

# **THE SPIES THAT POLITICIANS AND OLIGARCHS HIRE TO END YOUR LIFE - "THEY SENT THEM AFTER ME!"**


- **Stella Penn Pechanac worked for a Mossad-linked Israeli intelligence company**
- **Weinstein hired the firm just months before sexual allegations ruined his career**
- **But Stella told the actress she was executive at London asset management firm**

By [Adam Luck And Ben Lazarus For The Mail On Sunday](#)

With her long blonde hair, catwalk figure and dazzling smile, it's easy to believe that Stella Penn Pechanac could have been one of the victims of disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein.

Indeed, that's exactly what she told New York Magazine writer Ben Wallace when she introduced herself as 'Anna' with another terrible story about the influential producer.

However, with his journalist's instinct, Wallace smelled a rat.

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This was 2016, well before the #MeToo scandal emerged, and even Wallace's colleagues had no idea he was investigating claims of sexual harassment against Weinstein.


When they met for coffee, 'Anna' confided she had had an affair with Weinstein that had ended badly.

But there was something about her story that didn't quite ring true. She seemed far more concerned, in fact, with asking questions about other Weinstein victims than her own story.

Call it paranoia, but Wallace had a sneaking suspicion she was recording him.

However, Rose McGowan, the actress who first accused Weinstein of rape, was rather more easily fooled.

Stella's plausible manner and hard-to-place European accent convinced the actress that she was Diana Filip, an executive from London asset management firm Reuben Capital Partners, who wanted to invite McGowan to speak at a gala dinner.

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Over the course of several months, 'Diana' inveigled her way into the Scream star's life. Whether McGowan was in California or New York, Diana always seemed to be conveniently nearby.

They met for long walks, drinks and girls' nights out. McGowan even told her 'there was no one else in the world she could trust'.


But it was all a con. Just like Anna, Diana was merely a cover dreamed up by Stella, a spy working for the infamous Mossad-linked Israeli intelligence company Black Cube.

Weinstein had hired the firm in the months before his career and reputation were ruined by a welter of sexual allegations.

An extraordinary contract, dated July 11, 2017, between the mogul's lawyers and the British arm of the Israeli firm show that Weinstein had tasked Black Cube with two primary objectives: to 'provide intelligence which will help the Client's efforts to completely stop the publication of a new, negative article in a leading NY newspaper', and to 'obtain additional content of a book which is currently being written and which includes harmful negative information on and about the Client'.

To achieve this, Black Cube promised a dedicated team. As part of the operation, codenamed Parachute, the organisation introduced Stella to Weinstein.

Her main objective was to befriend McGowan, obtain a draft of her memoir – and discredit it. And she was tasked with finding out about and blocking other allegations about Weinstein – just like the stories Ben Wallace was working on.

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In late 2017, Weinstein met three Black Cube operatives in the back room of a New York restaurant. There, one of the agents told Weinstein 'we got something good for you'.

After a short pause, a woman with long blonde hair and high cheekbones stepped forward and introduced herself as Anna.

She read passages from McGowan's upcoming book. Listening in a state of shock, Weinstein muttered repeatedly: 'Oh my God.'

Today, Stella Penn Pechanac has left her lucrative job at Black Cube and claims to have turned her back on the murky world of espionage.

She is pregnant with her second child and, in an exclusive interview with The Mail on Sunday, has agreed to lay bare her extraordinary and disturbing double life as an agent for hire.

It is clear from the first moment that Stella is ideal spy material. She comes across as open, engaging and honest, with an unwavering gaze and a seemingly puncture-proof self-confidence.

The first thing she wants to make clear is that she was never involved in any honeytraps.

'I was never a Bond girl,' she insists.

'I was James.'

So how did she come to be a central figure in the most explosive scandal ever to grip Hollywood?

'I acted for years, I spoke five languages, and I travelled a lot,' she says.

'They approached me.'

If that seems unlikely, consider that Black Cube was set up by former Israeli intelligence officers in 2010 and is known for – and trades on – its links with the feared Mossad intelligence service.

Consider also that Stella's fractured background could have been dreamed up by John le Carré: she was born in Sarajevo into a mixed Muslim/Orthodox Christian family that had sheltered Jewish Yugoslavs during the Holocaust. Her grandfather perished in a concentration camp.

Her family converted to Judaism and escaped the bloody Balkans civil war in 1994 and Stella volunteered for the Israeli Defence Force as soon as she turned 18, rising to lieutenant in the air force.

She graduated from an elite Israeli university and went to drama school before joining Black Cube. Although there appear to be puzzling gaps in her CV, she doesn't admit to any previous intelligence training.

However, she did divulge it was the ex-Israeli premier Ehud Barak who put Weinstein's lawyers in touch with the firm.

'The company received the project, examined it, found it legitimate,' Stella says.

'Weinstein was respected, everyone wanted to work for him, with him. We had this new project, it was like a big deal, a huge client coming in. He was facing serious allegations, and there were suspicions there was a negative campaign against him.

'I've worked on cases like this before so it was just another of those, a commercial negative campaign but on a much bigger scale because of Weinstein.'

Stella, 36, is eager to stress that Black Cube field agents usually do not meet the clients, but in this case Weinstein insisted on seeing her face-to-face. The initial meeting, she says, gave her a rare insight into the disgraced titan.

'He was 100 per cent sure people were out to get him,' she says.

'So when I met him, contrary to the huge reputation he had – how powerful, strong, dominant he had been portrayed – he was vulnerable.

'He was saying, 'Someone out there is trying to get me, I need your help and everything they are saying is a bunch of lies. I have never done anything that is not consensual. Someone is

trying to ruin me, my business, my family and I need to find out who that is."

Weinstein must have been happy with the meeting and the material Stella and her team subsequently produced. The former head of Miramax went on to spend more than £1 million with Black Cube to protect his reputation.

Stella sees her efforts as a professional job aimed at protecting her client. Some of those at the other end of Black Cube's techniques, however, describe a sinister and complex web designed to ensnare and cripple those fighting him.

Key witnesses have had their reputations badly damaged since the Weinstein allegations first surfaced, while journalists working on the story have been intimidated.

Ronan Farrow, the writer who broke the Weinstein story, details in his book *Catch And Kill* how the 67-year-old mogul's intimidation tactics left him so frightened that friends advised him to buy a gun.

He was so certain his calls and emails were being monitored he took to communicating with an encrypted messaging app and only connected to the internet through anonymous wi-fi hotspots.

Farrow was so worried that he asked a rival Israeli spy firm what to do if he was being followed by a Black Cube operative. The man replied: 'Just start running.'

The campaign certainly seems to have been successful. Several high-profile cases against Weinstein, including those by actress

Ashley Judd and Hollywood producer Lucia Evans, have been struck out.

Weinstein's legal team, led by Donna Rotunno, nicknamed the Bulldog, are confident of getting their client off when his trial on five counts of sexual assault and rape begins on January 6.

Faced with the prospect of potentially spending the rest of his life behind bars, it is no surprise Weinstein turned to Black Cube to save him. But just how does it operate?

Stella explains that every mission begins with a team brainstorming session, but that the field operative always has the final say.

'You are involved in the think-tank process. No one is going to tell you to be a brain surgeon if you cannot hold that cover,' she adds.

'The team builds the operation and does the analysis and research, and the psychologists build the psychological profile of the person you are supposed to meet.

'Then they bring in the agent, present them with different options and see what works best.'

Recalling her approach to Rose McGowan using the identity Diana Filip, Stella says: 'At that point it was just another cover. It has to be really in-depth, you have to know the role really well and the character really well. Essentially it is all just theatre, right?'

The former agent does not appear to recognise that her approach may have been immoral.



Indeed, during a two-hour interview, Stella only betrays her discomfort once and that is when she is asked what she would think of someone approaching her daughter in the same manner that she approached McGowan.

After a jarringly long pause, the former field agent calmly recovers her equilibrium and says: 'You are not meeting them in order to do anything wrong or harmful to them... in 99 per cent of projects I reveal the bad guys.'

When asked whether this was true in the Weinstein case, she confidently replies: 'Me talking to someone is not harmful. I am just extracting information.'

McGowan, however, was distraught to discover that a woman she regarded as a friend was actually an agent working for Weinstein.

'Everyone lied to me all the time,' she said later.

'I've lived inside a mirrored fun house.' She is now suing Weinstein and Black Cube over what she describes as an attempt to smear and defraud her.

So was Stella acting during her 'friendship' with the actress? 'In a lot of aspects we are very much alike, so the connections were very real,' she says, seemingly unable to comprehend why her actions would appear distasteful to most people.

'In a parallel universe, in a different dimension, in different circumstances, we really could have been friends because although the circumstances were... a lie... the human aspect was very authentic.'

Stella claims that her traumatic childhood in war-torn Sarajevo gave her the ability to have empathy for her targets like McGowan.

'The only way I can get to people and get into their heads is by empathy and you cannot fake that. The empathy is real even if the circumstances are tricky.'

But no matter how many mental blocks she has put up to rid herself of any feelings of guilt, there is no doubt her actions with McGowan were truly questionable. And she was not the only one in the Black Cube cast of actors.

Briton Seth Freedman, a one-time Guardian journalist and a former equities broker, who spent time in the Israel Defence Forces, told The Mail on Sunday that he, too, was tasked with 'finding out who was talking to the press'.

Freedman had some success with McGowan. He used the cover story of being a journalist working on an article about Hollywood to convince McGowan's literary agent to encourage the star to speak to him.

There followed a 75-minute call in which she believed she was talking to a concerned British journalist and revealed information about her accusations against Weinstein.

Freedman denies he was involved in any black ops against Weinstein's victims.

'The line that is always used is Black Cube are hired to investigate, harass and silence victims,' he says. 'I wasn't hired to do any of these things.'

Just like Stella, Freedman was unmasked by Farrow and no longer works for Black Cube.

Stella claims she left the firm in June for personal reasons.

'Being a mother changed my priorities, the risk assessment, everything,' she says.

'You cannot do the job with small children. The universe sends you clues and that was mine.'

So what would she say to McGowan today?

'I think she is very brave, very strong, and I am very supportive of what she was doing,' she says, smiling.

'I am sorry if she ever felt betrayed or hurt by anything that I had to do. I am sorry that I was another person in her life that was there under false pretences. My goal was never to hurt her.'

As with everything she says over the course of the interview, it is impossible to tell whether the trained spy is lying or not.

Regardless, it is perhaps a little too late for apologies.

Mr Weinstein's attorneys said in a statement: 'Mr. Weinstein had a right to examine any claims against him to attempt to prove they were false, as anyone facing false allegations would do.'

'The firm is a recognized investigative agency that was referred by the largest law firm in the world devoted solely to business litigation and arbitration. In addition, the research that was done was more comprehensive than so much of the fiction dreamed up for [Ronan Farrow's] book.'