

Analysis

Mark Kennedy: undercover cop or eco-warrior?

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Spy's interview leaves no one any clearer as to exactly where his loyalties lie



⌚ Mark Kennedy in his undercover role as Mark Stone. Photograph: Public Domain

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Given he spent most of the last decade trading classified information, it is hardly a surprise that **Mark Kennedy** sold his story.

There has been a frenzied hunt for the man known among protesters by his alias, Mark Stone, ever since the *Guardian* disclosed the full scope of his life as an undercover agent - and his apparent remorse - last week. A delegation of officers were flown to the United States to find Kennedy, fearing that he had "gone rogue" and endangered the lives of more than a dozen fellow undercover officers. They and the environmental activists they were so keen to place under surveillance were desperate to find out which side of the fence an apparently torn Kennedy would choose.

Yesterday, Kennedy managed to reveal elements of his deployment that will infuriate his old friends and employers, but left no one any clearer as to exactly where his loyalties lie.

What is clear is that his two most notable disclosures reflect worse on the National Public Order Intelligence Unit. First, by stating that his handlers "sanctioned" his every move, Kennedy has undercut attempts by police to claim he was a "bad apple" who lost control.

Police chiefs have privately tried to distance themselves from the more embarrassing aspects of his operation, claiming Kennedy was a loose cannon. That will be harder to sustain now Kennedy has gone on record saying that he "didn't sneeze without a superior officer knowing about it".

Similarly, his revelation that police withheld surveillance tapes that would have exonerated six activists they were happy to see go to jail for a crime they did not commit could amount to an attempt by his police handlers to pervert the course of justice. But Kennedy's claim to have only had two sexual relationships while posing as an activist, for example, contradicts starkly all the accounts of those who knew him best. Similarly, Kennedy claims he did not "give up" the identity of a fellow undercover officer, a woman known as Officer A. Those present when Kennedy confessed to being an officer three months ago say that is exactly what he did.

"The trouble with Mark is you don't know what is real," said Craig Logan, one of the friends who said Kennedy told him about Officer A's true identity. "He was an absolutely extraordinary liar trained by the British state."

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