

ABDUCTION OF THE PRINCESSES

Sheikh in new police probe

... as detective who first investigated princess's kidnap blasts 'cover-up'



Snatched: Princess Shamsa

By Sam Greenhill, Claire Duffin and David Churchill

THE detective who tried to investigate a princess's kidnapping says his inquiry was shut down to save official embarrassment.

David Beck was investigating the 2000 abduction of teenage Princess Shamsa from Cambridge by her father, the ruler of Dubai, when the case was shelved amid alleged meddling from the Foreign Office.

It is claimed that Labour foreign secretary Robin Cook, who died in 2005, was involved in the decision as a 'diplomatic favour' to Sheikh Mohammed al-Maktoum.

Cambridgeshire police now say they will review the case following a damning High Court judgment that Sheikh Mohammed, 70, was behind the abduction and forced return to Dubai of his daughter Shamsa, as well as the 2018 kidnap of her sister Latifa.

Mr Beck, 65, a retired detective superintendent, said he was not directly aware of political 'interference' but he was told that the case was being shelved because of 'significant sensitivities'. To him that meant 'someone is going to get embarrassed - well, personal embarrassment is not a reason for withholding the truth,' he said.

'Had they said "national security is at risk", then of course I may have considered differently. But they didn't. They just said "significant sensitivities", and I don't agree with bullying.'

The High Court ruling followed a 10-month custody battle between the sheikh, worth £9 billion, and

his sixth and youngest wife, Princess Haya, 45.

He launched the case to demand the 'summary return' of his son and daughter but it backfired spectacularly. He lost his children, his wife, and his international standing after Sir Andrew McFarlane, president of the Family Division, found he had conducted a 'campaign of fear and intimidation' against Princess Haya, forcing her to flee to London with their two children last April.

The judge also found the sheikh 'ordered and orchestrated' the kidnap of Princess Latifa, who was snatched from a boat in the Arabian Sea in 2018. She and Shamsa are still captive in Dubai.

Sir Andrew said the sheikh's actions, on balance of probabilities, ran 'contrary to the criminal law of England and Wales, international law and internationally

accepted human rights norms'. The sheikh, who did not attend court, denies any wrongdoing. He repeatedly tried to keep the findings secret but the case was ruled to be in the public interest.

Mr Beck said he had never forgotten the plight of Princess Shamsa, who ran away at 19 because of her father's oppressive treatment of women and girls.

She fled his Surrey estate, but after weeks on the run she says that after visiting a pub in Cambridge she was grabbed by four of armed heavies, injected with sedatives and taken back to Dubai.

Yesterday, both Tony Blair, who was prime minister in 2000, and Jack Straw, who became foreign secretary in 2001, denied any knowledge of the case. And Number 10 sources insisted the Foreign Office had 'no role in the investigation or outcome'. But



Oppressive: The sheikh with sixth wife Haya. Inset: Yesterday's Mail

SCANDAL OF PRINCESS ABDUCTED FROM UK

Labour's Shami Chakrabarti, shadow attorney general, said: 'This is clearly a shocking judgment. She called for an urgent probe into 'why a criminal inquiry into a kidnap in Cambridge appears to have been impeded'.

Tory MP Alec Shelbrooke backed calls for a probe and Kate Allen of Amnesty International said: 'No

one is above the law.' Announcing a review yesterday, Cambridgeshire Police said their investigations in 2001 and 2017, were called off due to 'insufficient evidence'.

The British Horseracing Authority faces calls to review the sheikh's registration. He owns hundreds of horses through his Godolphin stables in Newmarket, Suffolk.



COMMENTARY
by Stephen Glover

SHAMEFUL CASE EXPOSES HYPOCRISY OF BLAIR YEARS

WHEN New Labour came to power in 1997, it trumpeted what it grandly called an 'ethical foreign policy'. Its most vocal champion was the foreign secretary, Robin Cook.

Mr Cook asserted that he 'would make Britain a force for good in the world' and promised that New Labour's foreign policy would have 'an ethical dimension' and promote democratic rights.

Some of us were pretty suspicious as to whether foreign affairs could be sensibly conducted on this basis, but few of us in our wildest dreams imagined that an 'ethical foreign policy' would turn out to be so stupendously unethical.

A probably illegal war in Iraq, the wooing of the monstrous leader of Libya, Muammar Gaddafi, and British association with torture are just some examples of Labour supposedly enlightened foreign policy.

On Thursday, a High Court ruling revealed

a shameful case which in some ways surpasses anything that has come before. It concerns the kidnapping of a young woman on a British street, and the subsequent connivance of the Labour government in this unlawful act.

Sheikh Mohammed al-Maktoum, the billionaire ruler of Dubai and a close UK ally, ordered his henchmen to abduct his runaway daughter Princess Shamsa, then 19,

from Cambridge in August 2000. The princess later described how she had been grabbed by armed bodyguards, injected with sedatives and taken to Dubai, where she was tortured. She has not been seen in public since her abduction.

The British government was seemingly unaware of what had taken place. But when Cambridgeshire police launched a criminal investigation the following year, the Foreign

Office (with Mr Cook in charge) allegedly shut it down as a diplomatic favour.

That was only one astounding revelation thrown up by the court case. It also emerged that Sheikh Mohammed much later kidnapped another daughter, and left the youngest of his six wives in fear of her life after discovering her relationship with a British bodyguard. Not a nice man.

How could Mr Cook - a decent enough person, I think - have so jettisoned his principles that he was prepared to turn a blind eye to such an appalling act involving a defenceless young woman?

Was prime minister Tony Blair, a much more ruthless character, party to the decision? It is hard to believe he wasn't, given his political dominance at the time. Mr Blair, by the way, removed Mr Cook as foreign secretary, demoting him to leader of the Commons in June 2001.

These are just some of the questions that must be answered by a proper inquiry into the affair. This is a scandal. It must not be brushed under the carpet and forgotten, along with the other foreign policy abominations of the Blair years.

I accept, of course, that we live in a fallen world, and must deal with regimes we don't much like in order to safeguard

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Britain's national self-interest. During nearly four decades we have sold billions of pounds worth of armaments to Saudi Arabia, an authoritarian regime which is guilty of innumerable human rights abuses. Neighbouring Dubai is part of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and a major US naval base. Although in 2000 the attack on the World Trade Centre had not yet happened and the subsequent Middle Eastern conflagration set in train, the UAE was already a valued western ally. Moreover, the UAE has for many years been a significant investor in the UK, and an important trading partner. Long before this week's shocking High Court ruling, it was clear that Sheikh Mohammed's regime was about as far as is possible from being a beacon

of democracy. So, yes, I'm afraid we have to hold our noses and do business with countries like the UAE. That is why New Labour's ethical foreign policy was so much humbug. Messrs Blair and Cook were perfectly aware of the nature of the people they were

'This is a scandal. It must not be forgotten'

supping with. But there are limits. No self-respecting government with any notion of decency can ignore foreign thugs abducting an innocent young woman in broad daylight. Sheikh Mohammed al-Mak-

toum can behave like that in his own benighted country, if he must. But when he starts throwing his weight around our streets, and flouting the rule of law, that really is time for the British government to take action, even if there are some disagreeable consequences.

An investigation into what happened would not just illuminate the hypocrisy and double-dealing of New Labour. It would also shine a light into some pretty rotten recesses of the British foreign policy and security establishment.

Speaking for myself, I've never had the slightest wish to visit Dubai, with its soulless skyscrapers and ugly temples of Mammon. Now wild horses would not drag me to Sheikh Mohammed's depressing patch of land. I hope British visitors who venture there know where they are headed.

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OF ONE thing we can be sure. When the Queen is driven along the Epsom Downs racecourse on Derby Day in June, one man will be watching with more than usual concern: her fellow racing enthusiast and Dubai's autocratic ruler Sheikh Mohammed al-Maktoum.

Unlike at Royal Ascot later that month, where in the past Sheikh Mohammed, 70, has shared the royal carriage, the Queen does not have official guests on Derby Day. But as the owner of Pinatubo, the three-year-old colt who is already leading the betting as an early favourite for the classic race, there is every chance the oil-rich sheikh and his entourage will be there in numbers.

The question is just what, or rather how, will the Queen react? In the course of her near 70-year reign she has overcome any number of awkward public encounters with despots, dictators and even former terrorists. But Sheikh Mohammed the ruler of Dubai, has been a long-standing and valued friend.

Now the judgment of the High Court has revealed him to be a vindictive tyrant with not just scant regard for human rights, but also someone who has ridden roughshod over the laws of the country which for years has made him welcome.

The court heard how the billionaire sheikh kidnapped two of his daughters - one from the streets of Britain - and waged a 'campaign of fear and intimidation' against Princess Haya, the youngest of his six wives, after she began an affair with her British bodyguard before she fled from Dubai to the UK with their two children.

A bitter ten-month courtroom battle even heard claims that the couple's daughter Jalila, 12, would be forced into an arranged marriage to the ruthless Mohammad bin Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and the man accused of ordering the murder in Turkey of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Racing and a shared love of horses have long cemented the family ties between the Windsors and the Maktoums. Eleven years ago Sheikh Mohammed gave the Queen four yearlings, one of which, Carlton House, came close to delivering her longed-for Derby winner in 2011 but ultimately finished third.

In return she gave him one of her thoroughbreds, Highland Glen, as a present. He had wanted to buy it but because of fears of embarrassment if the horse did not win again, she insisted on giving it to him.

The friendship extends quite separately to the sheikh's estranged wife Princess Haya, whose explosive evidence in court helped expose the brutality of her husband. Haya's Anglophile father King Hussein of Jordan was a warm and staunch ally of the UK and a close friend of the royals. Prince Charles attended his funeral in 1999.

THE princess, an accomplished horsewoman who rode for her country in the Sydney Olympics, lavished praise on the Queen when presenting her with the International Equestrian Federation's first ever lifetime achievement award.

'She is a true horsewoman who rides whenever state business allows,' the princess declared, adding that her 'knowledge of breeding and bloodlines is incredible'.

It was against this backdrop of kinship and common interests that the Queen found herself unwittingly drawn into the sensational drama that has played out in the High Court between the sheikh and his wife.

As I revealed in July last year, only days after fleeing the Gulf with her two young children for London, where she has been holed up in an £85million mansion opposite Kensington Palace, Princess Haya met the Queen privately for tea at Windsor Castle.

The meeting took place two weeks



by **Richard Kay**

EDITOR AT LARGE

before the sheikh began legal moves against his estranged wife to try to get his children returned to Dubai, an action he has since dropped. Yet during Ascot week in June the Queen was rubbing shoulders with the horse-owning sheikh in the paddock, presenting him with the trophy as winner of the Diamond Jubilee Stakes.

Ever since, she and the rest of the Royal Family have made strenuous efforts to avoid being accused of taking sides. At one stage reports emanating from the Gulf claimed that Princess Haya had sought sanctuary in one of the Queen's palaces. If true it would have been hugely embarrassing and potentially compromising for the Queen. Aides were swift to deny the claims.

They are now thought to be one of the many fake news items and smears generated on Sheikh Mohammed's behalf through media contacts to damage his wife's reputation - and which were described by the judge presiding over the High Court case this week as 'wholly inaccurate.'

Now that the full details of the case have emerged, questions are being asked if it is right for the Queen - and other royals - to continue their cosy relationship with Sheikh Mohammed. One courtier said: 'The findings of the court are very disturbing: torture, kidnap and flouting international law cannot be absolved by a mutual love for horse flesh. The issue of course is that these relationships are directed by government policy.'

All the same, the case has not just shone a light on the relationship between the Queen's family and the sheikh, who is also Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, but on that of the other Arab royal families.

Over the years the British royals have forged the closest of links with the desert kingdoms dotted around the Persian Gulf and the other Middle East monarchies, such as Jordan. There are strategic reasons for this, of course. Britain has long been an influential figure in that part of the world and defence contracts struck there are vital to the British Exchequer.

The gas-rich al-Thani family of Qatar, where the World Cup will be held in 2022, have made London their second home and bought up large swathes of the capital. They too have invested heavily in the sport of kings with their holding company, Qatar Investment & Projects Development, becoming Royal Ascot's com-

They've long shared a deep bond over horses. But after this week's revelations of kidnap and 'torture' by Dubai's billionaire ruler, a troubling question for the Queen...



Friends: Queen with the sheikh at Royal Windsor Horse Show

man with a £14billion fortune something infinitely more valuable to him - honours. She has invested him with the knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George.

There are other favours of a more back-scratching kind too. In 2010, an anxious Charles wrote personally to the then Emir of Qatar for help when £3billion of Qatari money was invested in the redevelopment of Chelsea barracks into a modern steel and glass monstrosity of homes.

The prince objected to the architectural plans and, at his request, the Emir helped. The modernist scheme was scrapped at considerable cost, and a new, more conventional building plan was drawn up, of which Charles approved.

Can she turn a blind eye to cruelty?

FIVE years ago it emerged that Sheikh Hamad al-Thani, first cousin of the Emir of Qatar, was helping to pay for the upkeep of one of the Royal Family's personal treasures, the Castle of Mey, the Scottish retreat that Prince Charles inherited on the death of the Queen Mother.

Such generosity was reciprocated - Sheikh Thani, who is the boss of Ascot sponsors Qipco, was appointed vice president of The Friends of the Castle of Mey.

Which us brings us back to Sheikh Mohammed and the upcoming flat-racing season which his horses dominate and which the Queen so passionately loves. She will, says a friend, have her 'official' face on when she and the sheikh meet, as they inevitably will.

'The encounter will be courteous and she will be flattering,' says a figure who has observed the relationship between the royals and the Arab kingdoms close up. 'The Queen has respect for those - and especially the Maktoums - who can turn out a decent racehorse or provide some stock to strengthen her own thoroughbred operation. But her human affection for them will be reserved. Unlike other royal houses, she does not regard them as relatives.'

also extends to royal staff. One former Royal Household figure told me that he returned from Dubai with Charles, and six or seven Swiss watches. So what can the British royals offer in return? The answer lies in the gloss of respectability they bestow just by receiving them. In 2016, for instance, Sheikh Mohammed was photographed in the royal box during Ascot week, a picture that was endlessly reproduced throughout the Arab world.

The Queen has paid two visits to the UAE, the first was on board the Royal Yacht Britannia in 1979 and the most recent in 2010. Sheikh Mohammed, meanwhile has been her house guest at Windsor Castle during Royal Ascot week, which ensured he was part of the televised carriage drive down the racecourse, sitting alongside Prince Andrew. The Queen has also handed the

BUT gifts to the royals keep on coming. 'Arab rulers in particular give them huge valuable gifts at the drop of a hat, it's their custom to be generous,' says a former royal aide. 'Only official gifts given during engagements have to be catalogued, displayed, put on loan or in storage. These range from, books, paintings, pens, statues and even cars. They, however, belong to the nation. The largesse

with hand-written thank-you letters from them both. This, incidentally, despite the fact that Hammer was a fraudster and one of the most corrupt magnates of modern times. No such effusive notes between the royals and the oil monarchs have - so far - come to light.

Rarely are these exchanges of presents witnessed in public, but just occasionally they are. In 1997 Prince Charles was photographed receiving two inlaid jewel boxes through his car window during a visit to Saudi Arabia. His expression was one of awkward pleasure.

And sometimes the gifting has come back to haunt him. Take his close relationship with the ruthless and corrupt oil tycoon Armand Hammer, a major benefactor to the prince's charities who was exposed after his death aged 92 as having spied for Russia.

Money, of course, is at the heart of these alliances. Arab rulers have poured millions into many of the royals' charities and other schemes. And then there are the gifts. Lavish doesn't come close.

In 1990, Sheikh Mohammed's father, Sheikh Rashid - then ruler

of Dubai - presented the Queen with a fabulous jewellery set of sapphires and diamonds set in gold. It comprised of a necklace, earrings and a brooch.

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