

# The Queen's Corps of Commissionaires

by Dean Andromidas

Earlier this year, the government of Papua New Guinea was voted from office, following the worst scandal to hit the country since its independence. It was triggered when the government sought to contract a British mercenary firm, Sandline International, to take on the task of wiping out a local insurgency. For weeks, the press ran articles depicting Sandline as the stereotypical mercenaries, the dogs of war, hired killers. But, there was barely a mention of another company which was also involved in bidding for security work in P.N.G., and which, in fact, had initiated the proposal that the government bring in "private" companies to fill its counterinsurgency needs. The other company, standing discreetly in the shadows, was the Corps of Commissionaires. It was only after the Corps of Commissionaires, which maintains a permanent office in P.N.G., submitted a bid higher than the government's limited budget, that Sandline was given the contract—which, some observers report, was on the Corps' recommendation. Sandline, in turn, farmed out part of the contract to another London-based "private" security firm, Defence Systems Limited.

Sandline and the Corps of Commissionaires appear to be very similar outfits: Both are based in London. Both draw exclusively from the military and police establishments of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. Both have Special Air Service (SAS) veterans in their employ. Both take on work for foreign governments and multinational corporations.

## The Queen's squadristi

But, in fact, the Corps of Commissionaires is not a competitor to Sandline, Executive Outcomes, Defence Systems Ltd., and the rash of other British and Commonwealth "private" mercenary companies that have surfaced in recent years; it is an umbrella agency, and central hiring hall, which brings the entire collection of so-called "private" services under the direct auspices of the British Crown.

The substantial difference that puts the Corps higher on the pecking order, is that it lists the Queen of England as its official patron and honorary chair. It has sister organizations in Canada and Australia, two countries which are still under the direct sovereign control of the House of Windsor; the Queen is their patron and honorary chair, as well.

A spokesman for the Queen, in a moment of royal indiscretion, admitted to *EIR*, that Queen Elizabeth II serves as

head of the various Corps of Commissionaires, as part of her official duties as Commander-in-Chief of all military forces of the Empire. In short, the Corps is an integral part of the military structure of the Crown—albeit a usually "invisible" part.

Given the Corps' royal sponsorship and direction, it should come as no surprise that the British Corps' Board of Governors is dominated by retired senior officers, who have held positions within the Royal Household. Many board members belong to the Order of the Bath, the only chivalric order, which honors military officers who made extraordinary contributions to the Crown. The Order of the Bath was founded, in the eighteenth century, by King George I, in the early days of the Hanoverian-Windsor dynasty.

## Her Majesty's mercenary clearinghouse

A spokesman at the Corps' London office, in a recent interview, confidently assured *EIR* that the Corps could draw upon a pool of former military and uniformed services personnel, from ex-SAS veterans, to regular soldiers, to senior offi-

## The Corps' key personnel

### Great Britain

**Her Majesty the Queen**, chief patron.

**Maj. Gen. David Alexander**, Companion of the Bath, president of the Board of Governors, Corps of Commissionaires. His is a former Equerry and Treasurer to Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and a senior retired officer whose last position was Commandant of the Scottish Police College.

**Adm. Sir Nickolas Hunt**, Board of Governors, Corps of Commissionaires. Hunt is chairman of the British Chamber of Shipping, representing the British shipping industry, a key institution in the City of London which coordinates with the "Invisibles," the City of London business group that utilizes the Queen's royal yacht for its international business activities.

**Vice Adm. Sir Robert Gerken**, Knight, Companion of the Bath; Commander of the British Empire; chairman of the Board of Directors, Corps of Commissionaires. Gerken is also Commodore of the Royal Western Yacht Club, whose patron is the Duke of Edinburgh.

**Air Marshal Sir Thomas Kennedy**, Board of Governors, Corps of Commissionaires; Knight Grand Cross of the Bath; Commander of the British Empire; former Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Air Force in Germany; and, Air Aide-de-Camp to the Queen (1983-86). Director of Dowty Group, a major British defense contractor.

cers up to the rank of four-star general. These include veterans capable of any tasks, from organizing operations of a logistical nature; to military and police training, in Britain and overseas; to more esoteric operations. Although the spokesman denied that the Corps plays any role in recruiting mercenaries, he hedged, "We can do anything in this field, and if we can't do it, we can find someone who can." While advertising its more mundane security services on a well-maintained web site, the spokesman further explained to *EIR* that "other" services are available, but that details would have to be "discussed across the table. Get my drift?"

The scale of operations of the Corps of Commissionaires is staggering, particularly in light of the spokesman's veiled admission that it can provide mercenary services.

The Canadian Corps is the largest of the organizations, with over 13,000 Commissionaires presently on the payroll. By comparison, the Canadian Army, which has forces deployed in United Nations "blue helmet" peacekeeping missions all around the globe, has only 20,000 men and women. Although organized as a not-for-profit private company, the

Corps is the official uniformed security service for the Canadian government. Commissionaires can be seen at all Canadian federal facilities. Its chief patron is Canadian Governor General Romeo Leblanc, who holds this position as the official appointee and representative of the Queen. Leblanc is himself a member of the Privy Council.

The Corps of Commissionaires sister organizations in Australia have expanded its role well beyond the traditional. They have established subsidiaries outside of Australia. One of these is P.N.G. Corps Ltd., located in Papua New Guinea.

An Australian spokesman assured *EIR* that the Corps, as a private company can "supply customers with a wide range of services. . . . We will do anything that's legal. Our men have a wide range of military skills and these can be put to good use in the private sector in areas of security, crowd control, or whatever, as required by our clients." Among their 700 clients are the country's major banks and corporations, including, for example, ANZ Banking Group Ltd., Westpac Banking, Commonwealth Bank, Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp., and National Australia Bank.

## Australia

**Maj. James B. Leslie**, chairman of the Board of Governors, British Oil Refineries Australia Ltd. (Boral), 1991-94; International Advisory Board of Chemical Bank New York; chairman, Qantas Airways Ltd., 1980-89; chairman and managing director, Mobil Oil Australia, and Christies.

**Maj. Everard Baillieu**, president: Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE), founder of the Baillieu Allard Real Estate empire and member of the family of brokers which virtually controlled the Australian Stock Exchange.

**Will Bailey**, board member of the Tasman Institute, a Mont Pelerin Society front group; deputy chairman, ANZ Banking Group, 1984-92; deputy chairman, Coles Myer Ltd. (a retail giant).

**Commodore Dacre Henry Deudraeth Smyth**, Aide-de-Camp to the Queen, 1975-78; Order of Australia; director, David Syme and Co. Ltd., 1982-94; patron, Animal Welfare League. Son of Gen. Sir Nevill Smyth (London), Victoria Cross, Knight Commander of Bath.

**Col. Norman Carlyon**, Order of the British Empire; chairman and founder, the Carlyon Hotels Group.

**Nobby Clark**, board member, Institute of Public Affairs, a Mont Pelerin Society front; chairman, Coles Myer Ltd.

**Sir Rupert Clarke**, Third Baron of Rupertswood, member, Order of the British Empire; chairman, P&O (Australia) Ltd.; chairman, National Australia Bank, 1986-92; chairman, Cadbury Schweppes Australia Ltd., 1971-92.

**Lt. Col. Sir John Holland**, director, ANZ Bank 1976-81; chairman, Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Trust, 1981-87; member and director, Winston Churchill Memorial Trust; patron, Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Victoria; board member (since 1970), Institute of Public Affairs; member, Rhodes Scholarship Selection Committee.

**Sir Arvi Parbo**, chairman (since 1974), Western Mining Corp.; patron, Australian Drug Foundation (a group which is pushing drug legalization); chairman, Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd. (Australia's largest company, and the third largest mining investor in the Western World), 1989-92; chairman, Alcoa Ltd. (Rio Tinto subsidiary).

**Joseph Trethowan**, Australia Medal; deputy chairman (since 1988), Mayne Nickless; director (since 1984), National Australia Bank; treasurer (since 1986), Corps of Commissionaires.

**Sir Wilfrid Brookes**, CBE; former director, Alcoa Ltd., Western Mining Corp. Ltd., and Central Norseman Gold Corp.

## Canada

**Romeo Leblanc**, Governor General of Canada; member, Privy Council.

**Lt. Gen. J.A.R. Gutknecht**, National Executive Secretary of the Corps of Commissionaires. Officer of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. He is a 35-year career officer with postings in Vietnam, Pakistan, India, and the United States, and is a representative of Canada on the Military Committee of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Among the industrial firms which employ the Corps are: Imperial Chemical Industries, Unilever, and British General Electric Company. The insurance giant Australian Mutual Provident (the largest insurance company in the country), as well as the nation's most important stock-brokerage, Potter Warburg, both contract with the Corps. Among Australia's largest mining and oil companies, the Corps' clients include: Shell Corp. of Australia, Western Mining Corp., British Petroleum, and Caltex Oil.

As in the case of Canada, the chief patrons of the Corps of Commissionaires in Australia, which are organized by state, are the state governors, who are directly answerable to the Queen. Their directors are drawn not only from retired senior officers, but from the highest level of the Australian establishment which is closest to the Crown.

### An imperial history

The Corps of Commissionaires, like its sister agency, Crown Agents, was founded under royal sponsorship in 1859, when the British Empire was at the peak of its power and global reach. The Corps was established, ostensibly, to provide employment for thousands of British soldiers demobilized following the Crimean War. Initially, the "soldiers" of the Corps of Commissionaires were employed principally as armed, uniformed security guards for the prestigious financial

houses of the City of London. Their flashy uniforms have been a familiar sight, at the entrances of elite banking and financial establishments of the City ever since.

But, make no mistake. The Corps is not some kind of benevolent society for war veterans, or even a simple uniformed security guard service. It was organized as an integral part of the imperial military system, as evidenced by the Queen's role, to this day.

In the nineteenth century, the Corps of Commissionaires was established in Australia, Canada, East Africa, New Zealand, and South Africa, after a series of resettlement agencies helped relocate a sizable number of British military veterans and their families to the far corners of the Empire, where they also assumed prominent posts within the local military and intelligence establishments.

The Corps was founded by Sir Edward Walter, a retired captain in the Royal Army, whose family also founded the *Times* of London, which has always served as the mouthpiece of the British Establishment.

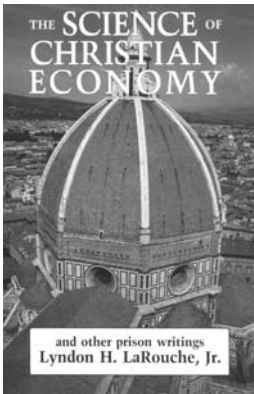
The official history of the Corps, *Our Sergeant*, writes of Sir Edward's motivation for founding the Corps: "He believed they [Army veterans] could demonstrate, through their military qualities, the essence of their employability to the City of London, the world's financial and commercial capital, the country as a whole, and indeed to the Empire beyond. The City would surely come rapidly to appreciate representatives on the doors of head offices, who embodied discipline and loyalty, men who could guard banks and store houses, men of trust who could carry sensitive valuable items between branches of companies and between companies themselves." On where their loyalties lay, the same book reports that the Corps of Commissionaires' "very existence relied on the establishment, on protecting the property of financial houses, the professions and the major industrial concerns."

The role of the Corps of Commissionaires was substantially upgraded when Margaret Thatcher was elected prime minister in 1979, and the radical "free market" policies of the Mont Pelerin Society were unleashed on the world with new force. In 1984, following a reorganization, drafted by Peter Loyd, executive director of the British Institute of Management, the Corps of Commissionaires moved to expand way beyond its role in the City. Its uniformed security service was converted into a separate division, within the Corps, and new divisions were created to provide "specialist security functions." At the same time, the Corps began recruiting personnel from a broader range of military, paramilitary, and police agencies. The scope of its operational capabilities expanded tremendously, as the use of privatized counterinsurgency forces, suited to operate in zones of instability, became a crucial part of the British bag of tricks.

In 1986, to commemorate this reorganization, a special reception was held at Buckingham Palace in honor of the Corps.

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