

MI5 opens up (sort of)

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/05/01/mi5-opens-up-sort-of/

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I have been [banging on](#) for some months now about how Britain's secret services need to improve their public relations. Now after the [Crevice](#) trial there are signs of a better communications policy. I have [said](#) that they need a proper press office and to deal with the media in the way that the CIA does in the US. A POLIS [seminar](#) highlighted deep mistrust among the media and the security services. Suddenly, in the wake of accusations that MI5 failed to spot the links between the fertiliser bomb plotters and the 7/7 terrorists, the MI5 [website](#) has sprung in to life. For the first time ever, it carries an official statement from MI5 in response to the accusations. And if you click through there are even

more exciting revelations under the title of [Myths and Frequently Asked Questions](#). Some of the myths/queries are hilarious:

MI5 carries out assassinations (apparently it doesn't)

MI5 spies on and harrasses Muslims ("this is not true")

MI5 does not recruit tall people ("not true" but you do have to be under 5'11" tall to work in their mobile surveillance units – is this because they have to crouch behind small bushes?)

But seriously folks. This is a clumsy but commendable first step. It shows a willingness to inform if not engage. No-one expects MI5 to turn their online operations in to a kind YouSpy social networking website. But a I hope that they do see the potential for both further New Media and Old Media engagement. We need a better understanding of the reality of the terror threat. Only that way can we mantain both public security and community cohesion.

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