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The UK Terror plot: what's really going on?

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In-depth Report: FOILED UK TERROR PLOT

I have been reading very carefully through all the Sunday newspapers to try and analyse the truth from all the scores of pages claiming to detail the so-called bomb plot. Unlike the great herd of so-called security experts doing the media analysis, I have the advantage of having had the very highest security clearances myself, having done a huge amount of professional intelligence analysis, and having been inside the spin machine.

So this, I believe, is the true story.

None of the alleged terrorists had made a bomb. None had bought a plane ticket. Many did not even have passports, which given the efficiency of the UK Passport Agency would mean they couldn't be a plane bomber for quite some time.

In the absence of bombs and airline tickets, and in many cases passports, it could be pretty difficult to convince a jury beyond reasonable doubt that individuals intended to go through with suicide bombings, whatever rash stuff they may have bragged in internet chat rooms.

What is more, many of those arrested had been under surveillance for over a year – like thousands of other British Muslims. And not just Muslims. Like me. Nothing from that surveillance had indicated the need for early arrests.

Then an interrogation in Pakistan revealed the details of this amazing plot to blow up multiple planes – which, rather extraordinarily, had not turned up in a year of surveillance. Of course, the interrogators of the Pakistani dictator have their ways of making people sing like canaries. As I witnessed in Uzbekistan, you can get the most extraordinary information this way. Trouble is it always tends to give the interrogators all they might want, and more, in a desperate effort to stop or avert torture. What it doesn't give is the truth.

The gentleman being "interrogated" had fled the UK after being wanted for questioning over the murder of his uncle some years ago. That might be felt to cast some doubt on his reliability. It might also be felt that factors other than political ones might be at play within these relationships. Much is also being made of large transfers of money outside the formal economy. Not in fact too unusual in the British Muslim community, but if this activity is criminal, there are many possibilities that have nothing to do with terrorism.

We then have the extraordinary question of Bush and Blair discussing the possible arrests over the weekend. Why? I think the answer to that is plain. Both in desperate domestic political trouble, they longed for "Another 9/11". The intelligence from Pakistan, however dodgy, gave them a new 9/11 they could sell to the media. The media has bought, wholesale, all the rubbish they have been shovelled.

We then have the appalling political propaganda of John Reid, Home Secretary, making a speech warning us all of the dreadful evil threatening us and complaining that "Some people don't get" the need to abandon all our traditional liberties. He then went on, according to his own propaganda machine, to stay up all night and minutely direct the arrests. There could be no clearer evidence that our Police are now just a political tool. Like all the best nasty regimes, the knock on the door came in the middle of the night, at 2.30am. Those arrested included a mother with a six week old baby.

For those who don't know, it is worth introducing Reid. A hardened Stalinist with a long term reputation for personal violence, at Stirling Univeristy he was the Communist Party's "Enforcer", (in days when the Communist Party ran Stirling University Students' Union, which it should not be forgotten was a business with a very substantial cash turnover). Reid was sent to beat up those who deviated from the Party line.

We will now never know if any of those arrested would have gone on to make a bomb or buy a plane ticket. Most of them do not fit the "Loner" profile you would expect – a tiny percentage of suicide bombers have happy marriages and young children. As they were all under surveillance, and certainly would have been on airport watch lists, there could have been little danger in letting them proceed closer to maturity – that is certainly what we would have done with the IRA.

In all of this, the one thing of which I am certain is that the timing is deeply political. This is more propaganda than plot. Of the over one thousand British Muslims arrested under anti-terrorist legislation, only twelve per cent are ever charged with anything. That is simply harrassment of Muslims on an appalling scale. Of those charged, 80% are acquitted. Most of the very few – just over two per cent of arrests – who are convicted, are not convicted of anything to do terrorism, but of some minor offence the Police happened upon while trawling through the wreck of the lives they had shattered.

Be sceptical. Be very, very sceptical.

As Britain's outspoken Ambassador to the Central Asian Republic of Uzbekistan, Craig Murray helped expose vicious human rights abuses by the US-funded regime of Islam Karimov. He is now a prominent critic of Western policy in the region.

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