

Britain: Lies begin to unravel in police murder of Jean Charles de Menezes

Vicky Short, Paul Mitchell
17 October 2008

Explosive testimony has been presented to the inquest into the police killing of Jean Charles de Menezes, suggesting that he was shot even though he was known to be unarmed.

Evidence was given that the innocent Brazilian was killed despite his not being clearly identified as a suspected terrorist. In addition, officers involved have said that they were prepared to kill de Menezes even without authorisation from commanding officer Cressida Dick.

Jean Charles was fatally shot two weeks after the July 7 bombings in London, which killed 56 people and one day after an apparent failed second attempt to detonate devices. He was reportedly mistaken for Hussain Osman, one of the failed July 21, 2005, bombers. Anti-terror officers pinned him to the floor of a London underground train and pumped seven bullets into his head at point-blank range.

Last week, a Special Branch officer revealed that he altered his notes because they indicated that police shot dead Jean Charles as he boarded a train at Stockwell tube station on July 22, 2005, even though he was known to be unarmed. The officer, referred to as "Owen," was giving evidence on October 8.

Owen was deputy surveillance coordinator in the Scotland Yard control room during the surveillance operation that resulted in the young electrician's death and had made notes about the day's events on his computer. After he had given his evidence at the inquest, Owen was asked for all his notes relating to the shooting.

He claims he logged onto his computer to change the names of officers into the codenames given by the court to protect their identities, but then deleted a paragraph in which Dick, who is now deputy assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, had told officers to allow Jean Charles to continue his journey because he was "not carrying anything."

The full paragraph reads, "Management discussion. CD [Cressida Dick]: Can run on to tube as not carrying anything. Persuaded by unidentified male amongst management."

It flatly contradicts Dick's own evidence at the inquest on October 7, the previous day, in which she claimed that she ordered her officers to "stop" Jean Charles because he was a "terrorist threat."

Owen says he deleted the paragraph because it was "misleading." He claimed he couldn't remember if it was Dick talking although he said it was probably her when questioned further.

"I believe it was the commander but when I reflected I couldn't be sure, or whether she was saying this is what we are going to do or this is one of the options. It was a woman's voice."

When asked if he realised he had committed a serious offence, Owen said, "I have removed a line I believed was wrong and gave a totally false impression." He told the inquest he had deleted more than he had intended because he was rushing to an appointment. When asked if "management" had asked him to make the changes, Owen replied, "No. I am sure of that, sir."

Owen also made the startling revelation that he did not submit the crucial paragraph to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) inquiry in 2006 or the health and safety trial last year into the shooting, at which he gave evidence, "because he wasn't asked to."

Commander Dick also claimed she was informed "they think it's him" when Jean Charles left a building linked to Hussain Osman and made his way to Stockwell station. Chief Inspector Vince Esposito, a counter-terrorism expert advising Dick on the day of the shooting, said he believed, "without a shadow of doubt," that Jean Charles was failed bomber Hussain Osman and that a "critical shot" to the head was only administered if a suspect was identified and was carrying a device.

However, speaking at the inquest on October 10, "Pat," who acted as contact between Scotland Yard and the surveillance team, reported he had said only that Mr. de Menezes was "possibly identifiable with" the suspect. "I was always under the impression that the subject had been unidentified," he stated.

Another senior officer, Detective Inspector Merrick Rose, revealed that he could not "recall" whether images of the real suspect, Osman, were discussed at a dawn briefing before Jean Charles's death—begging the question, was a comparison between the two men ever made?

Dick denies that her instruction to "stop" Jean Charles was an order to shoot to kill and that she did not say "at all costs."

Mark Lewindon, now retired, was a detective chief inspector in Special Branch at the time. He had told the inquest he had overheard the order from Dick when she was speaking in the operations room at New Scotland Yard. "It was said he shouldn't be allowed to get on the train and I think the words she used were 'at all costs,' " he said.

Dick responded in her defence that "I would need to be absolutely satisfied that this person posed a dreadful imminent threat to members of the public before I would order a critical shot."

"I was asking for what you might call a conventional—albeit aware of all the risks—challenge from the firearms officers."

Subsequent evidence demonstrated that, whether or not Dick was calling to make operational a shoot-to-kill policy, the police involved had already been instructed to do just that.

Watch David North's remarks commemorating 25 years of the *World Socialist Web Site* and donate today.

A tactical adviser and senior firearms advisor known as Trojan 84 made the extraordinary admission to the inquest that police were prepared to take a "critical" shot *without* orders from their superiors.

The inspector had been in charge of briefing the marksmen who shot dead Jean Charles. Giving evidence in open court for the first time, Trojan 84 said: "We felt that for any DSO [designated senior officer] to make a decision about a critical shot was a hugely difficult decision to make and maybe career-threatening.

"In relation to the critical shot, the instruction would come direct from the DSO but what I also mentioned was that if we were able to challenge, but the subject was not compliant, then a shot may be taken."

When Trojan 84 was asked if officers were prepared to

take the critical shot without authorisation, he replied, "Yes."

"It was my job to tell the team they would be supported whatever decision they took because of the structures that were in place."

Trojan 84 could only have conceivably issued such instructions if they had been already laid down at the highest possible level—much higher than the DSO Cressida Dick.

The shoot-to-kill policy implemented against Jean Charles is known as "Operation Kratos," adopted in secret two years earlier in high-level discussions between top police officers and the government. Under its remit, a senior police officer is on standby 24 hours a day at Scotland Yard, the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), with the authority to deploy special armed squads to follow and, if deemed necessary, shoot dead suspected suicide bombers.

It is now clear that, without any clear identification or indication of an imminent threat, the police were determined that someone would die that day in furtherance of the so-called "war on terror."

Moreover, even the limited safeguard of accountability to a designated superior officer would not be allowed to interfere with what was a *political and not a security-driven* decision. As the *World Socialist Web Site* insisted in the immediate aftermath of police murder, "there was a deliberate decision to kill, rather than arrest, de Menezes, taken at the highest level of the police force rather than by the officers immediately involved."

Jean Charles was shot in cold blood primarily in order "to instill fear in the population and implement a shoot-to-kill policy that had been secretly decided on by Prime Minister Tony Blair and top officials two years previously." The treatment meted out to de Menezes sent out the clear message—first articulated by Blair—that the "rules of the game" had changed.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact