable to exploitation.[95] Investigations showed Marshall had an interest in Russian culture and communism, and had a number of contacts outside the Embassy, leading to the conclusion that the Russians 'would have had numerous opportunities to earmark and recruit' him.[96] MI5 were quick to highlight that Marshall, an outsider and loner within the Embassy, would have been easily targeted:

> The Security Service investigation of MARSHALL has disclosed that he is a person of abnormal and possibly retarded mental development. By nature he is a morose self-contained individual with few friends. He is a quiet, introspective type of person who appears to have had considerable difficulty in attaining the standard of W.T. [Wireless telegraphy] operating required for his present post where, despite his employment for over three years, he is not regarded as a particularly competent operator. While his work and conduct in Moscow at first gave no cause for complaint, he later aroused the concern of his superiors by his unsociability and repeated lateness on duty.[97]

The damage done was limited; Marshall had access to only a small amount of classified information, yet could provide information on 'procedure, frequencies and schedules used by the wireless stations of British diplomatic posts'.[98]

If the information provided by Marshall caused little damage, the damage from the KGB recruitment of Admiralty clerk John Vassall, compromised at a KGB homosexual orgy, was worse. As in the Marshall case, the investigation into Vassall's time in Moscow identified officials in the Moscow Embassy as 'beleaguered forces under a constant and insidious attack, carried out not only by the skilful development of seemingly innocent contacts with Russian citizens'.[99] The earlier Radcliffe Committee report concluded 'it would be virtually impossible to find people prepared to undertake these jobs who had sufficient knowledge of the appropriate languages and conditions to do them effectively'.[100] The fallout of Vassall was to tighten security in missions behind the 'Iron Curtain'.[101] The report recognised that the 'manufacture of compromising situations … must be regarded as one of the regular instruments by which the Russian Secret Service suborn and enlist British agents … It has been attempted again and again through black-market operations, through currency offences, through involving men with women and … men with men'.[102]

The Security Department played a key role in advising on the dangers faced, though the advice was not always taken seriously. The highest profile victim of KGB entrapment was Sir Geoffrey Harrison, Ambassador to Moscow 1965-68, who was forced to leave his post at the height of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia having let 'his defences drop'.[103] Journalist John Miller, part of the British press corps, recalled it was 'a classic honey trap'. Harrison fell for Galya, an attractive Russian maid, who turned out to work for the KGB. 'There were even photographs of Sir Geoffrey and Galya when they took that romantic, overnight express train to Leningrad for a cultural weekend', wrote Miller.[104] One official said the Ambassador was 'demob happy'. Galya 'conspicuously flaunted her charms, leaning over the guests in her low cut uniform. Amber warnings flashed around her'.[105] When the Czech crisis started, the KGB made Sir Geoffrey aware they knew his maid was 'performing extra services … They had photographs of the couple making love in the residency's laundry'. The KGB suggested Harrison should be more sympathetic to Soviet aims'.[106] In a brief for the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart said Harrison had been blackmailed for 'the details of personnel and organisation of this Embassy's counter-intelligence system'. Harrison was interviewed by MI5, who concluded he had 'given a true and complete account of the affair and that there had been no loss of classified information', though it was possible he had disclosed 'information about some British Embassy staff'. Harrison's only punishment was that he could not collect his GCMG from the Queen.[107]

The KGB also appear to have been able to suborn others overseas; KGB officer Oleg Kalugin recalls the recruitment of a secretary in the British mission to the UN, resulting in 'classified material' being passed on.[108] Kalugin, nevertheless, downplayed the effect of honeypots and entrapment.[109] The only real defence was an 'exceptionally high standard of security discipline', which was not always enforced elsewhere.[110] Between March 1970 and April 1971 Leonard Hinchcliffe, then an Assistant Administrative Officer at the UK Embassy in Khartoum, was blackmailed and bribed into providing information about Foreign Office ciphers.[111] When David Gladstone was posted to Cairo, the Security Department advised him that 'morale' was low, 'the East Germans and Russians were very active in Cairo and virtually ran the show and they feared the junior members of the Embassy particularly being got at'. His first job was to 'raise morale and make sure that junior staff were not tempted'.[112]

Officials also let their defences drop elsewhere; another cautionary tale was the case of Rhona Ritchie, the First Secretary in the British Embassy in Tel Aviv in the early 1980s, who passed confidential papers on the deployment of peacekeepers[113] to an Egyptian diplomat she was having an affair with. Ritchie had 'an active and varied sex life, and was pretty open about it' but had been warned about her conduct. She had also been advised against starting another sexual relationship with an Israeli official, but went ahead and had a brief affair. To quote the official report, 'She did not seek advice before letting her connection with the Egyptian diplomat developed into a sexual relationship. It is very difficult to believe that she did not know what she was doing, though I suppose that she may have thought that she could get from him as much as she was giving to him' (a comment that provoked Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's private secretary Robin Butler to write, 'I imagine that in this comment Sir R. Armstrong is referring to intelligence!'). Ritchie was prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act.[114] 'In a relatively small community, particularly in one so close and vulnerable', the Cabinet Secretary wrote, 'it is perhaps surprising that the people at the top of the Embassy did not know, or (if they did have some knowledge) did not explicitly warn Miss Ritchie to be careful'.[115] One official, who knew Ritchie, believes security issues were applied more harshly to junior officials. Heads of mission were, they recalled, far from being a 'shining light of probity'.[116]

Classic KGB Humint (human intelligence) was only part of the picture. Christopher Mallaby, who was posted in Moscow, wrote of the extensive bugging and efforts by the KGB to recruit embassy staff. Having been in close contact with the KGB, many officials were sent home.[117] Mallaby recalls, 'it was just a difficulty of the profession, of being a diplomat in Moscow at that time, and we knew how to deal with it'.[118] Nevertheless, the constant vigilance necessary for diplomatic security had an effect; Colin Munro, posted to Bucharest in 1981, recalls hostile surveillance, and the advice of the Security Department, contributed to a 'difficult and isolated' life, especially for junior staff.[119] Martin Nicholson, posted to the British Embassy in Moscow, recalls that 'innocent "pillow-talk" [with his wife] after a party – so-and-so seemed to be having an affair with so-and-so's wife, or was drinking heavily, or seemed chronically short of money – could provide leads'.[120] The threat of bugging was an everyday existence as recalled by Denis Amy, when posted to Moscow. Under Amy's watch, hundreds of bugs were taken out of the embassy staff's accommodation though it was a futile exercise.[121] In Moscow, Amy recognised that 'security and morale are essentially bound up together. You can keep people happy, by giving them a new bedroom suite perhaps. It sounds a little bit silly but it isn't at all. If you care for people they will behave'.[122] During a visit by Prime Minster Harold Macmillan and Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, in 1959, Embassy security built a tent in the ambassador's office, playing the sounds of running water and a party in the hope it would drown out the discussions.[123] Such activity, while manageable from a security perspective, undoubtedly impacted the essence of diplomacy. For the US diplomat, George F. Kennan 'One was constantly suspicious of the suspicion and hostility with which one is viewed, of the elaborate secretiveness of the authorities, of the proximity of unseen but sinister eyes, ears and hands – observing, eavesdropping, manipulating one's life in the shadows'.[124]

In August 1960, thanks to KGB spying and bugging, an inter-departmental working party concluded 'that (except during periods between 1945 and mid-1947 and November 1953 and January 1954 when the cypher room was elsewhere) information classified up to and including Top Secret was intermittently compromised from October 1943 until early in 1954, and to a lesser extent from then until late 1958', suggesting that the Soviets had been able to read diplomatic messages during most of the major Cold War crises.[125] In 1964, the Soviets even set fire to part of the British Embassy, hoping to gain access. Rodric Braithwaite, a future HM Ambassador to Moscow, then a junior official recalls 'alleged Soviet firemen, directed by alleged senior firemen. It was pretty obvious that some of these people were not firemen at all. They wanted to get into that bit of the Embassy to see what was going on, so they set it on fire which was quite a good way'.[126]

Risk management? FCO security and terrorism

UK diplomats would remain a target for foreign spying, yet the 1970s saw the emergence of terrorism and other non-state actors as a threat, with western diplomats the victim of kidnapping, ransom, murder, and general criminality.[127] As with the espionage threat, officials serving overseas could always be lax, and the FCO's 'risk management' approach to security always meant it was impossible for the Security Department to manage all risks. Nevertheless, as the risk of officials being maimed or even killed increased, security officials took a robust response – and would continue to do going forward. Veronica Sutherland inherited, in her own words, a 'complete shambles' but took on the counter-terror remit energetically.[128] For officials like Sutherland, and others interviewed, the threat to life meant that terrorism would be taken far more seriously than the all-pervasive fear of bugging or entrapment at the hands of hostile intelligence agencies.[129]

Terror groups targeting British officials, or the Foreign Office and HM Missions overseas, were not new. In October 1946, an Irgun (a Zionist paramilitary organisation operating mainly in the Palestine Mandate and then Israel) cell operating in Rome had bombed the British Embassy in Rome, badly damaging the building although no diplomats were injured.[130] Nonetheless, the emergent threat saw diplomats come under direct attack; the Lehi, another Zionist paramilitary organisation, was behind the killing of Swedish diplomat Count Bernadotte in Jerusalem.[131] Later terror groups saw western diplomats 'as a symbol of what they hate', especially in South America with the successive kidnappings of US, German and Swiss diplomats, and the abduction and murder of Karl von Spreti, West German Ambassador to Guatemala, by Marxist-Leninist FAR guerrillas in April 1970.[132] The kidnappings reached a peak in 1970, when there were fourteen globally[133], but it has been estimated that, between 1968-73, some 50 diplomats were kidnapped or murdered, the majority in Latin America.[134] US officials noted the period saw 'an expansion of the threat from physical violence against diplomats – often private, incidental, even furtive – to the beginnings of calculated terror campaigns … waged by nation or sub-group against nation, with an ever broadening range of targets, weapons and tactics'.[135] These groups did not care about the terms of the 1961 Vienna Convention which, in theory, guaranteed that a host country would protect diplomats, overseas missions, and communications.[136]

UK officials were not immune from the spiralling violence. In October 1970, the UK's Trade Commissioner in Quebec, James Cross, was abducted by the Marxist Leninist *Front de libération du Québec*, and released after a month and 28 days in captivity.[137] In January 1971, Sir Geoffrey Jackson, HM Ambassador to Uruguay, was taken hostage by left-wing guerrillas (the *Tupamaros*). Jackson was held in captivity for 244 days until released after a deal brokered by the Chilean government.[138] Despite the growing body of evidence to suggest a foreign ambassador would be targeted, Jackson recalled the Embassy adopted a system of 'elusive security', involving 'back-up cars and no firearms'.[139] Jackson drew the somewhat depressing conclusion that his kidnap,

> … could probably never have been avoided, even if we had been armed or alarm services installed in my car. My captors later told me that our normal precaution of using three different routes and varying the departure somewhat had given them great trouble. But they claimed that, by concentrating the right fire-power and manpower at the right place at the right time, they could capture anyone against any opposition, as was their plan with me. So it would have amounted only to postponing the evil day to, as they said, some official engagement, with enhanced violence and risk, probably my wife also.[140]

In his post-release report, Jackson also pointed to the ineffectiveness of the Uruguayan authorities and the near impossibility of protecting officials from skilled kidnappers. Jackson explained:

> In general I have always taken the line that, even in the face of banditry or common crime, it is foolish for the amateur to take on the professional. My own guards could not possibly hope to catch up with the professionalism of Tupamara marksmen – and women – with their secret practice-ranges and unlimited

> supplies of stolen ammunition. The local police-force at that time had to pay personally for every cartridge they fired. Even therefore had they, or any other of the local security forces, been available as a bodyguard, their presence would have invited a massacre of my staff – i.e. my driver and my back-up car.
>
> The basic technique of my eventual capture was precisely to cut off my back-up car from its function of impeding the onslaught or get-way of an eventual kidnapper. Some fifty operatives and five cars were used to immobilise my escort and to keep the surrounding streets clear for the escape of my four immediate captors, driving my own official car. Speed was of the essence … I was immobilized by pistol-whipping and clubbing behind the ears, unnecessarily in fact, as I had not proposed to offer strenuous resistance.[141]

Jackson's experience was unfortunately replicated in the case of Edward Chaplin, Head of Chancery, Tehran, who was kidnapped in May 1987, likely in response to the arrest of the Iranian Consul General in the UK for shoplifting, and later released.[142]

These attacks were increasingly deadly. In April 1975, a bomb was detonated outside the Embassy in Buenos Aires, protesting at Britain's position on the Falkland Islands.[143] But it was the threat of the Provisional IRA that shaped FCO security.[144] In July 1976 the newly arrived HM Ambassador to Ireland, Christopher Ewart-Briggs, was killed shortly after leaving his residence, despite precautions having been put in place following earlier threats, and the 1972 attack on the British Embassy in Dublin. The FCO sent Sir Richard Sykes, Deputy-Under Secretary in charge of Irish affairs, to investigate and recommend tightened security.[145] Sykes himself was assassinated in March 1979, serving as HM Ambassador to The Hague by two assailants, along with his valet. At the time of the killing, despite efforts to improve security, neither Sykes' residence nor the Embassy had security guards.[146] The same day, a Belgian businessman was murdered opposite the home of Britain's deputy ambassador to NATO in an attack believed to have been mistaken identity.[147] The attacks left a lasting mark; in 1987 the Security Department took the protection of HM Ambassador to Ireland, both at home and in the Republic, seriously, including extensive strengthening of security at the home of Sir Nicholas Fenn in Kent, leading the then head of the Security Department, Anthony Ford, to complain of a 'catalogue of disasters' and delays to security improvements.[148] Fenn was considered a target following the successful SAS ambush of an IRA unit at Loughgall[149] in May 1987. The IRA later managed to get details of Fenn's movements, which the IRA stated was of 'crucial value had we chosen to strike'.[150]

British diplomats were targeted by other groups. In March 1984, the Director of the British Council in Athens, Kenneth Whitty, and a locally recruited colleague, were murdered while driving home by members of the Palestinian Abu Nidal Organisation, or Fatah. The organisation admitted the killing was an attempt to stop Britain resuming 'colonial rule in the world by spreading colonial culture under a new guise', threatening more attacks due to Britain's continued detention of three Abu Nidal members who had been caught trying to assassinate Israel's ambassador to London.[151] 'It was a political murder', HM Ambassador, Sir Peregrine Rhodes, recalled, 'They wanted a British victim. So they caught our staff. You advised staff not to choose the same route on the way to the office, but if there was only one route you couldn't do much about'.[152] Diplomats were told to 'stay in their houses and not go out'. Even having taken 'a little precaution here and there', explained Rhodes, there was 'wasn't much we could do'.[153] Just months later, in November, the UK's Deputy-High Commissioner to India, Percy Norris, was shot at point blank range in Bombay by a group calling itself the 'Revolutionary Organization of Socialist Moslems'.[154]

The Security Department was quick to respond. Veronica Sutherland, then Security Department head, says the killings 'strengthened' the hand of the department in arguing for greater resources, even if, in her view, neither death could have 'been prevented'.[155] The protection of the Foreign Secretary had been conducted by plain-clothes Met police officers, referred to in planning as 'the Secretary of State's detectives'.[156] The protection of other Foreign Office ministers and some diplomats was carried out by the Royal Military Police (RMP) Close Protection and elements of the Special Air Service (SAS).[157] Since 1966, the RMP had also helped guard the British Embassy in Saigon, after a spate of attacks on western diplomatic posts, and the FCO had used private security firm Keenie Meenie Services (KMS), founded by ex-SAS personnel, to guard especially

vulnerable posts in Buenos Aires, Beirut, Bangkok, The Hague, Kampala, San Salvador and Montevideo.[158]

The killing of Sykes had provoked a rethink on the protection of overseas, and especially the suitability of private security and whether future close protection could be delegated to the Ministry of Defence. The issue had been brought before the Cabinet's Defence and Overseas Policy Committee in January 1980, which failed to arrive at an adequate solution. The use of KMS Ltd. had been 'satisfactory' yet it was considered unwise to rely on just one firm, and the Home Office and Ministry of Defence were opposed to using police and service personnel on the grounds it was 'not the right kind of job on which to employ such personnel'. Another option was the creation of a 'special FCO bodyguard' yet, as the Cabinet Secretary Sir Robert Armstrong admitted, the unit would only amount to '12 people. Is it really worth setting up a new unit for this task?'.[159] The argument against using the RMP was reiterated by then Defence Secretary Francis Pym, who argued that the problem was one of 'suitably trained personnel' and the reluctance to deploy the 'highly trained' personnel in a 'police-type role'.[160] Both Prime Minister and Chancellor were in favour of service personnel being deployed as a cheaper alternative to private sector, and the Treasury pushed for 'savings' by 'reducing the number of Servicemen at our Missions abroad'.[161] It has been suggested that following threats to diplomats, the UK 'examined the possibility of replicating American SY [Office of Security] teams, turning the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Security Department into something more akin to the State Department's Office of Security'.[162] Nothing on these lines was ever suggested, and the protection of UK officials took, what one official calls, a 'risk management' attitude to security as opposed to a US policy of 'risk elimination'.[163]

The result was that the UK government became more involved in the security of officials overseas, and less reliant on host governments under the terms of the Vienna Convention.[164] Even in western countries, there was a feeling that the protection of diplomats was a British concern. Naturally, efforts to develop a national security capability could create their own diplomatic headaches. After Sykes' assassination, British officials in the Netherlands wrote there was a 'feeling that this murder was not really a Dutch responsibility: it was fortuitous that it took place in the Netherlands … It is perhaps symptomatic that much press coverage was given to the absence of bullet-proofing in the Ambassador's Rolls Royce and the fact that Sir Richard neither took special security precautions not had specifically requested Dutch police protection'.[165] In Luxembourg, it was noted the authorities with their small security forces could not 'provide armed guards for the Ambassador'.[166]

There were limits to what could be done. Following the death of Ewart-Briggs, a Security Department official admitted 'even the most thorough precautions cannot cover every eventuality'.[167] Another issue was that the Security Department was far ahead of other departments when it came to the issue, yet its advice remained advisory and was not always followed. In other words, what one official had earlier called the 'family spirit of the old Diplomatic Service'[168], continued to be a problem despite the growing expertise within the Security Department. By the middle of the 1970s, the department had set up a small anti-terrorism section, responsible for issuing 'alert instructions on terrorist incidents' and 'advising…other Government Ministers and MPs about proposals for overseas travel'.[169] Examples of advice can be found in the archives.[170] Members of the Department were also leading contributors to wider government decisions, especially the Cabinet Office Committee on Terrorism, chaired by the Home Office, and had given specialist advice on, for example, the security of 'oil installations in the North Sea'.[171] In July 1975, security officials recognised a growing trend in attacks against western officials and re-issued security advice for diplomats living outside embassy premises, who travelled in their own vehicles.[172] This expertise clashed with expertise elsewhere; from 1984, the FCO had the Security Co-ordination Department (SCD), responsible for policy on international crime and transnational terrorism.[173] Although

focused entirely on security advice, Security Department work had some overlap with the SCD.[174]

The funding of security was always an issue. The history of the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security explains the period saw the State Department 'expand physical and protective security efforts … the threat of terrorism forced … the Department to redefine and transform diplomatic security as it was understood in the present time', starting the process of radical change we see today.[175] The Foreign Office, by contrast, continued to do security on a shoestring. In Lebanon, where the civil war posed a significant risk to diplomats, the UK government provided just three KMS Limited staff to protect the Ambassador. Documents show the constant argument over the need to renew KMS's contract and battles with Ministry of Defence. Despite the threat, the Ministry of Defence 'put forward a less than satisfactory proposal to form a close protection unit from MOD police. They were asked to think again'. In contrast, the US, French, Germans, and Canadians had teams on the ground.[176] The FCO was also part of the problem; in 1970, a senior security officer was paid 'hardly higher than … a grade ten officer of the diplomatic branch or a grade two member of the secretarial branch'.[177] Elsewhere, the Ministry of Defence was 'unwilling' to provide support 'except in an emergency'.[178] Veronica Sutherland recalls the lack of attention to security:

> … there was an extreme lack of any sort of planning in all of this area. And a lack of advice! I don't know where you were at this sort of time in you [sic] career - what your view of embassies in the late 1970s/early 1980s would have been, but it seemed, from what I was looking at, not much had been done. We had two advisers in the Security Department who advised embassies on physical security. They did their best I am sure, but they had had very little supervision.[179]

'It was not an easy task', Sutherland says, 'getting agreement within the Department; it wasn't an easy task attracting the interest of others who sat on the purse strings. But it worked'. The Foreign Office supported a team of 'roving security advisors' looking at physical security, but the financial woes continued.[180]

Even with money, the evergreen issue of officials ignoring the advice and taking risks continued. Despite the risk of kidnap, John Shakespeare, Chargé d'Affairs in Buenos Aires, complained to the Security Department in September 1976:

> I suppose I must now be about the most heavily guarded British head of mission in the world. I have no privacy left to me, not even in my own home – except in the lavatory and in bed, for which relief I suppose I must render grateful thanks. I am escorted for 24 hours a day by armed thugs who dog my every footstep.[181]

Shakespeare may have been motivated by personal privacy, yet his concerns about security getting in the way of diplomacy were widely felt. Diplomacy should 'be conducted openly, with ready access to other diplomats, a wide range of officials, and members of the local population'. More security would, it was observed, make officials feel more secure yet reduce their 'effectiveness'.[182] There was resistance to other security measures, especially the recommendation that vehicles should be armoured to protect Ambassadors.[183] The Foreign Office paid for five new armoured vehicles to replace the Rolls Royce's used by Ambassadors, but the plan hit a snag. The Ambassador to France, Sir Reginald Hibbert, was particularly upset at losing his favourite car. In May 1979, the FCO main building received the following from an irate Hibbert:

> I have had some misgivings ever since arriving here about the policy which seems to be followed as regards security against terrorism … I found for example that, while the Rolls Royce had been withdrawn from us, my detailed daily programme was being … widely distributed…
>
> [the security arrangements] would look radical and effective, but they do or would have little real effect other than to make me fairly uncomfortable, and little steps have been overlooked. I suspect in fact that the security problem is being approached with a trench warfare mentality when it ought to be looked at

> with the intention of conducting a war of movement. A Maginot line is being constructed round me when in fact what is needed is a combination of good intelligence about movement in the immediate vicinity of the Embassy, some concealment, occasional camouflage, and full use of the elements of surprise, speed and precision of movement.[184]

Hibbert should not have moaned too much, as junior officials were exposed. Sent to Athens after a series of attacks on Western officials by the Greek 'Revolutionary Organisation 17 November', Sir Brian Donnelly was handed a 'piece of Kevlar … not much larger than a square of A4 paper … the theory was that you would hold this up against the window of your car if you ever thought someone was going to try and shoot you'.[185] Donnelly was also given a stick with a mirror and told to check for bombs.[186] The issue of vehicles remained a tricky one, thanks to the number available and number of HM Missions. The Embassy in Dublin had requested a new vehicle to replace the 'ageing flag cars which give continual mechanical trouble'. Despite the threat to the Ambassador, the issue continued. 'I imagine there may well be competing demands, perhaps from more senior ambassadors', an exasperated official wrote, 'but I am sure you will agree that security considerations should dictate the pecking order'.[187]

On a shoestring: physical embassy security

The physical or 'palpable' protection of diplomatic premises covered all aspects of security, from espionage to terrorism. While not the most glamourous of the Security Department's work, Sir Douglas Busk's study of diplomacy, published in 1967, provides a good overview of sheer scale of the problem: 'By "palpable" security measures I mean such everyday things as doors with locks; the sort of precautions that every sensible householder employs. The doors must be stout and the locks not easily pickable … All confidential papers must be kept in the "keep" and only removed during the day by the officer entitled to work on them'.[188] Historically, individual Ambassadors and Heads of Chancery were ultimately responsible for the security of all staff and the embassy, though the Security Department regularly conducted comprehensive reviews with the aim of improving physical security of premises.[189] Initially restricted to advice on limiting the effects of espionage or leaks, the security advice gradually grew to include countering the effects of terrorism, and the protection of diplomatic compounds and missions from rogue governments, or states where security could not be guaranteed. Although facilities were largely the intended targets, UK missions were always the likely, or unintended, targets. Increasingly, the host country was either unable, or unwilling, to provide the security necessary, with western governments having to take the initiative.

A sign of the challenging situation facing British officials and the Security Department is illustrated by the experience of the British Mission in Peking. On 22 August 1967, following months of tension, a large crowd of protestors broke into the mission, burning the official vehicles, shouting 'death'. The sacking of the mission came after weeks of provocation during which the Chinese authorities had been 'consistently unhelpful'.[190] Writing to the Foreign Secretary, Chargé d'Affaires, Donald Hopson, noted the complicity of Chinese officials, 'PLA at gates gave impression of being overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers of mob but this was almost certainly contrived'.[191] Days earlier, Percy Cradock, the Head of Chancery and the post's security officer, warned London that 'diplomatic immunity was virtually at an end'. Cradock developed his own plan in case the Mission was attacked ('Armageddon'), 'something of a joke. It consisted of retreats behind a series of defence points retreats'.[192] Cradock later observed the attack was not 'an irrational outburst of mob violence, but a carefully planned and controlled operation'.[193] Worse still, elements of the mob had penetrated the Mission strong room, as Cradock told London:

> Those who broke into the secure zone were not indiscriminate vandals. They made for those rooms where the Chinese officer cleaners had not been allowed and … these rooms were largely preserved from fire.

> They broke into the cypher room by breaking through the wall at the side of the door … As already reported, all really sensitive equipment had been removed to the strong room on 21 and 22 August where it was later recovered and destroyed. One or two items were taken from the loft (Astro and CEI receivers) … From beside the safe speech room two cases of DTMS defensive equipment were taken but may have been burnt. A further mark of selectivity; the DWS room with its Piccolo equipment was left alone apart from a perfunctory attempt at burning by flinging in an oil lamp.[194]

Following the sacking, Cradock cabled London that security was 'tenuous' and the Mission retained 'no more than can be held in a foolscap envelope' with copies of all classified incoming and outgoing messages burnt, with the work of the Mission relying 'on memory' with little noticeable impact.[195] The burning of documents the old way was needed after it was found a special 'chemical compound' sent by the Security Department to destroy material had failed to do the job, merely charring documents and leaving them perfectly legible to anyone. Use of the ineffective powder also turned the Mission strong room into a 'gas-chamber' forcing officials to wrap towels around their faces and risk the fumes.[196]

Closer to home, the British Embassy in Dublin was destroyed just days after the killing of unarmed protestors in Londonderry by British troops in 1972, forcing UK officials to move into new, and safer, premises.[197] Despite the security minded nature of the move, one official noted the new embassy was a 'horrible building … had been made even more horrible' with the ring of 'High fence/Lifting barrier … You had to go through a sort of decompression chamber to get in, with armoured glass doors and all the rest of it'. One result was 'low' morale.[198] 'Personal security was a big problem', Sir John Goulden (head of Chancery, 1976-78) recalled, 'some of us were on IRA lists that were picked up … When you are in that kind of situation tiny incidents – the sort of things which if they happened in London you would dismiss with a shrug – become sinister and you feel paranoid about them'.[199]

Parts of the Middle East could also be a dangerous posting. A 1975 assessment of the threat to the HM Embassy in Tehran explained that while the US were intended targets for any violence, UK officials faced 'bomb explosions' in light of the local security authorities having 'slightly lower priority' for the 'anti-terrorist protection for the Embassy compounds'.[200] The Security Department recommended revising security guidance, assessing the security of regular journeys to and from the Embassy, and the surveillance of unknown vehicles in the vicinity.[201] As behind the 'Iron Curtain', the employment of locally recruited staff was another issue. The Foreign Office's R.J. Alston noted, 'A particularly worrying point to the Americans has been the extent to which the terrorists have been able to rely on inside information. A civilian employee of MAAG [Military Assistance Advisory Group[202]] has been arrested and they are fairly sure that he was responsible for feeding the terrorists with information on the movements of senior US officers'. Another local employee working in the US Embassy had been arrested having provided local terror groups with the 'security dispositions being taken within the Embassy'.[203]

By 1979, the security situation had dramatically changed following the removal of the Shah, leading to the occupation of the UK Embassy. While less serious than the subsequent US hostage situation, the temporary takeover of the embassy highlighted the security problems facing the Foreign Office. A security review of Tehran Embassy suggested officials may have 'wasted … money on trying to improve the physical defences of the Embassy', with the intruders gaining access by 'climbing over the wall. Although quite high, it is not a serious obstacle'. Officials advised it was possible to 'make it into a more serious obstacle by barbed wire, broken glass or one of the new and extremely savage types of sharpened steel tape'. Such defences would only delay, it was suggested, the inevitable, and intruders would arrive 'in a more unpleasant frame of mind' having cut themselves climbing into the premises. Document security and the destruction of confidential material had been good, it seemed. Material in the strong room was still locked away when officials were allowed back and, as one official wrote to London, the takeover had witnessed an element of comedy with 'the insurgents overawed by the complexity of the combinations and alarms'. During the crisis one official played for time 'by failing to find the correct combination and blaming my lack of concentration on the noise and press of bodies. A

couple of men tried random selection with the dials in exasperation at lack of success, while others began to suggest shooting at (a) the locks or (b) me'. Facing physical threats, the official 'speeded up'. The official added, 'The insurgents were angry at the sight of bags of shredded paper which confronted them when I opened the outer secure door. One youth, who had been "guarding" us throughout the day, expressed great resentment and said he would not have passed a long, cold and boring day outside had he known that this was what we were up to'.[204]

Vital to embassy security were the regular security inspections by the Security Department, details of which survive in the archives. A security review of the Baghdad Embassy found the 'defences could be improved at several points, both to keep attackers out at ground level and to prevent them from getting at our staff'[205], while comments on the Embassy in Beirut in the mid-80s tried to improve security in a tricky situation. A 1981 review of the Embassy in Kuwait warned that, despite the risk of terrorism, the local guards were 'less than satisfactory. Elderly and none too strong and, in some cases, with a very limited command of any language other than Arabic, it would seem they allow access to the grounds to anyone with a commanding enough presence and a plausible enough story … one of the Embassy staff reported finding two middle-aged persons of Indian appearance wandering in the Embassy grounds photographing the building'.[206] As before, the issue seems to have been money.

Conclusion – no longer the latter day judas

The article contributes to the study of UK diplomacy by emphasising the importance of security to diplomatic relations. Firstly, it addresses the gap in literature on non-US diplomatic security, drawing on UK archives to show how the Foreign Office teams adapted to threats. Secondly, and more generally, it reiterates the importance of protecting one's diplomatic secrets and staff. Security was not always taken seriously, as suggested earlier. James Der Derian once talked of the 'antidiplomacy', three forces, in his view, challenging 'traditional diplomacy … spies (intelligence and surveillance), terror (global terrorism and the national security culture), and speed (the acceleration of pace in war and diplomacy). [207] Security could be a fourth, given the impact of building relationships. V.D. Tran wrote that communication 'is to diplomacy as blood is to human body. Whenever communication ceases … the body of diplomacy, is dead'.[208] Equally, Jönsson and Hall talk of the importance of communication to diplomacy. Security, it has been suggested, is a block to diplomacy, yet, as the article shows in the case of the FCO, it is a necessary condition of successful diplomatic work. The changing threat environment that officials worked in during the course of this article placed an ever growing emphasis on security. Whilst the protection of embassies and diplomats from hostile activity by states, especially behind the 'Iron' or 'Bamboo' Curtains, would remain a core mission of the Security Department of the Foreign Office, the growing physical threat to diplomats from terrorism and in countries where, under the 1961 Vienna Convention, states were unable or unwilling to provide diplomatic support put, this article shows, the security officials in the spotlight. Although security work offered no absolute protection to officials – as FCO's memorial wall is testament to – security officials placed an ever-growing focus on the protection of lives and UK diplomatic premisses. Rather than an obstacle, security was essential.

Faced with the challenge of a diversifying threat picture, the article argues that security officials performed well. While the observation that the Foreign Office had a 'long tradition of inefficiency and amateurishness' when it came to matters of security held true in some areas[209], the Security Department had come a long way since its formation in 1946 and responded proactively on security issues within the Foreign Office and across Whitehall. As with the early history of the Security Department, it quickly established itself as a centre for knowledge on the growing threat of terrorism and contributed to government-wide discussions on how to deal with the threat. Nevertheless, the work of the Department continued to be undermined in several areas, as before. Returning to a theme from an earlier analysis of the Foreign Office, the 'family spirit of

the old Diplomatic Service' continued to undermine the security of British diplomacy, although this factor diminished over time.[210] The principles of sound security also clashed with the practicalities of diplomacy, lessening, it can be argued, the effects of the department. Nonetheless, the Security Department had grown into an important part of the Foreign Office machinery, evidenced by the growing importance of the department in most matters connected to the day-to-day work of diplomacy. The biographies of the heads of the department show that it could be a useful stepping stone in promotion, and heads of the department took on an ever-increasing importance once the lives of UK diplomats were threatened. Although the names of officials killed in the line of work on the Foreign Office's memorials are testament to the risks involved, it can be argued that the efforts of the Security Department helped mitigate the worst dangers overseas.

The study of the Security Department also contrasts starkly with the history of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. In marked contrast to the State Department's security apparatus, the budget for security in the Foreign Office continued to be small and generally increased in the aftermath of attacks, despite the best efforts of officials, as evidenced by the hiring of private security and the arguments with the Ministry of Defence about close protection. It can be suggested that the Foreign Office's 'risk management' approach was shaped as much by resource implications as it was an underpinning philosophy, whereas the Bureau of Diplomatic Security could afford a 'risk elimination' approach to security. During her time as head of the Security Department, Sutherland introduced a team of 'roving security advisers', responsible for 'looking at embassies around the world, making recommendations as to how their physical security might be improved'. She recalls, 'it wasn't an easy task attracting the interest of others who sat on the purse strings. But it worked'.[211] Dame Judith MacGregor was to face similar issues with the threat to officials following the September 11 attacks. 'The 9/11 attacks did lead to further significant change in FCO security policy', she recalls, 'We had anticipated it; we had begun to implement security changes before September 2001 but 9/11 gave me all the money I could wish for to actually implement them, which was very welcome'.[212] Like the department in the 1970s, MacGregor's teams faced terrorism and 'a resurgence of espionage, not just from some parts of the former Soviet bloc but also from countries in Asia and world-wide whose goal was commercial, technical and data capture as well as defence and intelligence'.[213] Whilst the funding of UK diplomatic security remained on a shoestring, the Security Department, in the context of this article, had matured from its early days and was now vital to the protection of all aspects of day-to-day diplomacy. Security in the Foreign Office was by now a vital and respected dimension of the Department's work, and would be in the aftermath of the Global War on Terror. Security officials had ceased, therefore, to be a 'latter day Judas'.[214]

Notes

1. John Ure, ed., *Diplomatic Bag: An Anthology of Diplomatic Incidents and Anecdotes from the Renaissance to the Gulf War* (London: John Murray, 1996), 55.
2. Zakia Shiraz, 'Diplomats Under Siege: The M-19 and the Dominican Embassy Takeover of 1980', *The International History Review*, 42(5) (2020), 1050. See also Daniel W.B. Lomas and Christopher J. Murphy, 'The Foreign Office "Thought Police": Foreign Office Security, the Security Department and the "Missing Diplomats", 1940–1952', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 34(3) (2023), 433–63.
3. The so-called Wikileaks cables, in the short term, impacted the day-to-day work of officials with communications 'less frequent, less candid, and more cautious, as participants worry that what they say in confidence might shortly be very public' (see Mark Page and J.E. Spence, 'Open Secrets Questionably Arrived At: The Impact of Wikileaks on Diplomacy', *Defence Studies*, 11(2) (2011), 235). The security of communications, and sensitivity of leaks, is also a major theme of the Washington diptel leaks in 2019, read Kim Darroch, *Collateral Damage: Britain, America and Europe in the Age of Trump* (London: William Collins, 2020).
4. Eugenio Cusumano and Christopher Kinsey, eds., *Diplomatic Security: A Comparative Analysis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 2.
5. J. Craig Barker, *The Protection of Diplomatic Personnel* (London: Ashgate, 2006).
6. G.R. Berridge, 'Diplomatic security and the birth of the compound system' < Birth-of-compound-system.pdf (diplomacy.edu) >

7. Eugenio Cusumano, 'Diplomatic Security for Hire: The Causes and Implications of Outsourcing Embassy Protection', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 12 (2017), 27–55; Eugenio Cusumano and Christopher Kinsey, 'Bureaucratic Interests and the Outsourcing of Security: The Privatization of Diplomatic Protection in the United States and the United Kingdom', *Armed Forces and Society*, 41(4) (2015), 591–615.
8. On technical surveillance, read David Easter, 'Soviet Bloc and Western Bugging of Opponents' Diplomatic Premises During the Early Cold War', *Intelligence & National Security*, 31(1) (2016), 28–48; Richard J. Aldrich, *GCHQ: The uncensored story of Britain's most secret intelligence agency* (London: Harper Press, 2011), 176–82; David Easter, 'State Department cipher machines and communications security in the early Cold War, 1944–1965', *Intelligence & National Security*, October 2023.
9. See M.S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy, 1450–1919* (London: Routledge, 1993), 39–40
10. Lomas and Murphy, 'The Foreign Office "Thought Police"', 433–63.
11. *History of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security*, 2011.
12. Joseph G. Sullivan, ed., *Embassies Under Siege: Personal Accounts by Diplomats on the Front Line* (Washington: Brassey's, 1995); Robert David Booth, *State Department Counterintelligence: Leaks, Spies and Lies* (Dallas, TX: Brown Books, 2014); Patrick Cullen, 'A Century of US Diplomatic Security: An Evolutionary Response to a Changing Threat Environment' in Cusumano and Kinsey (ed), *Diplomatic Security*, 11–36.
13. Martin Thomas, 'Embassies in Crisis: Diplomacy, Communities and Conflicts' in Martin Thomas and Rogelia Pastor-Castro, eds., *Embassies in Crisis: Studies of Diplomatic Missions in Testing Situations* (Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 1.
14. Alyson J.K. Bailes, 'Reflections on Thirty Years in the Diplomatic Service', *Contemporary British History*, 18(3) (Autumn 2004), 189. Another excellent insider perspective is Jane Marriott's chapter, 'Embassies Responding to Crisis: A Practitioners Perspective' in Thomas and Pastor-Castro, eds., *Embassies in Crisis*, 231–247.
15. Roz Morris, 'Alyson Bailes Obituary', *The Guardian*, May 2016.
16. 'Introduction' in Andrew Cooper, Jorge Heine and Ramesh Thakur, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.
17. Harold Nicholson, *Diplomacy* (Georgetown: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, 1988), 4–5.
18. G.R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), xxvii.
19. Jean-Robert Leguey-Feilleux, *The Dynamics of Diplomacy* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2009), 1.
20. Michael Herman, 'Diplomacy and Intelligence', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 9(2) (1998), 6.
21. Lord Strang, *The Foreign Office* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957), 158.
22. Arthur de la Mare, *Perverse and Foolish* (La Haule Books, 1994), 99.
23. Private Information.
24. Ruth Dudley Edwards, *True Brits: Inside the Foreign Office* (London: BBC Books, 1994), 114–5.
25. Para. 62, Foreign Affairs Committee, Eighth Report, September 2004.
26. Ure, *Diplomatic Bag*, 55.
27. M.S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy*, 40.
28. Jeremy Black, *A History of Diplomacy* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2010), 62.
29. Read Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (London: Allen Lane, 2018).
30. Keith Hamilton and Richard Langthorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its evolution, theory and administration* (London: Routledge, 1995), 62, 76.
31. See, for example, Jonathan Scheer, *The Lockhart Plot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 224–7.
32. *History of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security of the United States Department of State, First Edition* (Global Publishing, 2011). See also, *Diplomatic Security Service Then & Now: The First Century of the Diplomatic Security Service* < DS100Then-Now_forWebOnly-1.pdf (state.gov) >
33. Martin S. Alexander, 'Safes and Houses: William C. Bullitt, Embassy Security and the Shortcomings of the US Foreign Service in Europe before the Second World War', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 2(1) (1991), 187–210.
34. Donal O'Sullivan, *Dealing with the Devil: Anglo-Soviet Cooperation During the Second World War* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 61.
35. Aldrich, *GCHQ*, 197.
36. See Cusumano and Kinsey, ed., *Diplomatic Security*. See also, Alex Tiersky and Susan B. Epstein, Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities and Personnel Abroad: Background and Policy Issues, *Congressional Research Service*, 30 July 2014 < Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities and Personnel Abroad: Background and Policy Issues (fas.org) >
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39. Jacqueline Gardner Burns, Christopher A. Moulton, Adam R. Grissom, John P. Godges, 'Seizures of Western Diplomatic Facilities: Historical Timelines, 1979–2019', *Rand Corporation*, 2021 < RAND_RR4233z1.pdf >
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41. For details, read British Diplomatic Oral History Programme (hereafter BDOHP): WESTMACOTT, Sir Peter John, GCMG LVO (b. 1950), 49–50.
42. 'Scottish-born Diplomat Dies Three Months After Shooting', *The Herald*, 9 March 1996.
43. Charles Crawford, 'The FCO Remembers', 14 November 2011 < https://charlescrawford.biz/2011/11/14/the-fco-remembers/>
44. 'Obituary: Brigadier Stephen Saunders', *The Guardian*, 9 June 2000 <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2000/jun/09/guardianobituaries >

45. 'Rebecca Dykes: Family of Embassy Worker Describe Her as "Irreplaceable"', *BBC News*, 18 December 2017 < https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42401083 >
46. 'Remembering those that served', 10 November 2011 < https://www.gov.uk/government/news/remembering-those-that-served >
47. The Security Department existed as a stand-alone department until 1985 when it became a joint Foreign and Commonwealth Office/Overseas Development Agency department. Security came under the Personnel and Security Command in 1998, moving to the Security Strategy Unit in 2000. Now, security falls within the remit of Estates, Security and Network Directorate (Private Information).
48. Ephraim Maisel, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1919 – 1926* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1994), 29; FCO Historians, *From Telegrams to eGrams: A Potted History of FCO Communications*, 12.
49. Nick Barratt, *The Forgotten Spy: The Untold Story of Stalin's First British Mole* (London: Blink, 2015).
50. Richard Thurlow, 'Soviet Spies and British Counter-Intelligence in the 1930s: Espionage in the Woolwich Arsenal and the Foreign Office Communications Department', *Intelligence and National Security* 19(4) (2004), 610–31.
51. Robert Cecil, 'The Cambridge Comintern' in Christopher Andrew and David Dilks (ed), *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Palgrave, 1984), 181.
52. Christopher Baxter, 'Forgeries and Spies: The Foreign Office and the "Cicero' Case"', *Intelligence and National Security*, 23(6) (2008).
53. Lomas and Murphy, 'The Foreign Office "Thought Police"', 441–2.
54. All documents are from The National Archives (TNA) unless otherwise stated: FCO 158/24, 'The Establishment of a Security Department within the Foreign Office', 10 February 1947.
55. See, David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London: Pan Books, 1992), 280–1. Details on attempts to reform the Foreign Office reform and internal culture can also be found in James Southern, *Diplomatic Identity in Postwar Britain: Deconstruction of the Foreign Office "Type", 1945 – 1997* (Oxon: Routledge, 2021).
56. de la Mare, *Perverse and Foolish*, 101.
57. On the impact of the policy, read Lomas and Murphy, 'Security or Scandal? Homosexuality and the Foreign Office, 1945 – 1991' in Dennis G. Molinaro (ed), *The Bridge in the Park: The Five Eyes and Cold War CounterIntelligence* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2021), 72–91; James Southern, Homosexuality at the Foreign Office, 1967–1991, FCO Historians, *History Notes: Issue 19*, October 2017.
58. Lomas and Murphy, 'The Foreign Office "Thought Police"', 451–2.
59. Cmnd. 2276, *Report of the Committee on Representational Services Overseas appointed by The Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Plowden, 1962* – 3 (London: HMSO, 1964), 145–50.
60. PREM 13/1203, The organisation for security in the diplomatic service and Government Communications Headquarters, August 1966.
61. Ibid.
62. On the merger, read Richard Smith, '1968 and all that: the creation of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office', 17 October 2018 < 1968 and all that: the creation of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office - History of government (blog.gov.uk) >
63. Private Information.
64. Private Information. Another former official noted that any 'A-streamers would have been pretty discouraged to get placed in any of the 'support' departments. Any A-streamer who didn't get assigned to a geographical department was regarded with some sympathy by contemporaries' (Private Information).
65. Private Information.
66. BDOHP: SUTHERLAND, Dame Veronica Evelyn, DBE CMG (b. 1939), 16. Sutherland later become the first married female Ambassador on her appointment as Ambassador to Ivory Coast in 1987, read Helen McCarthy, *Women of the World: The Rise of the Female Diplomat* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 296.
67. Edwards, *True Brits*, 109.
68. See Daniel W.B. Lomas, 'Security, Scandal and the Security Commission Report, 1981', *Intelligence & National Security*, 35(5) (2020), 745.
69. BDOHP: Sutherland interview, 16 and Private Information.
70. Private Information.
71. BDOHP: Sutherland interview, 17.
72. BDOHP: MACGREGOR, Dame Judith, DCMG LVO (b. 1952), 43.
73. Private Information.
74. BDOHP: Sutherland interview, 16.
75. Ibid. 18.
76. Ibid.
77. de la Mare, *Perverse and Foolish*, 100.
78. Private Information.
79. Private Information.
80. Information obtained from the four volume *British Diplomats Directory – compiled by Colin Mackie*, reproduced by FCO Historians < https://issuu.com/fcohistorians/stacks/4bf815ad95c94cedbf8780d67845976b >
81. Douglas Busk, *The Craft of Diplomacy: Mechanics & Development of National Representation Overseas* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), 145.
82. Ibid., 148.
83. Ibid., 148.

84. BDOHP: WOOD, Sir Andrew Marley, GCMG (b. 1940). See also, BDOHP: KEEBLE, Sir (Herbert Ben) Curtis, GCMG (1922–2008), 57–8. See also James Reeve, *Cocktails, Crises and Cockroaches: A Diplomatic Trail* (London: The Radcliffe Press, 1999), 183.
85. See, Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990).
86. BDOHP: CARTLEDGE, Sir Bryan, KCMG (b. 1931), 13.
87. In at least one of these cases, SIS/MI6 tried to turn an approach to a junior FO official, Doyle, into a deception operation, feeding false information to the Yugoslav government who would, it was hoped, provide this information to Moscow. SIS admitted they had been forced to hand over some 'quite useful information' to build up Doyle's credibility, and that he had provided (with approval) information on the 'cost of living' in the Embassy, in return for '2,000 dinars and 916 cigarettes'. The scheme ran into difficulties when Carey-Foster was only told about the scheme later, and the Foreign Office objected to some of the proposals for administrative reasons. In the end, the Doyle plan largely ended thanks to the Tito-Stalin split (see FO 1093/426, 'British Embassy Belgrade: double agent case "Expedition"').
88. BDOHP: CARLESS, Hugh Michael, CMG (1925–2011), 21.
89. Martin Nicolson, *Activities Incompatible: Memoirs of a Kremlinologist and a Family Man, 1963 – 1971* (self published, 2013), 66.
90. Private Information.
91. As an example, read Hank Prunckun, *Counterintelligence: Theory and Practice, Second Edition* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019); Paul Martin, *The Rules of Security: staying safe in a risky world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 96–119; Noelle J. Camp and Adam D. Williams, 'Lessons Learned from a Comparative Analysis of Counterintelligence and Insider Threat Mitigation Case Studies in Nuclear Facilities', *SN Computer Science*, 3(143) (January 2022); Adrian Furnham and John Taylor, *The Psychology of Spies and Spying* (Matador, 2022).
92. FO 366/1514, 'Security', August 1945, 2.
93. On MICE and the later reassessment of agent motives, read Christopher Smith, 'John Cairncross, RASCALS and a reassessment of his motives', *Intelligence & National Security*, 37(4) (2022), 527.
94. KV 2/1636, Lambert Titchner to Carey-Foster, 9 May 1952.
95. Ibid.
96. KV 2/1641, 'The Background to MARSHALL's motives for Espionage', 15 January 1953.
97. KV 2/1638, The Case of William Martin MARSHALL, 19 June 1952.
98. Ibid.
99. CAB 301/265, *Inquiry into the Vassall Case and Related Matters*, 10.
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101. TS 58/658, Item 1. Security at the Moscow Embassy. Note of meeting 5 November 1962.
102. Cmnd. 1681, *Security Procedures in the Public Service*, 25.
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104. John Miller, *All Them Cornfields and Ballet in the Evening* (Kingston upon Thames: Hodgson Press, 2010), 260–61.
105. Nicolson, *Activities Incompatible*, 73.
106. Miller, *All Them Cornfields and Ballet in the Evening*, 260–61.
107. PREM 19/120, brief for Prime Minister: Case of Sir Geoffrey Harrison.
108. Oleg Kalugin, *Spymaster: Former Chief of Counter-Intelligence and Major General, KGB* (London: Smith Gryphon, 1994), 44.
109. Ibid.
110. Cmnd. 1681, *Security Procedures in the Public Service* (London: HMSO, 1962), 25.
111. David Easter, 'Protecting secrets: British diplomatic cipher machines in the early Cold War, 1945–1970', *Intelligence & National Security*, 34(2) (2019), 163–4.
112. BDOHP: GLADSTONE, David, CMG (b. 1935), 14.
113. BDOHP: DOWSE, Timothy Michael, CMG (b. 1955), 17.
114. PREM 19/1385, Armstrong to Butler, 22 July 1983.
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116. Private Information.
117. Christopher Mallaby, *Living the Cold War: Memoirs of a British Diplomat* (Amberley, 2017), 111–112.
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119. BDOHP: MUNRO, Colin Andrew, CMG (b. 1946), 21.
120. Nicolson, *Activities Incompatible*, 67.
121. BDOHP: AMY, Dennis Oldrieve, CMG OBE (1932–2016), 7.
122. Ibid., 8.
123. Michael F. Hopkins, '"Worlds apart": The British embassy in Moscow and the search for east-west understanding', *Contemporary British History*, 14(3) (2000), 138.
124. Kennan cited in Ibid.
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129. Private Information.
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132. John Dickie, *Inside the Foreign Office* (London: Chapmans, 1992), 180; Geoffrey Jackson, *People's Prison* (Faber & Faber, 1973), 16. See also Gerard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al Qaeda* (University of California Press, 2007), 232–3.
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136. J. Craig Barker, *The Protection of Diplomatic Personnel* (Ashgate, 2006), 2.
137. BDOHP: CROSS, "Jasper" James Richard, CMG (1921–2021).
138. Jackson, *People's Prison*, 25.
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140. CAC: JAKN 2/1/4, 3–4.
141. CAC: JAKN 3/1, Lecture entitled 'Kidnapping and Hijacking'.
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149. Mark Urban, *Big Boys' Rules: The SAS and the Secret Struggle Against the IRA* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), pp. 227–37.
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