

Top terror chief's car hire firm is operating without a licence

By Martin Delgado

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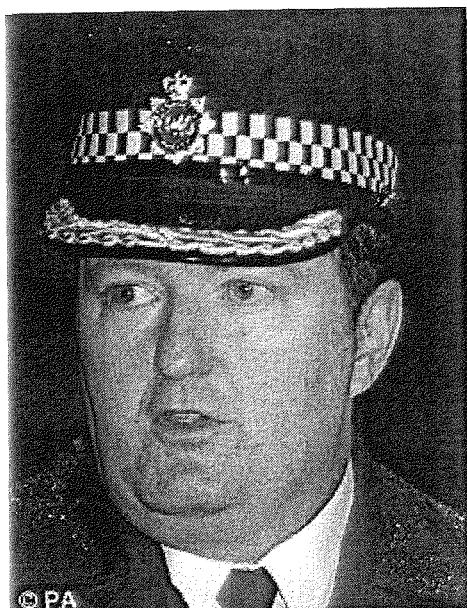
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Controversy: Anti-terror chief Bob Quick's wife has been running the car hire firm without a licence

Britain's top anti-terror police chief faces more embarrassing questions over a luxury car hire business run from his home which appears to be operating illegally and is being investigated by the local council.

The business, run by the wife of Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Bob Quick, the officer who sanctioned the highly controversial raid on the House of Commons office of Tory MP Damian Green, could face prosecution and a fine of up to £3,000.

Inquiries by this newspaper have established that the business, which hires out vintage Rolls-Royces and Mr Quick's 130mph Jensen Interceptor for about £500 a day, does not have an operator's licence.

This could have a bearing on the validity of its passenger insurance policies.

The business, Aphrodite Wedding Services, also appears to have broken the law on two more counts – failing to obtain a private-hire licence for its vehicles and to register its drivers.

To get an operator's licence, drivers must be checked by the Criminal Records Bureau – so there is no way of guaranteeing those employed by Aphrodite have been vetted.

Steve Wright, chairman of industry body the Licensed Private Hire Car Association, said: 'Private-hire vehicles on executive trips gain access to high-security venues. This has serious implications in view of the terrorist threat.'

He added: 'If this business has no licence, it should not be trading. I would have expected a senior police officer, of all people, to be aware of this.'



Mr Quick's wife Judith poses with one of her hire cars

The Mail on Sunday reported last week that the business was being run from Mr Quick's home and details were on the internet.

Mr Quick then accused the Conservatives of corruption and of trying to undermine his investigation into the leak of secret Home Office information to Mr Green.

He later withdrew the remarks and apologised to David Cameron.

In a further embarrassment to Mr Quick, it has emerged that while in his previous post as Chief Constable of Surrey, his force and the local Tandridge District Council produced a 36-page booklet explaining the rules affecting private car hire firms.

One paragraph states: 'No person shall operate any vehicle as a private-hire vehicle in Tandridge without having a current operator's licence.'

After a change to the Road Safety Act in April this year – aimed at closing a loophole that let some operators circumvent the rules – the only firms allowed to operate without a licence are those dealing exclusively with weddings and funerals.

Aphrodite offers a wide range of services, including executive trips and days out to destinations such as Kew Gardens and stately homes.



Mr Quick's 130mph Jensen

A Mail on Sunday reporter visited Tandridge Council offices to inspect the register of private car hire firms but was unable to find any reference to Aphrodite Wedding Services.

A council spokesman said: 'If this business is providing car hire services for day trips and events, and not just for weddings and funerals, we believe it does need a private hire vehicle and operator's licence. All its drivers will also need to be licensed. We will be contacting the business.'

Last night Mrs Quick said that in early 2007 she had sought 'detailed advice' from the council.

'Due to the nature of the business I was not required to obtain a licence,' she said.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1102242/Top-terror-chiefs-car-hire-firm-operating-licence.html#ixzz1m4ohMlPm>