

# False Flags a Fluttering: The History of Deception and the London 7/7 Bombings

## The Conjunction of Disinformation and Violence

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Theme: [History](#), [Terrorism](#)

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In the fifth century BC, during the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians were laying siege to the city of Notion. One of the factions in Notion led by Hippias called in Persian and Arcadian mercenaries to protect them against the onslaught. The Athenian commander Paches summoned Hippias to a negotiation, promising that if they couldn't reach an agreement that he would return Hippias safely to the fortified quarter of the town protected by the mercenary armies. When Hippias came out to meet Paches the Athenians arrested him and launched a vicious surprise attack on the forces at Notion. Hippias was then returned safely to the town, where he was promptly seized and 'shot down'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Several centuries earlier during the Trojan War, a betrayal by Agamemnon meant that Achilles was refusing to fight. Without their great warrior Greece suffered heavy losses and retreated back to the beaches. As the Trojan forces threatened the ships, Patroclus rushed to Achilles, his cousin, to try to persuade him to rejoin the fighting. Achilles refused, but he did concede to allowing Patroclus to don his armour and lead his forces, the formidable Myrmidons, into battle. This had the dual effect of not only enabling Patroclus to command forces loyal to Achilles, but also scared the Trojans into believing that Achilles had resumed the fight. The counterattack saved the ships, but in his arrogance Patroclus pursued the Trojans and ended up being killed by Hector. This ultimately led Achilles back to the fray, and he avenged his cousin's death when he killed Hector and dragged the hero's body around the walls of the besieged city of Troy behind his chariot. The war culminated with possibly the most famous military deception operation in history – the Trojan Horse.<sup>(2)</sup>

History is littered with this sort of deception. As former CIA agent turned Watergate burglar Howard Hunt explained, 'Propaganda takes the place of armed combat, takes the place of bloodletting, so you don't need to do it.'<sup>(3)</sup> In the above examples, disguise and psychological warfare were used by the Athenians to either turn conflicts back to their advantage or to enable an attack that would otherwise have been better defended, and hence more costly. Over time the means and methods have become somewhat more sophisticated but the strategies remain much the same. Another example is the 1770 Boston Massacre, which was provoked and encouraged by the Boston revolutionaries led by Sam Adams as a way of showing the public that war with the British was inevitable. Adams' men had plastered the town with notices purportedly signed by British soldiers, saying that they were planning to attack the townspeople. They had also instigated the violent conflict by carrying out a sneak attack on the soldiers using clubs. The townspeople and the soldiers were manipulated into a street battle, which escalated to the point that the British fired on the mob, killing five people. As noted by journalist Ed Rippy, 'The Boston Massacre

[...] was pivotal in the events leading up to the War of Independence between England and the colonies which later became the US.’(4)

Among the numerous 20th century examples, in 1953 the British Secret Intelligence Service – MI6 – conspired with the CIA to cause a coup d’etat in Iran, deposing the Iranian leader Mohammed Mossadegh. In particular they sought to undermine his democratic support by pitting the Tudeh (Communist) Party against the Mullahs, the religious leaders who would eventually seize power in 1979. According to the CIA’s own history of the operation, ‘CIA agents gave serious attention to alarming the religious leaders at Tehran by issuing black propaganda in the name of the Tudeh Party, threatening these leaders with savage punishment if they opposed Mossadeq. Threatening phone calls were also made to them, in the name of the Tudeh, and one of several planned sham bombings of the houses of these leaders was carried out.’(5)

What all these examples have in common is the conjunction of disinformation and violence. Paches lied to Hippias so as to weaken his defences, making the assault on Notion far easier to carry out. Patroclus posed as Achilles to frighten the Trojan forces, making it easier to drive them away from the Greek ships. The Trojan Horse appeared to be a gift but was a covert trap that enabled the Greeks to complete their destruction of Troy. The Boston Massacre was precipitated by Sam Adams’ propaganda campaign and provocative violence against the British soldiers. The CIA and MI6 Operation TPAJAX combined threats with actual violence to exacerbate tensions and divisions and weaken the support of their ultimate target. In every case either the violence or the psychological warfare element on its own would not have accomplished the objective, the operations required both in order to be successful.

As history marched on the strategies remained, though the masters of deception increasingly relied on proxies to do the dirty work. Not long after Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba in 1959, the CIA were called in to run a campaign of covert action against him. Deniability became extremely important, particularly after John Kennedy became US President. Castro’s unpopularity among the middle classes had seen thousands of Cubans leave the island and seek refuge in the US, particularly in southern Florida. The CIA recruited around 1500 of these refugees for Operation Pluto, most commonly known as the Bay of Pigs invasion. The refugees formed Brigade 2506, and though they were trained by the US Army and the CIA they fought alone on the beaches of Bahía de Cochinos. They attempted the invasion in April 1961, and the operation was an almost total failure. Most of the brigade was either killed or captured, forcing the US to have to pay millions of dollars in ransoms to the Castro government. Though much of the history devoted to the Bay of Pigs failure focuses on Kennedy’s obsession with plausible deniability, the importance of the psyops dimension is often overlooked.

The CIA had utilised a radio station on Swan Island, in the Caribbean Sea off the coast of Honduras. During a previous CIA operation in Central America that removed Jacobo Arbenz as President of Guatemala, the CIA had successfully created a radio station named La Voz de la Liberacion (The Voice of the Liberation). It had convinced the Guatemalan people that Arbenz was a traitor and a Soviet puppet, and that the small paramilitary force prepared by the CIA was much larger than the few hundred men that existed in reality. Radio Swan (later renamed Radio Americas) used the same basic strategy to try to prepare the Cuban public for the invasion at the Bay of Pigs. However, it wasn’t anywhere near as effective, despite the signal being strong enough that the station was heard throughout the Caribbean. Even Castro’s efforts to jam the transmission were only successful in Havana.

The problems for the CIA came from the fact that Radio Swan was being run as a quasi-commercial station, selling space to anti-Castro Cuban groups. As noted by the CIA in March 1961, 'Towards the End of 1960, the effectiveness of Radio Swan began to diminish. Although great numbers of Cubans still listened to the station, its credibility and reputation began to suffer as the result of statements representing the selfish interests of the Cuban groups producing the various programs... As time passed and the Cubans found their sources of information were no better than the next fellow's, the program producers began to exaggerate... They made statements which were obvious lies to the listeners. An example: One of the announcers stated that there were 3000 Russians in a park in Santiago de Cuba - the residents had only to walk to the park to see that this was untrue. Moreover, the various programs began to defy coordination. All programs but one told the Cuban militiaman that he would be a hero on the day that he defected from Castro. The sole exception told the Cuban militiamen that he would be hanged regardless of what he did.'(6) This conflicting propaganda meant that the underground anti-Castro movements within Cuba didn't rise up to help the Brigade when the invasion happened, and also meant that Castro's militiamen remained loyal.

What we can learn from this about modern events that probably or definitely involve some sort of official deception is that the propaganda is as important as the event itself. This is true not just for those running the operation but also for those seeking to investigate and expose it. My recently released film about the 2005 London Bombings [7/7: Seeds of Deconstruction](#) focussed on this, showing how the official story of what happened has been radically adapted and revised over time. Working out exactly what did happen is very difficult, as investigators and researchers have to negotiate a minefield of bad reporting, misinformation, disinformation and outright propaganda.

### The London 7/7 Bombings

On the morning of July 7th, at around 10:45, BBC Radio reported that security service officials had told correspondent Frank Gardner that they believed the morning's attacks 'bore all the hallmarks of Al Qaeda'. This was at a point where it wasn't even clear what had happened, with the mainstream media having reported for the previous couple of hours that the explosions on the underground trains were caused by electrical power surges, and anywhere from six to ten tube stations were said to have suffered explosions. This story then became one of only three explosions on the underground system (and one on a bus), caused by suicide bombers using homemade explosives. Al Qaeda were mostly dropped from the story, and those responsible were described as 'self radicalised' 'homegrown terrorists' and 'clean skins', i.e. a small group of individuals working entirely on their own who were unknown to the security services.

By 2008 this story had evolved into one of the four alleged suicide bombers being one part of a wider jihadi network, with MI5 saying that the four weren't picked up because of a lack of resources. This new story came out as three men were put on trial for a conspiracy, largely on the evidence that they knew Mohammed Siddique Khan, the supposed ringleader of the plot, and had been to London in the months before the attacks. However, when the men were initially charged the conspiracy they were alleged to have been involved in did not include what happened on 7/7. A Metropolitan Police press release stated that they 'maliciously conspired' with the four supposed suicide bombers between 1 November 2004 and 29 June 2005, a time period that falls short of the 7th July 2005.(7) Though these dates were subsequently changed to include 7/7, no one in the mainstream media picked up on

this question, and they unanimously presented the three men as 7/7 accomplices. Though the trio faced two juries, the first couldn't come to a decision and the second acquitted them, and so to date not a single person has been convicted in connection with the London Bombings.

So, why the ever-changing story? If 7/7 was a covert operation of some kind then we can understand the multiple stories in that context. The initial story of 'homegrown' 'clean skins' was reported in the media for over a year after the attacks, and was detailed in the two official 7/7 reports published in May 2006. The four alleged bombers were said to have been motivated by revenge for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, thereby associating opposition to those wars with terrorism. This story and implicit premise was advanced in a period when opposition to the Iraq war was at a peak. In part this opposition was due to the publication of the now infamous Downing Street Memo in May 2005, only days before the UK General Election, and only two months before the 7/7 bombings. The memo detailed a meeting between British officials in July 2002 to discuss the policy of war with Iraq. The memo demonstrated that the policy was already well under way in the summer of 2002, well before Colin Powell's widely criticised appearance before the UN Security Council in February 2003. It also included the assessment of 'C', then head of MI6 Richard Dearlove, that the 'the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy'.<sup>(8)</sup> The presentation of the 2005 bombings as being caused by people opposed the Iraq War helped muddy the waters of the debate, seeking to make people less ardent in their opposition lest they be labelled as extremists. That the Iraq War still goes on five years later shows how ineffective the opposition to that war has been.

Other dimensions of the official story were also very useful. That the alleged bombers were said to be homegrown helped advance the agenda for increased powers for police and security services in the name of counter-terrorism. Despite this help, in November 2005 the Labour government suffered a historic defeat when MPs in the House of Commons rejected legislation that allowed the police to hold terrorism suspects for 90 days without charge. While in reality some suspects are thrown in the hole for far longer without ever getting any sort of hearing, this was the first time the Blair government had lost a vote in the Commons. It is also the only postwar defeat regarding security policy. That said, the rest of the 'anti-terror' legislation passed smoothly, and became law the following year. Among the new criminal charges created by the 2006 Terrorism Act were 'disseminating terrorist publications' 'preparation of terrorist acts' 'training for terrorism' and 'encouragement of terrorism'. These rather ambiguous phrases have enabled the security services, police, and Crown Prosecution Service to bring far more terrorism cases before the courts, and to charge far more people with terrorism-related offences. Between 9/11 and the end of 2004 701 arrests under the terrorism act had yielded only seventeen successful convictions for terrorism offences. Only three of those convicted were Muslims.<sup>(9)</sup> By April 2008 this was up to 102 convictions from 1,471 arrests, a considerable increase. Put against that, only six people had actually been held for 28 days under the provisions of the 2006 legislation, three of which had been released without charge.<sup>(10)</sup> So much for the great terror threat that necessitated the 90 days.

Once the initial story of 7/7 had been accepted and the anti-terror legislation had passed, the authorities started the trial of the suspects from the Operation Crevice investigation, commonly referred to in the media as the Fertiliser Bomb Plotters. Eight men had been arrested in March 2004, only weeks after the Madrid train bombings, but didn't go on trial until two years later. Of the seven that went on trial in Britain, five were convicted, and two

found innocent. Testimony at the trial revealed that the group had been under surveillance for some time, and had been bugged, recorded and videotaped by MI5. This included footage of them meeting with Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer, two of the alleged 7/7 suicide bombers. Once this evidence had been admitted at trial it was no longer possible for the security services to maintain their original story of four men working alone who were completely unknown to MI5. They weren't unknown, and they had connections to other supposed terrorists. The official account needed to be adapted. However, the authorities needed time to change their story.

In March 2007, while the jury was still considering its verdict in the Fertiliser Plot trial, the three alleged 7/7 co-conspirators were arrested. Though these three men were put through two trials, they were eventually acquitted in April 2009. This provided an appropriate excuse for the government to delay any further publication of information or evidence. The excuse held good until over two years after the Fertiliser Plot trial where the original story was shown to be untrue. Shortly after the conclusion of the second alleged co-conspirators trial the government published a new report through the Intelligence and Security Committee, titled 'Could 7/7 Have Been Prevented?'(11) As the title suggests, the scope of the report was limited to asking whether MI5 had enough intelligence prior to 7/7 to have stopped the attacks, i.e. whether 7/7 was the result of an 'intelligence failure'. Though the story of who the alleged bombers were and what was known about them was systematically changed, there was no consideration whatsoever of the suggestion that they might not have been responsible, or might have been duped into being responsible.

The other function of the arrest and subsequent trials of the trio of alleged co-conspirators was to delay the inquests, which finally resumed in October 2010, more than five years after the bombings. For those five years the families of the victims, the survivors, and the British public have been told an ever-shifting story of what happened. Despite this, the authorities and mainstream media ridicule anyone who dares to ask whether the fundamentally unchanged part of the story, i.e. that suicide bombers were responsible, might also be subject to revision. Given that the inquests have not yet reached a verdict, it is possible (though unlikely) that they will find that some or all of the victims did not die in intentional suicide attacks, and at this stage it has not been legally proven that this is what happened.

We know from history that there is a wide range of possible deceptions taking place about what happened on 7/7. In the absence of forensic evidence of precisely what happened and why, we are left with an ever-shifting story that conveniently fits the policy of the ongoing War on Terror. However, just because some terrorist attacks are inside jobs does not necessarily mean that 7/7 was an inside job, even though the event has been used to suit a manipulating agenda. It is entirely possible that 7/7 was a false flag operation, but it is also entirely possible that the way in which it has been used as a psychological warfare operation is merely exploitative after the fact. The only way we can ever truly know is through the disclosure of evidence and information pertaining to what happened, something that has been jealously guarded by the authorities since day one.

**Tom Secker** is a writer, researcher and filmmaker based in the UK. He recently produced a feature-length investigative documentary on the London Bombings and the history of covert operations called *7/7: Seeds of Deconstruction*. [Click here to view the film on GRTV.](#)

## Notes



(1) Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, Book III, see also Jon Hesk, Deception and Democracy in Classical Athens, page 98

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=EjhPccfWDbcC&lpg=PP1&pg=PA98#v=onepage&q&f=false>

(2) Homer, Iliad, book XV-XVI

(3) Howard Hunt, interview excerpt from A Coup Made in America, CBC, 2001

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-3650053512224622409>

(4) Ed Rippy, How the US has Gotten into Wars, 27/5/02

[http://erippy.home.mindspring.com/How\\_the\\_US\\_Has\\_Gotten\\_Into\\_Wars.html](http://erippy.home.mindspring.com/How_the_US_Has_Gotten_Into_Wars.html)

(5) Dr Donald Wilber, CIA Clandestine Service History, "Overthrow of Premier Mossadeq of Iran, November 1952-August 1953", March 1954, chapter V 'Mounting Pressure Against the Shah'

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB28/5-Orig.pdf>

(6) J.C. King, History of Radio Swan. Memorandum for: General Maxwell D. Taylor in CIA "Proposed Operations Against Cuba" 11/3/61

[http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs.asp?doc\\_no=0000481604](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs.asp?doc_no=0000481604)

(7) Metropolitan Police Service, Three charged in connection with 7 July terrorist attacks, 05/04/07

[http://cms.met.police.uk/news/arrests\\_and\\_charges/terrorism/three\\_charged\\_in\\_connection\\_with\\_7\\_july\\_terrorist\\_attacks](http://cms.met.police.uk/news/arrests_and_charges/terrorism/three_charged_in_connection_with_7_july_terrorist_attacks)

(8) Downing Street Memo, 23/07/02

<http://downingstreetmemo.com/memos.html>

(9) Hundreds arrested, few convicted, BBC News, 11/3/05

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3290383.stm>

(10) Home Office Statistical Bulletin, Statistics on Terrorism

Arrests and Outcomes Great Britain 11 September 2001 to 31 March 2008

<http://www.statewatch.org/news/2009/may/uk-ho-terrorism-arrests.pdf>

(11) Intelligence and Security Committee, 'Could 7/7 Have Been Prevented', 19/5/09

[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/210852/20090519\\_77review.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/210852/20090519_77review.pdf)

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