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MI5 investigates KGB father of Russian 'spy'

By Andy Bloxham and Gordon Rayner
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On Wednesday an MI5 officer interviewed Alex Chapman at his home in Bournemouth, Dorset, as part of the Security Service's investigation into the background of Mrs Chapman, 28, who has been accused of spying in the US.

MI5 is trying to discover whether Mrs Chapman, who has British citizenship and a British passport, could have spied on Britain or was recruited here.

Alex Chapman, a 30-year-old trainee psychologist, married the then Anna Kushchenko in Moscow in 2002, five months after they met in a London nightclub. They divorced in 2006 but have remained in touch ever since.

Mr Chapman told The Daily Telegraph: "Anna told me her father had been high up in the ranks of the KGB. She said he had been an agent in 'old Russia'.

"Her father controlled everything in her life, and I felt she would have done anything for her dad.

"When I saw that she had been arrested on suspicion of spying it didn't come as much of a surprise to be honest.

"Towards the end of our marriage she became very secretive, going for meetings on her own with 'Russian friends', and I guess it might have been because she was in contact with the Russian government."

Public school-educated Mr Chapman said he received a visit from MI5 on Wednesday morning, following the arrest last weekend of his ex-wife in the US together with nine others suspected of being part of a spy ring tasked with infiltrating political circles.

“The officer told me she would need everything and I told her what I knew,” he said. “It’s just totally weird to think that my ex-wife could be involved in something like this.”

Mrs Chapman, who has kept her married name despite being divorced, introduced her new husband to her father during their honeymoon in 2002 in Zimbabwe, where Vasily Kushchenko was serving as a diplomat.

“I asked her what her father’s job was and Anna just said he was there to represent the Russian government in certain areas of government,” said Mr Chapman.

“He didn’t trust anyone. He asked me why I had chosen a Russian bride and asked what business I had in Russia, and I said none.

“He was scary. He would never introduce me to other Russian people who came to the house and he always seemed to have a lot more security than the other diplomats. He had a Land Rover with blacked out windows and there was always one car in front of it and one car behind.”

Mrs Chapman moved to London in 2002 and had a succession of well-paid jobs, including a six-month spell working for the small business banking division of Barclays and a period working for a hedge fund called Navigator Asset Management.

MI5 is thought to be investigating whether she handled the accounts of wealthy individuals, and whether there could be any security implications for Britain.

Mrs Chapman later set up her own internet estate agency, and after moving back to Russia in 2006 when her marriage ended, relocated to the US in 2007 where she established another online property venture.

Insurance broker’s son Mr Chapman, who spent his childhood in Bermuda, said his ex-wife had always disliked Americans, complaining about their accent, but suddenly decided in 2007 that she was desperate to go there to exploit “business opportunities”.

He said: “She had met a rich American man who had taken her to the States and when she came back she said she loved it.

“She moved over there to set up her internet property company and it always seemed to be in the red, but it took off suddenly in 2009 and she said she was employing 50 people.

“I couldn’t understand how she could pay them. At some point someone had pumped a lot of money into it.”

Yesterday nine of the 11 alleged spies, none of whom has been formally charged, appeared in court in the US seeking bail, but Mrs Chapman was not among them, as she was refused bail at a hearing on Monday.