

British MP Michael Meacher suggests Security Services are shielding July 7 bomb plotters

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Senior Labour member of Parliament and former environment minister Michael Meacher has written in the *Guardian* newspaper, alleging that a thorough investigation into the July 7 terror bombings in London may be thwarted by the intelligence services.

Under the headline, “Britain Now Faces its Own Blowback,” Meacher charges that British and US intelligence agencies have had longstanding relations with Islamic fundamentalists from the time of the Mujahideen war against Soviet forces in Afghanistan through to the wars in Bosnia in the 1990s. He states not only that British intelligence cannot be trusted to investigate the London bombings, but also that the CIA may be protecting key figures involved in 9/11.

“Blowback” is the term widely used to refer to the unexpected consequences of CIA support for the Mujahideen in a conflict that first saw the emergence on the international stage of Osama bin Laden and the seeds of his Al Qaeda network. The CIA’s relationship with the Albanian nationalist Kosovo Liberation Army is also well documented.

However, Meacher begins by focussing on the largely unexplored connections established by British intelligence with these and similar Islamic fundamentalist groups, centring on Pakistan.

Earlier this month, the Arab TV network Al Jazeera broadcast a video message from Pakistan-born Briton Mohammed Sidique Khan, one of the suicide bombers responsible for the July 7 attacks. In a second message on the same tape, Al-Qaeda’s Ayman al-Zawahri claimed responsibility for the blasts.

Meacher comments that the videotape emphasises that the London bombs must be understood “against the ferment of the last decade radicalising Muslim youth of Pakistani origin living in Europe.”

He writes: “During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, the US funded large numbers of jihadists through Pakistan’s secret intelligence service, the ISI. Later the US wanted to raise another jihadi corps, again using proxies, to help Bosnian Muslims fight to weaken the Serb government’s hold on Yugoslavia. Those they turned to included Pakistanis in Britain.”

The break-up of Yugoslavia was viewed by Washington and London as the best means of re-establishing control of the Balkan region and extending their influence into the former Soviet territories and spheres of influence in the oil- and gas-rich Caspian

Basin.

Referring to a recent report by the Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation, Meacher explains that to this end the Clinton administration requested assistance from the Pakistani government of Benazir Bhutto.

Pakistan sent a contingent of the Harkat-ul- Ansar (HUA) terrorist group to Bosnia which had been trained by its security service. Possibly 200 Pakistani Muslims living in Britain were involved in the Bosnian operation. The report states that this was “with the full knowledge and complicity of the British and American intelligence agencies.”

Meacher also cites a 2002 Dutch government report on Bosnia, which detailed how Washington gave a “green light to groups on the state department list of terrorist organisations, including the Lebanese-based Hizbullah, to operate in Bosnia.”

At this point it is necessary to quote Meacher extensively. He writes, “For nearly a decade the US helped Islamist insurgents linked to Chechnya, Iran and Saudi Arabia destabilise the former Yugoslavia. The insurgents were also allowed to move further east to Kosovo. By the end of the fighting in Bosnia there were tens of thousands of Islamist insurgents in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo; many then moved west to Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

“Less well known is evidence of the British government’s relationship with a wider Islamist terrorist network. During an interview on Fox TV this summer, the former US federal prosecutor John Loftus reported that British intelligence had used the al-Muhajiroun group in London to recruit Islamist militants with British passports for the war against the Serbs in Kosovo. Since July Scotland Yard has been interested in an alleged member of al-Muhajiroun, Haroon Rashid Aswat, who some sources have suggested could have been behind the London bombings.”

Meacher cites one alleged incident in which the British security services stepped in to protect someone who could possibly have been involved in the July 7 attacks. He writes:

“According to Loftus, Aswat was detained in Pakistan after leaving Britain, but was released after 24 hours. He was subsequently returned to Britain from Zambia, but has been detained solely for extradition to the US, not for questioning about the London bombings. Loftus claimed that Aswat is a British-backed double agent, pursued by the police but protected by MI6.”

Another high profile Islamic fundamentalist, Omar Saeed

Sheikh, is also a British citizen of Pakistani origin who was educated at the London School of Economics. Currently imprisoned in Pakistan for the killing of the US journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002, he too is still politically active and is suspected of possible involvement with July 7.

Meacher writes that Sheikh "was recruited as a student by Jaish-e-Muhammad (Army of Muhammad), which operates a network in Britain. It has actively recruited Britons from universities and colleges since the early 1990s, and has boasted of its numerous British Muslim volunteers. Investigations in Pakistan have suggested that on his visits there Shehzad Tanweer, one of the London suicide bombers, contacted members of two outlawed local groups and trained at two camps in Karachi and near Lahore. Indeed the network of groups now being uncovered in Pakistan may point to senior al-Qaida operatives having played a part in selecting members of the bombers' cell. The Observer Research Foundation has argued that there are even 'grounds to suspect that the [London] blasts were orchestrated by Omar Sheikh from his jail in Pakistan.'"

Meacher asks the obvious question, why it is that Omar Sheikh may have been allowed to continue playing a part in terrorist activities and has so far successfully avoided the death sentence imposed against him by the Pakistani government? Numerous appeals against the sentence have been adjourned, leading to its delay on 32 separate occasions by a regime not normally associated with respect for democratic rights.

Meacher links this directly with 9/11 and possible CIA involvement: "This is all the more remarkable when this is the same Omar Sheikh who, at the behest of General Mahmood Ahmed, head of the ISI, wired \$100,000 to Mohammed Atta, the leading 9/11 hijacker, before the New York attacks, as confirmed by Dennis Lormel, director of the FBI's financial crimes unit.

"Yet neither Ahmed nor Omar appears to have been sought for questioning by the US about 9/11. Indeed, the official 9/11 Commission Report of July 2004 sought to downplay the role of Pakistan with the comment: 'To date, the US government has not been able to determine the origin of the money used for the 9/11 attacks. Ultimately the question is of little practical significance'—a statement of breathtaking disingenuousness."

Meacher writes that these facts highlight "the resistance to getting at the truth about the 9/11 attacks and to an effective crackdown on the forces fomenting terrorist bombings in the west, including Britain."

He places this against similar inexplicably conciliatory positions by the Bush administration towards people with connections to Pakistan, in particular "its restraint towards the father of Pakistan's atomic bomb, Dr. AQ Khan, selling nuclear secrets to Iran, Libya and North Korea."

Meacher offers as a possible explanation the fact that Pakistan is considered by Washington to be a major international ally.

He concludes, "Whether the hunt for those behind the London bombers can prevail against these powerful political forces remains to be seen. Indeed it may depend on whether Scotland Yard, in its attempts to uncover the truth, can prevail over MI6, which is trying to cover its tracks and in practice has every opportunity to operate beyond the law under the cover of national

security."

Meacher's remarks are devastating in themselves. But they raise an issue which he himself does not explicitly address. Given the extensive connections between the security services and Islamic fundamentalists operating in Britain, one must ask: Did MI6 or any other agency have prior knowledge that some form of terrorist action was planned for July 7?

To date there has been no credible explanation offered as to why the threat assessment, used to estimate the likelihood of a terrorist attack, was lowered just weeks prior to the bombings and kept at the reduced level during the G-8 summit of government heads of major industrial nations in Scotland. The July 7 attacks occurred mid-way through the summit.

The intelligence services have continued to plead ignorance of any terrorist preparations, despite the fact that Mohammed Sidique Khan had come to the attention of the intelligence services in 2004 as part of an inquiry into an alleged plot to explode a truck bomb outside a London target.

Khan had also made several trips to Pakistan, and senior Israeli intelligence officials confirmed that he had visited Israel in Spring 2003, just prior to a suicide bombing carried out by two Britons of Pakistani origin on a Tel Aviv nightclub. This was the first time that Britons had been involved in a suicide bombing.

Yet Khan had supposedly never been placed under surveillance, not even when, according to the US-based *Stratfor* web site, "unconfirmed rumours in intelligence circles indicate that the Israeli government actually warned London" of a potential terror attack several days before July 7.

In the past, Meacher has raised the question of foreknowledge and possible collusion between the CIA and the perpetrators of 9/11. On September 6, 2003, he again chose the *Guardian* to publish an op-ed piece, "The War on Terrorism is Bogus: 9/11 Gave the US an Ideal Pretext to Use Force to Secure its Global Domination."

In that article he stated that "the US authorities did little or nothing to pre-empt the events of 9/11... It is known that at least 11 countries provided advance warning to the US of the 9/11 attacks."

He questioned whether US intelligence had connections with those alleged to have organised the attacks, established during the Afghan conflict, before asking who had ordered the US national security apparatus to "stand down" on 9/11.

The *World Socialist Web Site* drew attention to the significance of Meacher's remarks in a September 8, 2003 article. In contrast, Meacher was either ignored or denounced by the US and British media.

This time, only one Pakistani newspaper reproduced Meacher's *Guardian* article. The rest of the press has remained silent.



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