

Chapter 2

Disrupting Plots and Countering Ideology: Successes, Obstacles and Future Challenges for Intelligence Sharing in the United Kingdom

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Some time ago, before the death of Osama bin Laden, I gave a run-down of the intelligence cycle, the different intelligence and security agencies, how they operate and how they cooperate. To briefly reiterate, the British intelligence cycle consists of four main phases: direction, collection, analysis, and dissemination. To achieve greater effectiveness in identifying and disrupting international terrorist networks, the UK's current approach necessitates an unprecedented level of inter-agency cooperation and, most importantly, information sharing. After all, as an island nation we are alone. For the UK, the significance of intelligence in counter-terrorism stems from three main drivers:

- Its role in pre-emption and disruption of terrorist activity
- Its role in post-incident investigations
- Its contribution to preventive/protective security measures.

Since we met in Albania, there have been significant developments in the UK. In fact mostly within the last six weeks. Fortunately, there was not a terrorist attack but two major terrorist trials which gave great insight to the way intelligence agencies cooperate, share information and ultimately foil and disrupt plots and save lives. I want to look at this in more detail which hopefully will illustrate the level of intelligence cooperation—not just internally but also with foreign partners—and look at the benefits and advantages as well as the weakness and challenges that still exist. Certainly controversy has emerged from both the trial of three men accused of conspiring with the 7/7 bombers and the Liquid Bomb Plot trial which was allegedly about bringing down an airliner.

It is widely accepted that obtaining “good” intelligence is the most effective way to prevent or pre-empt acts of terrorism. Since surprise is the cornerstone of successful terrorist operations, it is the primary function of the intelligence

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and security services to detect them and to thereby provide sufficient warning to enable counter-operations to be conducted. Current, accurate secret intelligence is indispensable for the prevention or pre-emption of terrorist activities. However, as can be seen, the global nature of the international threat poses some unique challenges for the UK's intelligence and security services particularly through our legal systems.

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Operation Overt

On 8th August, 2008, one of the biggest ever terrorist trials in the UK, known as the Liquid Bomb Plot/Operation Overt Plot, concluded at Woolwich Crown Court. Three men were convicted of conspiring to commit mass murder but the jury failed to reach a verdict on the allegation they were plotting to bring down trans-Atlantic flights by using liquid explosives. Prosecutors had alleged that eight Britons planned to blow up at least seven airliners heading to North America with 1,500 people aboard, in attacks that would have had a global impact and rivalled the 9/11 atrocities.

The plot was disrupted in August 2006 when the men were arrested. This led to weeks of chaos at airports in Britain and the US. Air traffic on two continents was paralysed. Even though the terror cell's plot was foiled, and no one was convicted for conspiring to bring down airplanes, the conspirators did achieve one objective, which was major and long-term disruption to the aviation industry. The restrictions on liquids travellers can take in their hand luggage remains in force today.

By majority verdicts, the jury convicted three men of conspiracy to commit murder. They were the cell's ringleader, Abdulla Ahmed Ali, the bomb-maker Assad Sarwar, and Tanvir Hussain. They had also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to cause explosions and conspiracy to commit public nuisance. The three admitted plotting to detonate a small device at Heathrow's Terminal 3 because it was used by several US airlines. They had earlier aborted plans to explode a home-made bomb at the Houses of Parliament due to the tight security at Westminster. They did not plead guilty to bringing down aeroplanes.

One defendant, Mohammed Gulzar, who flew into Britain from Pakistan to allegedly oversee the plot, was acquitted of all charges. The jury failed to reach verdicts on four other defendants, Ibrahim Savant, Arafat Khan, Waheed Zaman and Umar Islam, who had earlier admitted conspiracy to cause a public nuisance by making al-Qaeda-style suicide videos. In presenting the case, prosecutors had used evidence from several months of police and intelligence co-operation efforts which included thousands of items seized in 69 searches which included DNA and chemical evidence; internet and audio and video surveillance, travel records and the defendants' own apparent suicide videos. For the security agencies and police authorities, the plot was the biggest ever surveil-

lance operation in terms of manpower and expense. The acquittals on the most serious charges is a setback for the British government. Prosecutors have requested a retrial.

The verdict showed the limits of intelligence cooperation. Despite the best efforts of MI5, the domestic intelligence agency, the Metropolitan Police, other local forces and the FBI and CIA – good intelligence cooperation cannot always guarantee a successful trial and verdict. There were also some problems with intelligence co-operation and we'll have a look at that later.

Assembling the Plot

The following description and analysis of the Overt Cell is based on the intelligence co-operation between MI5 and the Metropolitan police. A USB flash drive was found in Abdulla Ahmed Ali's right-hand pocket when he was arrested. The data in Ali's flash drive contained details of flight timetables, baggage information, security advice about what items could be taken on flights as hand luggage and which were restricted, plus other information about Heathrow airport. The timetables covered the period from 2nd August, 2006 to 1st August, 2007.

Seven flights of commercial airliners flying to the US and Canada from Heathrow Airport's Terminal 3, each with a passenger capacity of between 285 and 241 people, had been highlighted on the flash drive. Despite the prosecutors case, the jury could not be convinced that the plot was designed to bring down trans-Atlantic flights. The seven flights targeted were:

- *1415 United Airlines Flight 931 to San Francisco*
- *1500 Air Canada Flight 849 to Toronto*
- *1515 Air Canada Flight 865 to Montreal*
- *1540 United Airlines Flight 959 to Chicago*
- *1620 United Airlines Flight 925 to Washington*
- *1635 American Airlines Flight 139 to New York*
- *1650 American Airlines Flight 91 to Chicago.*

The Overt cell also considered targeting national infrastructure – including gas terminals and oil refineries. Evidence revealed Canary Wharf, the Bacton gas terminal pipeline, various airports, the electricity grid and internet providers were also studied. Assad Sarwar was described as the terror cell's quartermaster, purchasing and storing bomb-making materials, with terrorist ambitions that were "limitless." He bought and stockpiled bomb-making materials and was responsible for experimenting with hydrogen peroxide and HMTD. On 1st August, 2006, Sarwar is watched by a surveillance team visiting three pharmacies in High Wycombe within 15 minutes. He buys citric acid at each one.

During the trial, Sarwar explained in detail how to concentrate hydrogen peroxide to bomb-making levels, articulating the difficult formula with chilling accuracy. Under surveillance, he was also watched by the authorities buying a suitcase and walking in Lloyds park, Walthamstow, north-east London, where

the police later found a partly buried suitcase filled with materials to make HMTD. The group had not yet made the HMTD or refined the hydrogen peroxide to the correct concentration. The plotters would drill a small hole in the base of each of the injection moulding points of the Lucozade and Oasis soft drinks bottles. The original content would then be removed and the ready-mixed liquid explosive, hydrogen peroxide, introduced using a hypodermic or syringe in order to have their original contents removed. The liquid explosive, which can be made from commonly available items, was to be mixed with a powdered fruit drink called Tang. When Tang, which is an energetic compound, because of the material from which it is made is combined it is capable of creating an energetic mixture that can be detonated. On 27th April, 2006, Sarwar travels to Health Leads UK, in Carmarthen, south Wales, to purchase hydrogen peroxide as well as other household goods. He is caught driving at 85mph on a speed camera.

Whilst under surveillance, the plotters were also seen disposing of apparent bomb-making materials in a park shortly before they were arrested. Undercover police watched the men dump plastic bags, containing items including miniature light bulbs with the filaments exposed and attached to short wires, in bins. Two plastic carrier bags recovered from bins in Lloyds Park also contained Lucozade bottles, latex gloves, plastic cylinders, needles and parts of a battery. The park is close to the flat in Walthamstow where the men constructed their bombs and recorded “martyrdom” videos. A bag, containing heavily-stained latex gloves, was found outside the flat three days before the material in the park was uncovered. One of the most curious dimensions of the plot was the flat which was bought by Ali for £138,000 cash. Ali explained the urgency, he was splitting up with his wife. This was not true. Ali had just returned from Pakistan with orders to prepare the plot.

Where the money to purchase the flat came from remains a mystery and it appears highly unlikely that any of the plotters had the financial resources to pay for it. Some of the money was traced to a Pakistani charity in Muzaffarabad, Pakistani Kashmir. However, there was very little co-operation from the Pakistani authorities. In many trans-national terrorist plots, al-Qaeda provided large sums of money to their operatives to travel, purchase material and explosives. In this case it appears that the money was used to purchase a “bomb factory.” The flat contained the paraphernalia needed to produce devices to be smuggled through security. Photographs of soft drink bottles in the kitchen cupboards were shown to the jury.

Passports

The plotters wanted “clean” replacement passports without suspicious stamps to places like Pakistan. Tanvir Hussain was issued with a UK passport on 26th June 2002. In February 2006 he travelled to Pakistan. Later in 2006, he too notified the agency that his passport had been lost. He too sought a replacement by fast-track. The dates similarly coincided with the attendance on 2nd August

of Ali at the Passport Office. A cleaner found Ali's damaged passport on the pavement outside his home in August 2006.

Ali was also applying for a British passport for his baby son at the time of his arrest. Mohammed Said Ali was nine months old when his father, Abdulla Ahmed Ali, was arrested in August 2006. A fingertip search of the family home in Walthamstow, east London, uncovered passport application documents signed by Ali on behalf of his baby. Woolwich crown court heard earlier in the trial how a police bug captured Ali considering whether he should take his children on suicide missions. Ali asked co-conspirator Umar Islam, "Should I take my lot on? I know my wife wouldn't agree to it, but..." On 2nd August, 2006, Ali and Hussain go to the passport office in Victoria, central London, for fast-track applications. Ali's bid is rejected because of a problem with his photograph.

Videos

The jury were played extracts from suicide videos made by six of the plotters. All the videos used as a background the same black flag with Arabic writing which said: "There is no god but Allah, and Mohammad is his Messenger." The flag was recovered from the car of Sarwar. Searches of Sarwar's High Wycombe home found further video recordings hidden away. One video featured Waheed Zaman, a former student of biomedical sciences at London Metropolitan University between 2003 and 2006 and a former president of the Islamic Society at the university. In the video, Zaman states, "I have been educated to a high standard and had it not been Allah had blessed me with this mission, I could have lived a life of ease but instead chose to fight for the sake of Allah's Deen [his religion]." Curiously Zaman concluded with the sentence "As you kill us, you will be killed." A very similar sentence was used by bin Laden on a 12th November, 2002 message. In the message he directly mentions the UK and France as a target if they continue to support the US. Bin Laden concluded "As you kill, so shall you be killed." The repetition in the Overt plot of the most important line used by bin Laden shows al-Qaeda's influence in spreading its ideology to individuals born or brought up in the West.

The al-Qaeda Nexus

There are some interesting connections between many of those involved in major terror plots in the UK. Abdulla Ahmed Ali was in phone contact with the leader of the 21st July, 2005, failed terrorist attack, Muktar Said Ibrahim. Ali travelled frequently to Pakistan, staying for long periods between 2003 to 2006. It is believed his travels led to South Waziristan. His co-conspirator, Assad Sarwar also visits Pakistan in 2005. In February 2006, Tanvir Hussain travelled to Pakistan. Ali claimed many of his trips were as a volunteer for an Islamic medical charity. However, in reality he was attending training camps and meeting senior figures in terrorist groups.

Both Ali and Ibrahim were in Pakistan in December 2004 which coincided with the presence of the ring leader of the 7/7 ringleader Mohammad Sidique Khan. All returned to plan attacks with bombs based on hydrogen peroxide.

There have been suggestions that the three plots, although compartmentalised from each other in order to avoid detection from counter-terrorism officials, may have been supervised by Abu Obeida al-Masri, the former head of al-Qaeda's external operations. He is believed to have died of hepatitis at some point towards the end of 2007. Abu Ubaidah al-Masri was part of al-Zawahiri's "Egyptian brigade" and a protégé of Mohammed Atef who was killed in a US air-strike during Operation Enduring Freedom. Abu Ubaidah showed his loyalty to al-Zawahiri when the Egyptian group, al-Jihad, split into two. Egyptian Islamic Jihad was led by al-Zawahiri whereas al-Gam'a al-Islamiyya was controlled by the blind cleric Omar Abdel-Rahman who was behind the 1993 World Trade Centre bombings.

On August 9th, 2006, the Pakistani authorities arrested a British national, Rashid Rauf, at his home in Bahawalpur, Punjab. Rauf was connected to the Overt plotters although there remains strong disagreement over his importance. Some have suggested he was a key mastermind behind the plot, others have insisted he was only on the periphery. The reality possibly lies in between. Rauf was important and relevant but the plot was not dependent on him. He may have known what was going on but he was not directing the plotters. Nevertheless, there was concern in Washington. When it appeared that Rauf's activity in Pakistan could impact on the Overt plot, the US authorities asked their Pakistani counterparts to arrest him. This was identified by some as the most contentious part of intelligence sharing.

Rauf's arrest caught British agencies by surprise. A decision was made to arrest the UK-based suspects before they heard news of Rauf's detention. John Reid, then the Home Secretary, was called away from a football match watching the Scottish champions Celtic playing the English champions Chelsea in a pre-season match, to chair a meeting of an emergency committee as the arrests began. Rauf was related through marriage to Maulana Masood Azhar, the leader of the al-Qaeda-linked Pakistani terrorist group, Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). The JeM is banned in both Britain and the United States. Azhar openly lives in Bhawalpur.

Peter Clarke, the former British counter-terrorism chief who led Operation Overt, said that the arrest of Mr. Rauf gave officers a real problem. "On the evening of Aug. 9, 2006, I was told that a man connected to the British terrorists had been arrested in Pakistan," he wrote in the Times. "This was not good news. We were at a critical point in building our case against them. If they got to hear that he had been arrested they might destroy evidence and scatter to the four winds. More worrying still, if they were tipped off to the arrest they might panic and mount a desperate attack." His revelations lay bare the crucial dilemma at the heart of any counter-terrorism operation – whether to allow plots to mature so as to build up valuable evidence, or whether to move early to protect the public.

On 13th December, 2007, the Pakistani terrorism charges on Rauf Rashid were dropped. The Pakistani court claimed there was no evidence that he is involved in terrorism. Britain is seeking Rauf's extradition in connection with the murder of an uncle, Mohammed Saeed, who was stabbed to death in Birmingham in 2002.

On 14th December 2007, Rauf mysteriously escaped from jail. He was being transported from an Islamabad court to the high-security Adiala jail in the garrison town of Rawalpindi. An investigation into the incident revealed that the escape was facilitated by the police officers guarding him. The officers told investigators that Rauf fled after they allowed him to say his prayers at a mosque on the way to the jail. Rauf's escape has caused huge embarrassment to the regime of General Pervez Musharraf. It was also regarded as a setback to Pakistan's effort to combat international terrorism. Rauf's whereabouts are still not known.

Overt Summary

One of the most complex and well-handled surveillance operations ever mounted by the British security failed so far, at least to secure the convictions that the Crown Prosecution Service, the British state prosecutors had hoped for. There is broad and noisy agreement in the intelligence community that the evidence, although strong, would have been stronger if MI5 and the police had been allowed to spring the trap later. In hindsight, which is a wonderful thing, we can now say that not only was all the evidence not quite ready, but we cannot be sure we picked up everyone we should have. Timing is not just about evidence: the intelligence services like to be confident that all the main players are on the scene before the police strike.

British investigators are convinced that the size, scope, cost and ingenuity of the Overt plot bear the al-Qaeda hallmarks. There is a strong belief that the plotters learned to make the liquid explosive device from al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan. Just because the jurors in the liquid bomb plot trial could not definitively conclude that the accused plotters were planning to bring down Trans-Atlantic flights, it should not diminish how serious the ramifications of the plot itself were and how it caused tremendous disruption at airports throughout the world.

It is important to remember that intelligence is not an exact science and is often a question of perception. The approach and strategy to conduct an operation to observe and examine a terror cell, and then make arrests to disrupt a plot, often vary from country to country. Because the burden of proof is set so high in a British court of law, the authorities believe in the need to monitor a cell sufficiently enough so that the evidence can stand the test of a trial. They do not wait to the last minute but wait close enough where the potential of a plot is reaching its end-stage. In the case of the Overt cell the authorities in the UK did not believe the plot going active was imminent.

US authorities can often arrest plotters with conspiracy and prefer to act with more speed in order to disrupt any plot and avoid the risk of the situation

spiralling out of control. They had a belief that the plot was reaching the end stage and the additional worry of Rashid Rauf disrupting the investigation. For the US, there were fears that the “blessed operation” as Ali referred to it, was about to begin. This forced the speed of the investigation and the arrest of Rauf.

It’s important to remember that both the British and American authorities are on the same side working towards a common goal in disrupting and foiling terrorist plots that threaten to kill innocent people and create economic, social and political consequences. Obviously, lessons can be learnt from the Overt trial over what could have been done differently but it is essential that there remains effective cooperation between the two countries, particularly as both nations face an on-going and consistent threat.

The 7/7 Dimension

On 1st August 2008, a jury trying three men accused of helping the July 7 bombers was dismissed after failing to reach a verdict after nearly three weeks of deliberations. Wheed Ali, Sadeer Saleem, and Mohammed Shakil—the first and only people to be tried in connection with the explosions on London’s transport network that killed 52 people in 2005—now face a retrial.

This was another trial that illustrated in graphic detail the intelligence co-operation between the Metropolitan Police, MI5 and West Yorkshire police.

Just to remind you, on July 7th 2005, four devices exploded in London killing 52 people and leaving over 700 injured. Three explosions on London Underground trains occurred within seconds of each other and the fourth, on board a bus, detonated an hour later. On July 12th it transpired that four home-grown suicide bombers, three of Pakistani origin and residents of the northern town of Beeston, Leeds, and one Jamaican convert from Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, carried out the July 7th bomb attacks. The names of Mohammed Sidique Khan, Shezad Tanweer, Germaine Lindsay, and Hasib Hussain have been permanently etched on our minds ever since.

Three of the crucial questions that had received so much speculation throughout the aftermath: Why did they do it? How did they do it? And were they directed from abroad? It was this lack of knowledge that prevailed two years later. The details of the bomb-factory provided crucial revelations. In the account, the site where the construction of the explosive devices took place was identified as a rented flat at 18 Alexandra Grove, in Beeston. The site was discovered on 12th July, 2005 with the equipment still in place and Khan, Tanweer, and Hussein were all subsequently linked to it by DNA evidence. It also documents Lindsay’s online trades of perfume for material useful in the bomb-making process.

Following the attacks, the authorities launched an investigation that was designed to uncover every possible piece of detail, every clue and lead. The aim was to find out not only who was responsible for setting off the bombs, but also who else was involved. This followed 21 months of intense investigation and intelligence cooperation by the Metropolitan Police and West Yorkshire Police. More than 18,450 statements were taken. 90,000 phone calls examined, 4,700

phone numbers probed, 19,400 documents created and some 19,000 leads pursued. 26,000 exhibits seized, of which 5,000 required forensic testing; 142 computers were being examined with thousands of hardware and software exhibits; and more than 6,000 hours of CCTV footage to be analysed.

The first major clues into the possibility of others involved in the 7/7 attacks arose in the debris of the Edgware Road bomb, when police found Khan's mobile telephone with numbers for Mohammed Shakil and Sadeer Saleem. Waheed Ali's number was found on Lindsay's mobile phone at Russell Square. A variety of material that provided a valuable insight into their attitudes and beliefs was seized from the defendants' homes when they were arrested.

Ali was a friend of Khan and Tanweer. His fingerprints were found on a booklet that Khan had photocopied for part of his Islamic will and testament. In addition a computer used by Ali had accessed radical al-Qaeda websites that included information about Osama bin Laden, jihad, Iraqi "martyrs," and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Traces of Ali and Saleem's DNA were found in the bomb factory, along with a key for a Mitsubishi belonging to Shakil.

Mohammed Junaid Babar

On 18th April 2008, testifying at the trial of Ali, Saleem and Shakil, American citizen Mohammed Junaid Barbar, the "al-Qaeda supergrass," who was arrested in the US for plotting attacks against US troops in Afghanistan, revealed that he had attended a weapons training camp in Pakistan with Khan. Shakil was also at same camp in the Malakand region for "physical conditioning and small arms training." Babar said he met Shakil and Khan in July 2003 when he went to Islamabad airport with convicted terrorist Omar Khyam who was plotting attacks in Britain with half a ton of ammonium nitrate. What is so interesting about this, is that intelligence cooperation can also benefit through the use of terrorists to inform on their former colleagues. So in effect you have cooperation between an intelligence agency and a terrorist but with full control by the intelligence agency. I like that. Babar betrayed a number of fellow jihadists during his interrogation including those connected to the ammonium nitrate plot.

SHAXMOB

The strength of Ali's relationship to Khan was demonstrated by a text message Ali sent to the 7/7 ringleader on 7th December 2003. It read "Gates of memories I will neva (sic) close. How much I will miss you no one knows. Tears in my eyes will wipe away but the love in my heart for you will always stay." In the remains of Khan's mobile telephone, recovered from the debris at the Edgware Road tube blast, were numbers "attributable" to Shakil, saved as "SHAXMOB," and Saleem, saved as "Sads."

The prosecution alleged that the trip Ali, Shakil and Saleem made to London on 16th and 17th December 2004 with Hussain and Lindsay was a "hostile reconnaissance mission" scouting for possible targets for 7/7. The group ended

up staying the night at Ali's sister's house and spent their second day visiting the London Eye and the London Aquarium. Ali insisted he never went on the tube. Ali and Saleem, who claimed on their visa application that they were visiting a relative, flew to Pakistan within days of the reconnaissance mission. The jury was told that according to evidence from mobile phone calls intercepted by MI5, it was "no coincidence" that the journey came around the same time as the trip made by Khan Tanweer. They visited the Pakistani consulate in Bradford to submit their visa applications a day before Ali and Saleem did.

Mobile telephone evidence showed "an unusually high level of contact" between Ali and Tanweer in the days before Khan and Tanweer left the UK on 18th November 2004, indicating a link between the respective trips to Pakistan. Similar radical material was found in the home of Saleem who is a trustee at the controversial Iqra bookshop in Leeds, the alleged hub of the July 7 plot. A computer was found that contained images of the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre, of fighters holding aloft AK-47 assault rifles and pictures of bodies in bags. Also on the computer were speech files extolling the virtues of jihad and martyrdom. On a notepad also found by police, Saleem wrote: "When I am a shaheed (martyr) I don't care in what way I receive my death for Allah's cause. If he wishes he will bless the cut limbs." Writing about children, he said: "I want loads and have them with the intention of making them mujahids... and mujahidas (holy warriors) because the filthy kafir (non-believers) have got big plans against the Muslims."

Despite all this evidence obtained through intelligence cooperation between three different agencies, like with the Overt plot, the jury could not make a decision and a retrial will take place. Again, this highlights the problems of information through intelligence cooperation being used in a court of law.

20th Anniversary

Al-Qaeda celebrated its 20th birthday last month, making it two years older than Hammaad Munshi who became the youngest person ever convicted of terrorism in the UK. Munshi, and his co-conspirators Aabid Khan and Sultan Muhammad, typify the home-grown terrorist, the son or grandson of immigrants. Munshi, a West Yorkshire schoolboy possessed a guide to making napalm on his computer and notes on martyrdom under his bed. Munshi, whose grandfather is a leading Islamic scholar, was 16 and taking his GCSEs when he was arrested. Munshi ran a website selling hunting knives and Islamic flags and was the cell's computer specialist, his online Arabic profile "fidadee" means a "person ready to sacrifice themselves for a particular cause." Two bags of ball bearings—described as the shrapnel of choice for suicide bombers—were found in one of his pockets. On his PC were al-Qaeda propaganda videos and recordings promoting "murder and destruction." The conviction of his mentor, Aabid Khan, marks the latest chapter in a series of raids and arrests across three continents. Four trials have already led to convictions in three countries – and the investigations continue. It also highlights the intelligence cooperation between the UK and other countries in Europe and North America.

In March 2005, armed police closed in on an apartment on a rutted road in a village on the edge of the Bosnian capital Sarajevo. As they burst in, they subdued a group of men they had been observing. One of the group had an armed “suicide belt” of explosives. These arrests were a major breakthrough in an investigation that would reveal how international terrorists were operating through the internet – from North America and Europe through to South Asia. The searches in Bosnia uncovered a so-called “martyrdom” video explaining in English how the men were fighting on behalf of oppressed Muslims around the world. Materials included the mobile phone belonging to the ringleader, who had travelled from Scandinavia hoping to carry out attacks on NATO targets. But just as importantly, detectives established the phone had been in contact with a number registered to an address in the UK.

When officers from the Metropolitan Police kicked in the door of a modest flat in west London, they had no idea they were about to arrest one of the then most significant figures among a growing network of cyber-terrorists. The occupant was a young Moroccan, Younes Tsouli, who had used the internet to build links to al-Qaeda leaders in Iraq and a wider network around the world. In July 2004, Tsouli hacked an FTP server operated by the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department and transformed it into an al-Qaeda message board. He also later hacked a server belonging to George Washington University. Tsouli’s encrypted hard drive was a treasure trove of evidence which led detectives to other suspected extremists across the world. These men had been using password-protected internet forums to exchange views on jihad – but they did not realise they had also left themselves exposed to infiltration by intelligence officers.

Within a couple of months of Tsouli’s arrest, West Yorkshire Police officers began observing the activities of Bradford man Aabid Khan. He had worked on one of Tsouli’s key websites, at Tibyan. Meanwhile, in North America, police and intelligence agents began watching another group they linked to this online network. Like Tsouli and Khan, many of them were very young. The targets they are alleged to have discussed attacking—the global positioning system and the Canadian Parliament—often seemed fanciful. Khan allegedly talked online to some of them about setting up a mini-Sharia state in a remote part of Scotland. Nevertheless, his naivety was combined with a deadly seriousness and burgeoning connections to militant groups in Asia. Gradually, once evidence had been gathered of various alleged plots, the authorities moved to arrest those they had placed under surveillance.

Two men from the United States were among those picked up in March and April 2006. They are alleged to have emailed Tsouli and Khan reconnaissance footage they filmed of targets in Washington DC. Khan is then believed to have met one of the men in Pakistan to arrange terrorism training. Scottish police arrested a student, Mohammed Atif Siddique, as he was about to board a flight to Pakistan to join up with Khan. Analysis of internet chat between him and Khan suggested the latter was grooming and radicalising the former. Then in June 2006 Toronto witnessed the dramatic arrests of 17 men. The group had

been infiltrated by two police informants and was accused of planning attacks on Canadian targets. The alleged leader was a friend of Aabid Khan's. The men deny terrorism charges in an ongoing case.

Days later Khan flew back to Britain from Pakistan. Despite knowing about the arrests in Toronto, he entered the country with a mass of incriminating material. Officers from West Yorkshire Police had been tipped off by MI5 that Khan was coming into the country. When they searched his luggage they were astonished to find evidence that dramatically illustrated his involvement in Islamist extremism and his dedication to the cause of the global jihad.

MI5 Figures

In 2001, following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the House of Commons' Intelligence and Security Committee reported that the Security Services MI5 were investigating 250 primary "terrorist" subjects. This compared to around 800 by July 2005. In 2006, then head of MI5, Eliza Manningham-Buller, pointed out that MI5 had identified around 1,600 individuals who they believed posed a direct threat to national security and public safety, because of their support for terrorism. The current head of MI5, Jonathan Evans believes that the figure today would be at least 2,000. This growth, which has driven the increasingly strong and coordinated government response, is partly because of their coverage and intelligence cooperation of the extremist networks is more thorough. But it is also because there remains a steady flow of new recruits to the extremist cause.

In April 2008, British Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, revealed that there are 30 active plots in the UK, with 200 networks involved. One thing to think about is that since 9/11, every major terrorist plot in the UK utilized immigrants or immigrant communities. Despite being local, many of these plots have an international dimension. It was through intelligence co-operation that each region in England could be ascertained for its level of terror.

RICU

Despite the many successes in foiling and disrupting plots through intelligence sharing, we still face a major dilemma. For every individual that is being captured, arrested and prosecuted there are at least five more coming along the assembly line. We are not stopping the recruitment of terrorism and by the same token not defeating the ideas, as articulated by the ideologies that are being used to radicalise them. What counter measures can intelligence and law enforcement agencies engage in? The government has now began a campaign of countering the ideas of al-Qaeda and its ideologues to prevent them from recruiting Britons. The research, information and communications unit (RICU) is a counter-terrorism PR operation set up in 2007 within the newly created office of security and counter-terrorism. Though based in the Home Office, RICU also reports to the Foreign Office and Department for Communities and Local Government.

UK officials finally concluded that while al-Qaeda and its allies were excelling at promoting their own narrative and propaganda, no one in the government was responsible for pushing back. RICU was established to fill this gap and achieve three key goals: exposing the weaknesses of and undermining violent ideologies; supporting and promoting credible alternative voices; and strengthening and protecting the UK government through strategic communications. Its creation, Tony Blair said in March 2007, “marked a change in the government’s approach to managing the terrorist threat to the UK and winning the battle for hearts and minds.” The material being used by RICU in the global propaganda effort to taint the al-Qaeda brand is designed to undermine their narrative.

Governmental officials were and are continually asked to draw up “counter-narratives” to the anti-western messages on websites designed to influence vulnerable and impressionable audiences in the UK. They will set out to explain the government’s “foreign policy in its totality,” counter the accusations made by al-Qaeda sympathisers and extremist groups and pinpoint the weaknesses in their arguments. The unit will also support “alternative voices” in the Muslim community.

A RICU document makes the following statement: “AQ is not the only extremist ideology of interest or concern, domestically or overseas. But countering the AQ threat is a counter-terrorism priority and requires AQ-centric communications efforts.”

The target of the campaign—the al-Qaeda narrative—is seen as linking together genuine or perceived, commonly held concerns into a “narrative of grievance” that reinforces the portrayal of Muslims as victims of western injustice. “It [the narrative] combines fact, fiction, emotion and religion and manipulates discontent about local and international issues. The narrative is simple, flexible and infinitely accommodating. It can be adapted to suit local conditions and may have a disproportionate influence on understanding and interpretation of local or global events.”

RICU says it needs to be challenged to reduce the opportunity for terrorist exploitation of underlying grievances: “The objective is not to dismiss ‘grievances’ but undermine AQ’s position as their champion: and violent extremism as the solution.” Initial attempts to counter this narrative focused on arguments for siding with the UK government in the War on Terror but were met with resistance. So RICU switched instead to an audience-focused, three-part counter-narrative. The first part is the message that there is a real threat to all UK citizens – Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Citing the number of Muslims killed in the July 2005 terrorist attack in London. Jonathan Allen, the head of RICU stated that “bombs don’t swerve around faiths.”

Second is the message that the terrorist ideology is morally repugnant. Rather than “jihadis” or “warriors,” as they like to call themselves, they are thugs who murder innocent people and who attempt to use Islam to justify violence. This effort seeks to draw a line around the terrorists, not the UK government: a person might not like UK policies or the government very much, but

as long as they oppose extremism, they are still in some way on the same side. According to Allen, Muslims should be able to feel like they are both Muslims and British at the same time. Finally, RICU seeks to challenge its audiences to do something about the threat. Once one accepts that there is a threat, said Mr. Allen, one must take on a personal commitment to do something about it. Understanding audiences is vital in a world of globalized communications. RICU draws little distinction between domestic and international messaging, though it pays careful attention to individual segments of its audiences – which radio programs a teenager or an adult prefers, for example, or where children seek information about religion online. Most importantly, messages must be crafted to resonate emotionally with audiences.

Individuals taking their own actions will make the real difference. The most important contribution by government will be empowering credible voices to oppose the extremist ideology; once a debate has been fostered, the ideology is likely to crumble under its own weight. This often requires capacity building within communities, often something as simple as training in public speaking. Some of the most powerful voices against terrorism are those who have left and rejected the extremist movement. Most of those credible voices will likely never be known to the wider world. They will be the parents, siblings, or neighbours who notice something and get involved.

This is not intelligence cooperation in the strictly operational sense but it is very valuable intelligence cooperation between governmental departments and intelligence agencies in the process to counter the ideas and doctrines that groups like al-Qaeda preach and articulate. Since I first took part in this working group in Tbilisi in April 2007, I've spoken about how this "war on terrorism" is a "war of ideas" and you have to defeat the idea in addition to capturing, arresting and prosecuting terrorists. The British government has finally adopted a mechanism which could potentially yield positive dividends. Let us see what happens in the next six months.

Assessment

Developing and delivering an effective counter-terrorism strategy involves all parts of Government acting together and taking a joined-up approach to dealing with this complex and wide-ranging threat. Delivery also depends upon partnerships with the police and emergency services, local authorities, and devolved administrations, as well as with the private sector and the voluntary and charitable sector. Perhaps the most important of all these partnerships is between these bodies, led by the Government, and our citizens and communities. Public awareness of the threat, understanding of the measures needed to combat it, and active support and cooperation with the police are critical to the success of the strategy.

I think we have a central dilemma – how to protect our citizens within the rule of law when intelligence does not amount to clear cut evidence and when it is fragile and cannot hold up in court. We also, of course, and I repeat in all our countries and within the EU, value civil liberties and wish to do nothing to

damage these hard-fought for rights. But the world has changed and there needs to be a debate on whether some erosion of what we all value may be necessary to improve the chances of our citizens not being blown apart as they go about their daily lives and to ensure convictions in court.

To look at the international angle, shared intelligence can decisively shape decision makers' perspectives on the problems they face and the policies they select by providing them with important information beyond that available to their national intelligence agencies. The principal benefit from sharing for recipients is the acquisition of intelligence that is valuable to decision makers but otherwise unobtainable at an acceptable cost. I am sure you all agree with me that containing terrorism in a democratic society, governed by the rule of law, where civil rights are of great value, having been acquired with difficulty over many centuries, is not straightforward. Our courts require evidence that meets high standards of proof and strong evidence of a crime having been committed or strong evidence of a conspiracy to commit such a crime. Of course it is a perverse irony that the terrorists use our legal system to protect themselves. The same legal system that they wish to destroy.

This is one of the central dilemmas of countering this sort of terrorism. We may be confident that an individual or group is planning an attack but that confidence comes from the sort of intelligence that is patchy and fragmentary and uncertain, to be interpreted and assessed. All too often it falls short of evidence to support criminal charges to bring an individual before the courts, the best solution if achievable. Moreover, there is a need to protect fragile sources of intelligence including human sources. Which at times can mean that intelligence sharing is controlled.

Being in this position can be uncomfortable for the authorities. We can believe, correctly, that a terrorist atrocity is being planned but those arrested by the police have to be released as the plan is too embryonic, too vague to lead to charges and possibly convictions. Furthermore the intelligence may be highly sensitive and its exposure would be very damaging by revealing either the source or the capability of the authorities.

The bottom line is that in all of our respective countries we face a common threat. A threat that has many different autonomous components. The components, however, unlike us, are united. They share intelligence, information, resources and even personnel. They are motivated and focused into achieving their objectives. We need to match their resolve. In addition, we need we all quite often have a piece of terror puzzle that when put together provides us with the complete picture. Cohesion is essential.

Based on the current global threat, protecting our allies is a way of also protecting ourselves. So the UK has a very strong interest in international co-operation and intelligence sharing. In the UK, intelligence cooperation is not only used to help track down and disrupt terrorists. It is also about trying more widely to reduce the risks of terrorism. Intelligence supports wider policies and action to make it more difficult for terrorists to succeed. As we pass the 7th

anniversary of 9/11 and with bin Laden and al-Zawahiri still on the loose, that co-operation has to and must continue.

Box 1. Under-Reported Significant Terrorist Acts since 2008

John J. Le Beau

The following information is provided as a point of reference. The sheer number of terrorist attacks around the globe—perpetrated primarily by jihadist groups—is so enormous that it dulls the senses. Only the most spectacular assaults—such as 9/11, Madrid and London—are retained in the public consciousness. The list below captures some less spectacular terrorist attacks in recent times that nonetheless caused considerable loss of life and destruction of property, or that were intended to do so, but failed. The cases listed underline the substantial damages and casualties inflicted by jihadist terrorism, and the global scope of what has become a battlefield without borders.

20 September 2008: A truck bomb attack in Iraq kills fifty-four and wounds nearly three hundred. Building caught fire as result of the blast.

26-29 November 2008: Small unit infantry-style assault by Pakistani jihadists on multiple targets in Mumbai, India, including two major international hotels and the main train station. At least 173 people killed, with circa three hundred wounded. In addition to Indians, casualties include several Westerners and Israelis.

1 February 2009: Twenty-eight killed during Taliban attack on a prison in the Afghanistan capital of Kabul.

10 August 2009: A truck bomb attack conducted near Mosul, Iraq kills circa twenty-eight Iraqis and wounds over one hundred, also causing extensive property damage.

5 November 2009: U.S. Army Major Nidal Hasan kills thirteen and wounds thirty at Fort Hood, Texas. Hasan, a Sunni Moslem who is a trained psychiatrist, is determined by the FBI to have been in touch via the internet with known jihadist -Islamist cleric in Yemen, Imam al-Alawki, a fugitive U.S. citizen and supporter of al-Qaeda.

28 November 2009: A major bomb blast derails a train on Moscow-St. Petersburg line, killing 29 and injuring scores. A Chechen Islamist group takes “credit” for the attack.

3 December 2009: Nineteen Somalis—including three government ministers and a number of female university students—are killed at a graduation ceremony being held in Mogadishu. The attack was conducted by a suicide bomber from al Shabaab, a Somali jihadist group sharing al-Qaeda’s ideology.

29 March 2010: Coordinated attacks on two Moscow Metro stations leave forty dead and scores seriously wounded. The suicide bombing attack was carried out by two Chechen “Black Widows,” one of them only seventeen years old.

13 April 2010: At least ten are killed and twelve wounded during the course of an attack in Isabela, the Philippines. The assault was attributed to members of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group.

1 May 2010: A crudely made propane tank car bomb fails to detonate in Times Square, New York City. A naturalized U.S. citizen of Pakistani origin was arrested for the planned attack as he tried to flee the country. U.S. authorities linked his activity to the Pakistani Taliban. The incident stepped up security concerns about “homegrown terrorism” in the United States, as well as the role of Pakistan as a magnet for terrorists.

17 May 2010: Over thirty Indian policemen are killed and more than forty wounded after the bus in which they were traveling was bombed in the city of Dantewada.

28 May 2010: Lahore, Pakistan. Over eighty killed and hundreds wounded in a bombing attack against the places of worship of a minority religious sect. Pakistani Taliban sympathizers were believed to be behind this and similar assaults on religious minorities in the country.

11 July 2010: Kampala, Uganda: Multiple explosions at popular restaurants result in over seventy deaths and many wounded. The attacks targeted restaurants featuring coverage of the World Cup games. Westerners are among the casualties. The Somalia-based jihadist group Al-Shabab subsequently takes credit for the attack, threatening more strikes at African Union countries that are performing a stability role in Somalia.

20 September 2010: Islamist fighters ambush a military convoy near the Rasht Valley, Tajikistan, killing at least twenty-three Tajik soldiers, and seriously wounding many more. Tajik authorities claim that the jihadists included individuals from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Chechnya.

11 December 2010: An Iraqi-born Swedish citizen detonates a car bomb and a backpack explosive device in Stockholm, killing himself and wounding two pedestrians. Authorities believe that the explosion was premature, and that the bomber intended to target busy ships in the immediate area. Although the attack failed, the “near miss” resulted in considerable security concern in Europe.

1 January 2011: An explosive device directly outside a Coptic church in Alexandria, Egypt detonates as attendees were leaving a religious service, killing twenty-three Christians and wounding nearly one hundred. Violent jihadists were regarded as the perpetrators, with Egyptian authorities blaming “outsider” radicals for the attack.

4 January 2011: The governor of Punjab province, Pakistan, Salmaan Taseer is assassinated by his bodyguard, a radical Salafi-Islamist. Taseer is targeted and killed because he opposed the prevailing blasphemy laws in Pakistan, often used to prosecute non-Moslem minorities. The assassin, Malik Hussein Qadri, openly justified his deed as an Islamic obligation, and was accorded broad public support during his court hearing.

17 January 2011: A suicide bomber in Tikrit, Iraq kills over fifty at a police recruitment center; several dozen more are severely injured. Al Qaeda in Iraq is seen as responsible for the attack, which is the worst experienced in the country in several months. Similar deadly attacks transpire at other locations in Iraq in the following days.

24 January 2011: A suicide bomber kills at least thirty five people and wounds over a hundred in an attack in the arrival terminal of Domodedovo airport, Moscow’s largest. A number of the casualties are foreigners. Islamist elements from the so-called “Emirate of the Caucasus” are widely suspected to be behind the blast.

28 January 2011: A bomb is detonated and shots fired in a supermarket in Kabul, Afghanistan frequented by foreigners. Nine people are killed outright, including at least three non-Afghans, and several more are wounded, some of them critically. The Afghan Taliban takes credit for the attack.

12 March 2011: Five Israeli settlers, including three children, are killed by stabbing in their West Bank settlement, after a Palestinian terrorist infiltrated their home. A Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip said that the attack had the organization's "full support."

2 March 2011: Two U.S. servicemen are killed and two more critically wounded with a handgun by an ethnic Albanian from Kosovo. The attacker was active on Islamist websites, and the case is believed to represent an example of individual "virtual jihad."

28 April 2011: A powerful bomb placed in a popular tourist cafe in Marrakesh, Morocco kills sixteen people, most of them European tourists, and wounds dozens more. Moroccan authorities attribute the attack to al Qaeda in the Islam Maghreb. Six terrorists are subsequently arrested.

7 May 2012: Thirty soldiers were killed and forty wounded by an Al Qaeda attack in the Abyan governate of Yemen. The attack followed an alleged missile strike on an al Qaeda senior operative, Mohammed Ahmed al-Quso.

18 July 2012: A suicide bomber kills five Israeli tourists and seriously wounds several others in an attack at Burgas airport. The attack was publicly linked to Iran by Israeli politicians.

11 September 2012: The U.S. Ambassador to Libya and four other diplomats are killed when hundreds storm the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi.