

Home Office 'knew police stole children's identities'

Bob Lambert admits to adopting the identity of a seven-year-old boy and has conceded to having four affairs while undercover



📷 Bob Lambert was deployed as an animal rights activist named Bob Robinson in the 1980s.

Paul Lewis and Rob Evans

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A former police spymaster has claimed the practice of resurrecting the identities of dead children so they could be used by undercover officers was "well known at the highest levels of the Home Office".

Bob Lambert, who is facing a potential criminal investigation over his work for a secret unit of undercover officers, admitted that when he was deployed as a spy himself, he adopted the identity of a seven-year-old boy who died of a congenital heart defect.

He also admitted to using his false identity in court and co-writing the "McLibel" leaflet that defamed the burger chain McDonald's, resulting in the longest civil trial in English legal history.

Conceding publicly for the first time that he had four relationships with women while undercover, one of which resulted in him secretly fathering a child, he said: "With hindsight I can only say that I genuinely regret my actions, and I apologise to the women affected in my case."

Lambert was deployed as an animal rights activist named "Bob Robinson" in the 1980s for a covert Metropolitan [Police](#) unit called the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) which deployed undercover officers in political campaign groups. In the 1990s, he was promoted to manage other undercover operatives.

Over the last two years the Guardian has detailed the covert work of Lambert, one of the most controversial spies to have worked for the SDS and its sister squad, the National Public Order Intelligence Unit.

Until now, Lambert has either declined to comment in detail or said the Guardian's reports amounted to "a misleading combination of truth, distortions, exaggerations and outright lies".

However, in a Channel 4 News interview broadcast on Friday, Lambert admitted that many of the allegations made against him were true. "My reputation is never going to be redeemed for many people, and I don't think it should be," he told the programme. "I think I made serious mistakes that I should regret, and I always will do."

Lambert said he was arrested "four or five" times while undercover and in 1986 he appeared in a magistrates court charged with a "minor public order offence". He said he had to appear in court using his alter ego - rather than his real name - in order to "maintain cover".

He also admitted to co-writing the McLibel leaflet. "I was certainly a contributing author to the McLibel leaflet," he told the programme. "Well, I think, the one that I remember, the one that I remember making a contribution to, was called What's Wrong With McDonald's?"

Asked if that was ever disclosed to the court during the long-running civil trial, he replied: "I don't know the answer to that question."

Although he admitted having relationships with women, Lambert denied it was a deliberate tactic in the SDS to use relationships to gain access, saying "probably I became too immersed" in his alter ego. "I'd always been a faithful husband," he said. "I only ever became an unfaithful husband when I became an undercover police officer."

Harriet Wistrich, a lawyer representing eight women involved in relationships with Lambert and other undercover police said that there was a systematic pattern in which operatives repeatedly used long-term relationships to build their cover.

Almost all of the undercover officers identified so far - including those known to have worked under Lambert - had sexual relationships while operating covertly.

An SDS spy who has become a whistleblower, Peter Francis, has said that when he was deployed as an anti-racist campaigner, his superiors asked him to find "dirt" that could be used to smear the family of Stephen Lawrence, the black teenager who was stabbed to death in a racist attack in 1993.

His revelation has since triggered further investigations into alleged covert tactics used against the Lawrence family, their supporters and Duwayne Brooks, a friend of Stephen and the main witness to the murder.

On Friday, police chiefs admitted bugging a meeting with Brooks and his lawyer, Jane Deighton. Deighton said that Brooks, who is now a Lib Dem councillor, conveyed his concern in a meeting with the deputy prime minister, Nick Clegg.

In a previous Channel 4 News broadcast, Lambert denied the unit was involved in seeking to smear the Lawrence family during his tenure as deputy head of the unit.

He had a supervisory role when other spies, such as Jim Boyling and Mark Jenner, formed long-term relationships with people they were spying on. All are now under investigation.

The deployments of Francis, Lambert, Boyling and Jenner are detailed in a new book: *Undercover: The True Story of Britain's Secret Police*.

Lambert has also been accused in parliament of igniting an incendiary device in a branch of Debenhams as part of a fire-bombing campaign by the Animal

Liberation Front. Repeating earlier denials, he told Channel 4 News that the claim was "false".

The home secretary, Theresa May, is coming under mounting pressure to announce an independent public inquiry into the affair. So far she has indicated that two pre-existing inquiries - one run by a barrister, the other an internal Met police review - are capable of investigating the allegations surrounding the Lawrences and Brooks.

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