

Prince Michael of Kent investigation: Calls for inquiry into ‘shocking’ result of Insight probe

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Prince Michael in Vladivostok at the start of a charity rally in 2005

ALAMY

The shadow defence secretary today questioned Prince Michael of Kent’s honorary position as a senior colonel in the British army after an undercover investigation revealed allegations that the prince was secretly selling his privileged access to Vladimir Putin’s Russian regime.

Labour frontbencher John Healey said it was “really shocking” that His Royal Highness had been filmed at a business meeting where prospective clients were told he could be hired for £10,000 a day to make representations to the leadership of a country regarded as the number-one threat to Britain’s security.

The prince is a senior colonel of the King's Royal Hussars regiment, which in 2019 was posted to Estonia to act as Nato's first line of defence against a Russian invasion of Europe.

Healey said: "The investigation calls into question Prince Michael's position as senior colonel of the King's Royal Hussars, when those serving in the regiment only recently finished a deployment to deter Russian forces on Nato's eastern borders."

Tobias Ellwood MP, a former army officer and chair of the parliamentary defence select committee, called for an inquiry into the prince's activities, saying that the royal family's "important work must be transparent and not for personal gain".

Putin's regime is currently subject to a raft of economic sanctions following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the chemical weapons poisonings on British soil and a series of cyberattacks on western targets.

Prince Michael was filmed in [a joint investigation](#) by *The Sunday Times* and Channel Four's Dispatches programme examining allegations that members of the royal family were trading on their status for personal profit.



Prince Michael's position as a regimental colonel in the King's Royal Hussars is an honorary rank
MAX MUMBY/INDIGO/GETTY IMAGES

The disclosures will intensify concern that the Queen's relatives risk damaging the monarchy's reputation by exploiting their royal position for cash. [Prince Michael](#), 78, has represented the Queen at events but does not receive funding from the sovereign grant.

The Duchess of Sussex drew attention to Prince Michael's commercial status in court documents last year to argue that there was a precedent for royals earning money in the private sector while retaining royal status.

While Prince Harry was stripped of his personal security and honorary military posts, Prince Michael has retained both. According to his website, other positions Prince Michael has held in the British armed forces include honorary vice-admiral of the Royal Naval Reserve and honorary air marshal of the Royal Air Force.

The prince was discussing his connections in Russia in a Zoom call with undercover reporters posing as prospective clients of a South Korean investment company seeking access to the Kremlin to boost their business in the country.

The prince's friend and business partner of 30 years, the Marquess of Reading, told reporters at the meeting that the prince was able to take advantage of his role as "Her Majesty's unofficial ambassador to Russia" to gain access to the Kremlin leadership.

Reading added that His Royal Highness's relationship with the Russian president had not been damaged by the Kremlin regime's numerous recent aggressions against the West because it was "above all the political turmoil", and that Putin regarded the prince as a "friend of Russia".

The marquess warned the reporters on the call: "We're talking relatively discreetly here because we wouldn't want the world to know that he is seeing Putin purely for business reasons."



Prince Michael with his wife Princess Michael, formerly Baroness Marie-Christine von Reibnitz, shortly after their wedding at Vienna city hall in 1978

ARTHUR EDWARDS/THE TIMES

The prince had earlier said he was “very excited” to take up a role helping the prospective client’s business in Russia. He discussed his receipt from the Russian presidency of the Order of Friendship, one of the Kremlin’s most prestigious awards. He said his links in Russia could “bring some benefit”.

Leaked documents show that an event at Kensington Palace in 2013 — held under the joint patronage of both the prince and Putin — was being used by the marquess to sell access to the Russian leader. One document, sent out by the marquess, outlined how sponsors would be given “opportunities for building relations with senior Russian political and business leaders including personally meeting President Vladimir Putin”.

In a statement, Prince Michael’s office said last week that he did not have a “special relationship” with Putin and had not been in contact with the Russian leader or his office for almost 18 years. It added: “Lord Reading is a good friend who, in trying to help, made suggestions that Prince Michael would not have wanted, or been able, to fulfil.”

Last week the marquess said he had “overpromised” during the meeting with the undercover reporters and he was “truly regretful”.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence said Prince Michael’s position as a regimental colonel in the King’s Royal Hussars was “an honorary rank and does not include involvement in operational matters”.