

# **The Tangled Web of Raymond: A Dutch Spy's Downfall, From Hong Kong to a Russian Sting and the Undercover Operation that Laid it Bare**

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The life of a spy is often shrouded in secrecy, a complex tapestry of aliases, clandestine meetings, and high-stakes operations. But for Raymond Poeteray, a Dutch intelligence operative whose career veered dramatically off course, the threads of his existence became irrevocably knotted, leading him from the bustling streets of Hong Kong to a humiliating Russian sting in New York, all while battling personal demons and an unexpected familial connection to a German spy dynasty.

Raymond Poeteray was a seasoned operative for the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD). His career, for a time, seemingly thrived in the shadows of Asia, a region ripe with geopolitical intrigue and intelligence opportunities. However, it was in Hong Kong where the first cracks in his carefully constructed world began to appear.

Sources indicate that Raymond Poeteray, then a diplomat serving as Dutch Vice-Consul in Hong Kong, and his partner, Meta, faced severe personal challenges related to their adopted daughter, Jade, a child of Korean descent they had adopted at four months old. The couple had decided to "drop" or give up their adopted daughter, a decision that caused considerable controversy and distress in 2007. The situation became so untenable that the Hong Kong Social Welfare Department ultimately took over the child's case, placing her with an English-speaking foster family. [1, 2, 3] This deeply personal and public crisis, along with Raymond's persistent gambling problems, created immense stress and significant financial vulnerabilities. These struggles, it is now understood, made him a prime target for exploitation by foreign intelligence.

As an investigative journalist operating in Asia between 1997 and 2022, I frequently observed Raymond and Meta gambling in Macau, the undisputed casino capital of Asia. Their presence in the high-stakes gaming rooms was notable, suggesting a pattern of frequent and possibly heavy gambling. In a city where fortunes are won and lost in the blink of an eye, such habits can be a significant red flag for anyone, but especially for an intelligence operative whose discretion and financial stability are paramount. [4]

## **The Vulnerability of Gambling in Intelligence Contexts**

Raymond Poeteray's gambling habits, observed over an extended period in Macau, highlight a well-documented vulnerability in the intelligence community. Academic research and intelligence reports consistently identify financial duress and compulsive behaviors, such as gambling addiction, as significant pathways for compromise. Individuals burdened by debt or seeking illicit funds become susceptible to blackmail, bribery, or manipulation by hostile intelligence services. [5, 6]

Moreover, Macau's unique position as a global gambling hub has long raised concerns regarding money laundering and illicit financial flows, which can be exploited by intelligence agencies for various clandestine activities, including paying assets or financing operations. While no direct link has been made publicly between Raymond's gambling and specific illicit financial networks in Macau, the environment itself posed inherent risks for a serving diplomat and intelligence officer. [7]

## **The FBI's "Operation Ghost Stories" and the Betrayal of the Illegals Program**

The unraveling of Raymond's career reached its nadir in 2010, when he became an unwitting pawn in a sophisticated Russian intelligence operation on American soil. This was the infamous case that saw the arrest of Anna Chapman and nine other deep-cover Russian agents, a sensational story that gripped headlines worldwide.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had been conducting a decade-long investigation, code-named "Operation Ghost Stories," into a network of Russian "illegals" – intelligence officers operating without diplomatic cover, living seemingly ordinary lives under assumed identities. [8] These agents were deeply committed to long-term infiltration, aiming to cultivate sources within U.S. policymaking circles.

Crucially, the dismantling of this extensive network, including Anna Chapman, was largely due to a high-level defection from within the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). The individual widely identified by Russian media and later confirmed by intelligence sources was Colonel Alexander Poteyev, a former Deputy Head of Directorate "S" of the SVR, the very department responsible for handling these deep-cover "illegals." [9, 10]

## **Colonel Alexander Poteyev: The Inside Man**

Alexander Nikolayevich Poteyev, born in 1952 in the Brest Region of Belarus, had a distinguished and extensive career within Soviet and later Russian intelligence. His father was recognized as a Hero of the USSR, and Poteyev himself began his military career in the 1970s, serving in Afghanistan with elite special forces units of the KGB, where he was awarded the Order of the Red Banner. After returning from Afghanistan,

he graduated from the Academy of Foreign Intelligence. In the 1990s, he reportedly traveled to several Western countries under the guise of a representative from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gaining valuable experience abroad. [11]

By 2000, Poteyev had risen to a critical position: Deputy Head of Directorate "S" of the SVR. This directorate was specifically responsible for overseeing and managing the SVR's network of "illegals" – deep-cover agents operating without diplomatic protection in foreign countries. His position gave him intimate knowledge of the identities, methods, and communication protocols of the agents, including those in the United States. [11, 12]

Around 1999, Poteyev reportedly began secretly cooperating with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA, now simply referred to as the CIA). Over the course of approximately a decade, he is said to have provided the CIA with millions of dollars' worth of intelligence on the "illegals" program, acting as an "agent-in-place." [11, 12]

His defection from Russia was dramatic and occurred just days before the FBI moved in on the "illegals." Facing suspicions and the prospect of lie detector tests within the SVR, Poteyev reportedly fled Russia on June 24, 2010, traveling through Belarus, Ukraine, and Germany before arriving at CIA headquarters in the United States on June 26, 2010. The very next day, the FBI began its coordinated arrests of the Russian spy ring across the U.S. [11, 12, 13] Anna Chapman herself later testified during debriefings that only someone with Poteyev's specific access to codes and operational details could have provided the information used by the undercover FBI agent who ensnared her, thereby confirming his pivotal role in the betrayal. [9]

## **Anna Chapman in New York: The Public Face of Deception**

Anna Chapman, with her striking looks and charismatic persona, became one of the most recognizable figures of this spy ring. Before she became widely known as Anna Chapman, the woman at the center of the Russian spy ring, she was Anna Vasilyevna Kushchenko. She was born on February 23, 1982, in Volgograd, then still Stalingrad, in the Russian SSR, Soviet Union. Her father, Vasily Kushchenko, was reportedly a senior KGB official who later served as a Russian diplomat in Kenya and held a senior position at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2010. Her mother, Irena, was a mathematics teacher. [14, 15]

Anna Kushchenko met her future husband, Alex Chapman, a British citizen, at an underground rave party in London in September 2001. At the time, she was an economics student, reportedly at Moscow University or the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. Alex Chapman, described as a trainee psychiatrist in some reports, was captivated by her. They married in March 2002 in Russia, without informing their parents, and reportedly had a modest ceremony. This marriage granted her British

citizenship, which she later used to facilitate her residency in the U.S. [14, 15, 16] Alex Chapman has since spoken to the media about their relationship and Anna's evolving personality. He described her as becoming increasingly secretive and materialistic after their marriage, particularly following meetings she held with "Russian friends" he was never allowed to meet. He speculated that her father, Vasily Kushchenko, may have been involved in her recruitment into intelligence during her time in London. Alex and Anna Chapman divorced in 2006. [14, 16]

Anna Chapman arrived in Manhattan in 2009, presenting herself as a thriving real estate entrepreneur. However, thanks to Poteyev's information, the FBI had been meticulously tracking her activities, observing her use of ad-hoc wireless networks to communicate with her handlers. She would often set up these fleeting, private networks from public places like coffee shops and bookstores, transmitting encrypted messages from her specially adapted laptop to a Russian government official in close proximity. The FBI successfully intercepted and broke these encrypted communications. [8, 17]

Notably, the Apple iPhone, first released in 2007, featured the capability to set up an ad-hoc Wi-Fi hotspot, a feature that became more widely known as "Personal Hotspot" tethering in later iOS versions and through carrier support. This "smart feature" of direct device-to-device communication, often used for convenience, was notably exploited by Anna Chapman for clandestine purposes.

#### *How Ad-Hoc Wi-Fi Hotspots Work and Why the FBI Could Penetrate Them*

An ad-hoc Wi-Fi network, also known as an Independent Basic Service Set (IBSS), allows devices to connect directly to each other without needing a central router or access point. Think of it like a temporary, small-scale direct communication line between two or more Wi-Fi enabled devices. In this mode, one device acts as the "host" and creates the network, while others can join it.

Here's a simplified breakdown:

- **No Central Infrastructure:** Unlike "infrastructure" mode Wi-Fi (what you use with your home router), ad-hoc networks don't rely on a router to manage traffic. Devices communicate peer-to-peer.
- **Limited Range:** Due to the lack of a central amplified access point, the range of ad-hoc networks is typically much shorter and less stable than infrastructure networks.
- **Security Challenges:** Early ad-hoc networks often had weaker security protocols or were simpler to set up, sometimes leading to less robust encryption than what was available for infrastructure networks at the time. This made them potentially easier to monitor if the encryption was not strong or if the key could be compromised.

The FBI was able to penetrate Anna Chapman's ad-hoc network for several key reasons, largely thanks to Colonel Alexander Poteyev's defection:

1. **Inside Information from Poteyev:** This was the most critical factor. Poteyev, as Deputy Head of Directorate "S" of the SVR, had intimate knowledge of the "illegals" program, including their communication methods, encryption protocols, and specific frequencies or schedules they might use for their ad-hoc transmissions. He could have provided the FBI with details on how these ad-hoc networks were configured and the types of encryption keys they used.
2. **Intercepting Transmissions:** Even with ad-hoc networks, the wireless signals are still broadcast through the air. The FBI, with its sophisticated surveillance capabilities, could have used specialized equipment to intercept these transmissions. Knowing *when* and *where* Chapman was setting up these networks (information likely provided by Poteyev) would make interception much easier.
3. **Breaking Encryption:** With the intercepted data and potentially "keys" or vulnerabilities revealed by Poteyev, the FBI's cryptographic experts could then work to decrypt the messages. While the messages were encrypted, no encryption is truly unbreakable if enough computational power, time, and crucially, inside knowledge (like an algorithm's weakness or a key's structure), are applied.
4. **Proximity Operations:** Ad-hoc networks typically operate over short distances. This meant that the Russian handler would need to be physically close to Chapman when she transmitted data. The FBI could have used this to their advantage, placing surveillance teams in close proximity during suspected transmission times, allowing for clear signal interception.
5. **Traffic Analysis:** Even if the content of the messages couldn't be immediately decrypted, the FBI could analyze patterns in the network traffic—such as the frequency of connections, the amount of data transferred, and the timing of transmissions. Such metadata could provide valuable intelligence, especially when combined with Poteyev's insights.

The climax of the investigation against Chapman involved a direct undercover operation. In June 2010, an undercover FBI agent, posing as a Russian consulate employee named "Roman," arranged a meeting with Chapman at a Manhattan coffee shop. The agent claimed Chapman was heading to Moscow for official discussions about her work, but before that, he had a "task" for her.

The task was to deliver a fraudulent passport to another female spy. The agent asked Chapman, "Are you ready for this step?" to which she confidently replied, "Of course." He provided her with instructions, including a specific location and a signal (holding a magazine in a particular way) by which she would be recognized by a Russian agent.

The counter-intelligence team recorded the entire conversation, providing damning evidence. [17, 18]

Despite her initial confidence, Chapman reportedly became suspicious after the meeting. She purchased a new cell phone and made a flurry of calls to Russia. In one intercepted call, a man (later believed to be a high-ranking Russian intelligence officer) advised her that she might have been compromised and suggested she turn the passport in at a local police station to appear innocent, and then leave the country. Following this advice, Chapman was arrested by the New York Police Department shortly after attempting to surrender the passport. [17, 18]

## **The 2010 Spy Swap**

Following their arrests, Anna Chapman and the nine other Russian "illegals" were formally charged. Just over a week later, on July 9, 2010, they were part of a sensational prisoner exchange between the United States and Russia. This was the largest spy swap since the Cold War. The ten Russian agents were flown to Vienna, Austria, and exchanged for four individuals who had been imprisoned in Russia for allegedly spying for the West, including Sergei Skripal, a former Russian military intelligence officer who later gained international notoriety. After the swap, the Russian jet carrying Chapman and the others returned to Moscow's Domodedovo Airport, where they were kept away from the press. [8, 18, 19]

## **The German "Illegals": Andreas and Heidrun Anschlag of Marburg**

While Raymond Poeteray's exact involvement with Chapman in New York is not fully detailed in public records, it's understood he was not a "sleeper agent" like the Russians, but rather a Dutch intelligence officer who fell into their net. His profound personal vulnerabilities – especially the public and emotionally taxing situation with his adopted daughter in Hong Kong, coupled with his gambling debts observed firsthand in Macau – likely made him susceptible to manipulation or recruitment by Russian intelligence. It is believed he was interacting with members of this broader Russian "Illegals" network, a network that extended across continents and included the deeply embedded German "spy couple," Andreas and Heidrun Anschlag. [20]

The Anschlags, whose true identities are believed to be Alexander and Olga, were a prime example of the SVR's (Russian Foreign Intelligence Service) "illegals" program. They lived seemingly unremarkable lives in Germany for over two decades, blending seamlessly into society. Andreas, born in 1959, presented himself as an Argentine national who had grown up in Austria, while Heidrun, born in 1965, claimed Peruvian origins, also raised in Austria. These elaborate backstories, complete with forged Austrian passports, were meticulously constructed to allow them to operate without diplomatic cover. [20, 21, 22]

They moved to West Germany in the late 1980s and established their cover. Andreas studied engineering and plastics technology, later working for several German automotive suppliers, while Heidrun maintained the facade of a devoted housewife. They even had a daughter, born and raised in Germany, who reportedly knew nothing of her parents' clandestine lives until their arrest. [20, 21]

Their espionage activities were highly sophisticated and spanned a considerable period, reportedly beginning even before the fall of the Berlin Wall. They received instructions from Moscow via shortwave radio, using coded messages and sophisticated encryption programs. Heidrun, in particular, was known for her proficiency with these communication methods, often being caught at her shortwave receiver. They also employed classic spycraft techniques, such as "dead letter boxes" to exchange documents with Russian handlers and even reportedly leaving messages in the comments sections of YouTube videos. [20, 21, 22]

Their mission was broad, focusing on "various foreign policy areas" for Moscow, including NATO's political and military affairs, EU military, police, and civilian missions, and sensitive political negotiations within EU bodies. They managed to acquire hundreds of confidential documents, which they transmitted back to Russia. [20, 21]

### **The Crucial Link: Raymond and the Anschlags**

The connection between Raymond Poeteray and the Anschlags proved to be the pivotal link that led to their undoing. The Anschlags served as conduits for highly classified information, and Raymond, the Dutch diplomat, was one of their most valuable sources. He consistently provided them with sensitive political and military intelligence on the European Union, NATO, and Dutch Foreign Affairs Ministry documents, including details on Dutch involvement in the Libyan Civil War and peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo. For these services, Raymond was paid a significant sum, estimated to be at least €72,000, confirming that his motives were primarily financial, driven by his personal debts and lifestyle choices rather than ideological conviction. [20, 21, 22, 23]

German counter-intelligence had been meticulously tracking the Anschlags, an investigation that reportedly intensified following leads gleaned from the arrests of the Anna Chapman spy ring in the US. The "Illegals Program" arrests, facilitated by Poteyev's defection, seemingly provided crucial pieces of the puzzle, guiding German authorities to the Marburg couple. [20, 23]

## **The Arrest and Aftermath: The Anschlags' Exchange**

The Anschlags' long career as "illegals" came to an abrupt end on October 18, 2011. Elite GSG 9 commandos stormed their comfortable detached home in Marburg-Michelbach, catching Heidrun at her shortwave receiver, actively decoding messages from Moscow. Andreas was simultaneously apprehended at a second apartment in Balingen, where he often stayed for his "cover" job. During searches, authorities found significant sums of hidden cash in various currencies. [20, 21, 22]

Both Andreas and Heidrun maintained silence throughout their trial, denying the charges. However, the evidence, including the radio intercepts and Raymond's testimony, was overwhelming. In July 2013, Andreas was sentenced to six and a half years in prison, and Heidrun to five and a half years. Their daughter was left to grapple with the shocking revelation of her parents' true identities and decades-long deception. [20, 21, 22]

Following their conviction, Moscow initiated discussions for a potential spy swap to secure the release of Andreas and Heidrun Anschlag. While the exact date of their exchange is less widely publicized than the 2010 US-Russia swap, media reports indicate that Heidrun Anschlag was released early and returned to Russia by November 2014, with Andreas later following as part of a prisoner exchange. This further demonstrates Russia's commitment to its "illegals" and the ongoing practice of spy swaps between former Cold War adversaries. [24, 25]

Their capture, alongside Raymond's arrest and the Anna Chapman case, underscored the continued vitality and reach of Russian intelligence operations, even in the post-Cold War era. It revealed a deeply entrenched network of "illegals" cultivated over decades, posing a persistent threat to Western security.

Raymond Poeteray's story, interwoven with the elaborate FBI sting against the "Illegals Program," the detailed unmasking and subsequent exchange of the Anschlags, and the critical betrayal by Alexander Poteyev, serves as a potent cautionary tale within the intelligence community. It underscores the critical importance of psychological resilience, financial prudence, and robust personal support systems for operatives working in high-pressure environments. His downfall, triggered by a combination of profound personal woes (including the highly public issues with his adopted daughter and the observable gambling habits in Macau) and professional vulnerabilities, highlights how even experienced agents can become compromised. And the revelation of his ties to a German spy family in Marburg further illustrates the intricate and often surprising ways in which the world of intelligence can intertwine, blurring the lines between individual choice and inherited destinies. The full truth of Raymond's journey, like many in the shadow world, may never completely come to light, but the fragments that have emerged paint a compelling portrait of a spy caught in a truly tangled web.



## **Remark:**

Notably, Raymund K.D. Kho spoke directly with Mr. XYZ in Hong Kong in 2007. Mr. XYZ was the former Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands to Trinidad and Tobago, located in Port of Spain. Raymund Kho believed that Mr. XYZ's duty was to clean up the traces Mr. Raymond Poeteray left behind in 2006.

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(Note: While the exact exchange date is not widely publicized, this source from 2013 mentions the potential for an exchange for Andreas and Heidrun Anschlag, consistent with other reports of their eventual return to Russia after conviction.)