

Mark Kennedy case brings calls for inquiry into role of undercover police

Senior officers defend tactics as lawyers and politicians demand judge-led investigation into policing tactics



📷 MP Keith Vaz is among those who have called for an inquiry into policing tactics as a result of the Mark Kennedy case. Photograph: PA

Mark Townsend

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Pressure is building for a far-reaching inquiry to establish the full scale of undercover police operations among Britain's political protest movement.

The lawyer whose request for details of the role played by **Mark Kennedy**, a covert police officer, led to the collapse of the trial of green activists last week, revealed yesterday that he was not satisfied with an Independent Police Complaints Commission inquiry into the affair. Mike Schwarz, of Bindmans, said that only a judge-led investigation, modelled on Sir William Macpherson's inquiry into the murder of teenager Stephen Lawrence, could be trusted to expose the true level of covert police infiltration of protest groups.

The IPCC investigation will examine whether police tried to cover up Kennedy's role within the green movement. Claims surfaced yesterday that

the trial of activists accused of plotting to close Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station near Nottingham collapsed because officers withheld secret recordings that "fatally undermined the case against the protesters".

Attempts by politicians to unearth the scale of undercover policing tactics have already begun with Keith Vaz, chairman of the Commons home affairs select committee, confirming he had written to Sir Paul Stephenson asking why the Met commissioner's parliamentary testimony last year appeared to fall short of providing "the full facts". There is also speculation that a separate inquiry will be launched by Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate of Constabulary this week.

Senior officers yesterday defended undercover policing. The Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo) said covert operatives had to remain within the law, but insisted: "The service cannot operate effectively to prevent and detect crime unless it uses intelligence."

Schwarz also indicated he might collate testimonies from protesters who said they had sexual relationships with Kennedy amid allegations that his behaviour was sanctioned by superiors.

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