

Alleged Toronto terror plot included two police agents

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According to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's *Fifth Estate* and the *Globe & Mail*, the "Toronto terror cell" arrested in June for allegedly plotting massive acts of terrorism against Canadian targets included not just one, but two Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) moles. This second Muslim man in the pay of Canada's security forces is said to have been involved in the accused terrorists' alleged efforts to construct powerful explosives.

Following the early June arrest of 18 young Toronto-area men on terrorism charges, government and media sources repeated ad nauseam that only prompt action by the security and intelligence services prevented a major terrorist atrocity.

The authorities' contention that those arrested posed a real and imminent threat rested on two claims—both of which have proven threadbare. On the one hand, they pointed to a "terrorist training camp" held in rural Ontario during December 2005. On the other hand, the Toronto men's intention to put into action their terrorist schemes was said to be proven by their alleged attempt to buy large quantities of ammonium nitrate, a fertilizer, from which bombs can be made.

In the days immediately following the arrests, the *World Socialist Web Site* urged that "all of the claims of the government and the police concerning the alleged terrorist conspiracy, and the further revelations and speculations given out by the media, be treated with the utmost caution and a large degree of skepticism. None of the alleged facts presented by the authorities can be accepted uncritically as true."

This warning was quickly vindicated when, in July, the identity of a first CSIS mole was made public. One Mubin Shaikh admitted to the media that he had been working for CSIS for two years, befriending members of the Toronto group and ultimately going on to lead the two-week "terrorist training camp." This camp, which largely consisted of paint-ball games, was under blanket surveillance by CSIS and RCMP personnel, while a crack-Canadian Armed Forces special operations unit waited a short helicopter ride away for orders to intervene.

With last week's news that a second mole was at the heart of the "bomb-making" part of the plot, the question is raised anew of the extent to which the alleged Toronto terror plot was—if not a complete fabrication of the security and intelligence apparatus—at the very least carried out with significant encouragement and "facilitation" from them.

Clearly, Canada's security agencies were in a position to manipulate the alleged plotters—a group comprised almost entirely of young men. And manipulate them it did: The arrest of the 18 individuals followed shortly on the heels of an attempted purchase of fertilizer in which the seller turned out to be an undercover RCMP agent.

Moreover, it is incontestable that the national-security establishment and the government manipulated the public. Given the fact that the alleged terrorists had been under heavy surveillance for at least six months before their arrest and given the presence of two moles at the heart of the alleged plot it is preposterous to claim that only quick action by CSIS and the RCMP prevented a terrorist atrocity. On the contrary, everything points to the “smashing of the plot” having taken place at a time and under circumstances of the national-security establishment’s and government’s choosing.

The exact role that the second mole, whose identity remains secret, played in the fertilizer entrapment operation remains murky and the Conservative government—which has held up the Toronto “terror plot” as justification for the growing Canadian military intervention in southern Afghanistan—and Canada’s security agencies have no reason to want to clarify it.

Both the CBC and the *Globe & Mail* carefully worded their reports in such a way as to exclude any suggestion that the second mole may have played a role beyond simply “facilitating” the purchase of explosive ingredients.

According to the CBC, the second mole’s role was to provide “evidence to authorities that the conspirators had material they thought could be used to make bombs.” Given reports that the second mole had a background in agricultural engineering and chemistry—and especially given what has been reported about the role the first mole played in organizing and leading the “terrorist training camp”—it is reasonable to ask whether this “evidence” was gathered after the mole had provided them with instruction in using ammonium nitrate to fashion bombs and/or had proposed that they procure the fertilizer for bombmaking.

Rather than raise these obvious questions, the CBC report suggests the mole’s role was peripheral to the plot; that his role may have been limited to giving the alleged conspirators access to greater quantities of explosive material: “Sources have told CBC that the young mole’s degree in agricultural engineering could have given the alleged conspirators access to much larger quantities of ammonium nitrate than they could have purchased at ordinary retail outlets.”

The *Globe & Mail*, meanwhile, offers the following tortuous construction: “It’s believed that he [the mole] put key suspects in touch with a police agent—possibly himself—who claimed to be able to purchase tonnes of ammonium nitrate.”

Since the June arrests, the corporate- and state-owned media have not only failed to critically assess the claims of the government and security agencies. They have played a major role in the Canadian establishment’s attempt to use the alleged Toronto terror conspiracy to press for a sharp shift to the right. The media have amplified lurid police claims of possible terrorist scenarios, including the macabre spectacle of the beheading of parliamentary deputies. They have editorialized in support of greater powers and funding for Canada’s security-intelligence agencies and promoted Prime Minister Harper’s claims that Canada, no less than the US, is implicated in a open-ended “war on terror” that necessitates foreign military interventions.

As was the case with the first mole, the media has diligently regurgitated the national-security apparatus’ line that its agent’s actions were motivated by the desire to “prevent a civilian calamity,” to “give back to Canada,” etc, even as they simultaneously report facts that suggest a very different story.

The first mole claimed to have been paid \$77,000 by CSIS for his services in infiltrating the Toronto “cell” and leading their terrorist training camp, and to be owed a further \$300,000. These figures by themselves call into question not only the mole’s motives but also the reliability of the information he may have passed on to his paymasters. He clearly had a strong material interest in giving the security services what they wanted.

Similarly, the *Globe & Mail* has reported that before signing on as a police agent the second mole had been experiencing severe money problems, after several business ventures, in which he had involved his family, had gone sour. The paper pointed to a 2003 bankruptcy claim, filed by the mole’s parents, showing \$26,000 in debts and only \$4,000 in assets. Yet, following his disappearance shortly after the sensational June arrests, cheques began mysteriously arriving in the mailboxes of his creditors. Apparently the settling of debts was no longer a problem, suggesting that the second mole was handsomely rewarded for, and had a major pecuniary incentive in, assisting CSIS and the RCMP in securing “evidence” against the alleged Toronto terrorists.

It is curious that in the case of both moles their service to security forces was roughly coincident with a reputed turn towards increased religious orthodoxy. During the same period that Shaikh was on CSIS’s payroll, he was also publicly prominent as a vocal proponent of a failed attempt to convince the Ontario government to give Sharia law legal status in the settling of some family disputes. According to the *Globe & Mail* the second mole also evolved in a fundamentalist direction starting in 2002. The paper cited a business partner of the mole who “almost thought he was Wahabbi.”

The CBC and the *Globe* have refused to name the second mole, who they suggest may be in a witness-protection program, citing legislation that makes it illegal to name such national-security operatives. But the mole’s identity is undoubtedly known to some if not all the 18 accused in the alleged Toronto terror plot.

The determination of CSIS and the RCMP to keep the mole’s identity secret suggest they may be planning to take advantage of provisions of Canada’s new security laws to prevent public scrutiny of their actions. Under these provisions, in the “interests of national-security,” the public, the accused and defence counsel can be denied access to parts of the prosecution’s “proof” in terrorist cases.

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