

U.K.: Security firm pays damages to anti-asbestos activists it spied on

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K2 Intelligence admits hiring infiltrator to pass information to asbestos industry clients

A private security firm has been forced to pay damages to five anti-asbestos campaigners after they discovered it had spied on them.

The firm, [K2 Intelligence](#), paid an infiltrator for four years to masquerade as a sympathetic documentary-maker to obtain confidential information about leading activists in the worldwide campaign to ban asbestos.

K2 Intelligence, which made no admission of wrongdoing, agreed to make the payments after the five campaigners took legal action in the high court against it, Matteo Bigazzi, [K2's executive managing director](#) in London, and the hired infiltrator, Robert Moore.

The size of the damages was not disclosed, but was described as substantial by the campaigners' lawyers.

The high court in London had heard that K2 passed the information to clients in the asbestos industry. The court was told that the aim of the espionage was to gather information about the campaigners, their methods, funding and future plans.

The illnesses resulting from asbestos have led it to be [banned in a large number of countries including the UK](#), but its use is still permitted in many others.

A worldwide network of campaigners, lawyers and doctors has been campaigning for a complete ban on the export and import of asbestos.

The court heard that Moore started to approach campaigners in 2012, saying he was planning to make a documentary about the dangers of asbestos. He later said he wanted to set up an anti-asbestos charity.

According to the campaigners' lawyers, Moore used this cover to embed himself into the heart of the network and gather secret information until 2016. He covertly recorded discussions with campaigners and talks given at private meetings. Invoices showed that K2 paid him a total of £336,000 in fees and £130,400 in expenses.

A document disclosed as part of the legal action showed that when he started spying he told K2 that he wanted to engage with one of the campaigners, Laurie Kazan-Allen, "in the most genuine and heartfelt way possible so that I can establish both an intellectual and emotional connection with

LKA". Through her, he made contact with other campaigners.

Kazan-Allen, the founder and co-ordinator of the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat, said: "The global campaign to ban asbestos is a legitimate grassroots movement backed by untold numbers of asbestos victims, trade unionists, NGOs, legal, medical and technical experts.

"This case was initiated to expose covert actions to infiltrate our network and target those of us perceived to be a threat to the asbestos industry."

The other campaigners who received damages after the legal action was settled were Rory O'Neill, the editor of Hazards magazine, Krishnendu Mukherjee, a barrister, Sugio Furuya, the co-ordinator of the Asian Ban Asbestos Network, and Harminder Bains, a lawyer.

According to Leigh Day, the campaigners' lawyers, [K2's clients were revealed](#) after legal orders to be Wetherby Select Ltd, a company in the British Virgin Islands, Nurlan Omarov, a Kazakh asbestos industry lobbyist, and Daniel Kunin, a figure in Kazakhstan's asbestos industry.

Kazakhstan is among [the biggest producers of asbestos](#).

Richard Meeran, the campaigners' lawyer, said: "The extent of intrusion into these campaigners' private lives shines a worrying light on the opaque activities of the burgeoning corporate intelligence industry."

K2 said: "We reached an agreement to end litigation with no admission of wrongdoing or liability. It is our practice to maintain the highest ethical standards at all times and to comply with the laws of all of the jurisdictions in which we operate."

The campaigners had taken legal action alleging breach of confidence, misuse of private information and breach of the Data Protection Act.

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