

## Return of old school spookery

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2006  
Gadfly

We hear that strange things are afoot in the tight-knit world of corporate spookery.

Next week, it will be announced that Richard Blaksley, former boss of Kroll in Hong Kong, is to join gpw - the outfit started by Patrick Grayson, original chief of Kroll London, and his partners.

Those who watch the watchers say this recruitment is significant and could mark the start of a return to a rather more traditional approach.

Rumours abound that Kroll is to be bought out from insurer Marsh & McLennan, which paid £1.07 billion for the firm in 2004.

One cynical view is that Marsh bought Kroll to get some protection against New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, who publicly hammered a range of US businesses and long had the insurance industry in his sights. It seems Kroll's chief executive, Michael Cherkasky, once worked with Spitzer - though any suggestion that this might have influenced Spitzer in any way is obviously ridiculous.

Now many in the business apparently want to get back to basics, free from cumbersome parent companies. Blaksley is clearly one of them. His clients have included Czech tycoon Viktor Kozeny, known as the Pirate of Prague, and even the Pakistan government.

Clearly, he is a spook of the old school and a perfect match for Grayson, the urbane elder statesman of investigations.