

Military man with 'security problem': Chris Blackhurst profiles Stephan Kock, a former soldier and director of firm in supergun affair

CHRIS BLACKHURST

Friday, 28 January 1994

WHEN a car belonging to two men broke down on a lonely moorland road in Argyll, Scotland, in January 1990, they got more than they bargained for. A car approached from a side road. A figure got out and beckoned one of them over. He suddenly produced a semi-automatic pistol, shouted 'I'm a soldier you know', and fired a shot over their heads.

Their misfortune had been to break down near the home of Stephan Kock, consultant to Midland Bank, adviser to the Joint Intelligence Committee and director of Astra, owner of PRB, the supergun propellant supplier. Mr Kock was fined pounds 650. Later, his solicitor said his client had 'a security problem and was acutely conscious of his own safety'.

A one-time officer in the Rhodesian Special Air Service, Mr Kock was also personal adviser to Sir Edgar Whitehead, the former Rhodesian Prime Minister. A brochure from Midland Bank described him as having served with the RAF and he was also once on the board of Billiton, a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell.

Described as large, bluff and hearty by former colleagues, he acts the ex-military man, wearing SAS cuff-links and dining at the Special Forces Club. He boasted to colleagues of his close ties with Margaret Thatcher. He told the Commons select committee investigating the supergun affair that he once hosted a dinner for Mrs Thatcher. But in 1992, pressed by MPs, he claimed only to have met her 'on one or two occasions'. However, when asked if he reported to the security services, he said: 'I know how to get in touch with some of them, yes.'

As befits someone with intelligence and military connections, Mr Kock is a difficult man to pin down. Former business contacts seem genuinely frightened of him.

(Photograph omitted)