

# Questions following not guilty verdicts in July 2005 London bombing case

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Last week, following a retrial ordered by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), three men were found not guilty at Kingston Crown Court of helping to plan the London terrorist bombings in July 2005.

On the morning of July 7, four bombs were detonated in rapid succession by suicide bombers. Three of the bombs were exploded on the London Underground and one on a packed double-decker bus. A total of 52 people were killed, with 700 also injured.

The bombers were Hasib Hussain, Mohammad Sidique Khan, Germaine Lindsay and Shehzad Tanweer. The bombs were detonated as G8 summit leaders were meeting in Scotland.

The jury at the retrial found the defendants Waheed Ali, Sadeer Saleem and Mohammed Shaki not guilty of organising a “reconnaissance mission” to London, in order to assist the suicide bombers. Two of the defendants, Ali and Shakil, were found guilty of a second charge of plotting to attend a terrorism training camp in Pakistan.

The retrial was ordered by the CPS after the jury in the original 2008 trial were unable to reach verdicts. The defendants had admitted knowing the bombers during the trial, but denied assisting them. The three defendants were all from the same area of Beeston in Leeds, West Yorkshire. Ali had known Shehzad Tanweer from childhood and had grown up in the same street. Saleem had first met Waheed Ali in 2001 and knew Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer. Shakil had first met Khan while working in a mosque in Beeston in 1996.

The evidence obtained by the police via the use of mobile phone records showed that the defendants had been together in London on December 16-17, 2004. There they visited several tourist attractions. They also met bomber Hasib Hussain and, for part of a day, were with another of the 7/7 attackers, Germaine Lindsay.

The defendants stated their trip had been to enable Ali to say goodbye to his sister, before he left to attend a training camp in Pakistan. During both trials the three insisted that

they opposed suicide bombings and had been shocked by the London explosions. Their defence counsel stated that there was no evidence linking them to the bombings and that they were, in fact, being tried for “guilt by association”.

The not guilty verdicts delivered on the main charge raise fundamental questions.

After nearly four years and despite a massive police investigation costing some £100 million, to this day the three remain the only people to have faced any charges in relation to the London bombings. The police investigation, the biggest in modern history, included tens of thousands of hours of police man hours, the examination of 90,000 phone calls, with 4,700 phone numbers probed, the assembly of 13,000 exhibits with 7,000 forensically examined, 18,450 statements taken and 19,400 documents created.

Why is it that the police, despite massive and unlimited resources, have not been able to throw any further light on the worst terrorist atrocity ever committed on British soil?

If the three defendants did not help plan and organise the bombings, then who did? And why have they been able to avoid being identified?

And why were the bombings not prevented?

Peter Clarke, the former head of the Metropolitan police's anti-terrorism branch, who led the inquiry until his retirement last year, told the *Guardian*, “Every possible line had been followed, and there didn't seem to be any fresh new lines. The core of the investigation was the people that were in court over the last few weeks”.

Such a statement is simply not plausible. In the same April 29 article, the *Guardian* states that senior “counter-terrorism officials believe around 20 people were involved, from those associated with the bombers to those who helped them plan the attacks”.

Over the past four years evidence has come to light revealing that intelligence and security forces had been warned of a possible terrorist outrage in London. The *Observer* revealed that in early 2005 Saudi intelligence had advised British officials that four Islamic militants, including British citizens, were planning to bomb the London

Underground within the next six months. The *Observer* cited the Saudi ambassador and senior US National Security Council counterterrorism agents confirming the intelligence.

Two of the bombers, Mohammad Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer, were known to British security services for at least two years before July 7. Khan and Tanweer had both been placed under surveillance in connection with other individuals who were also being monitored as suspected “terrorists”. Both had also been under observation in Pakistan. MI5 had Khan’s telephone number as a contact of a terror suspect, and also the phone number of a third bomber, Jermaine Lindsay. MI5 bugged conversations between Khan and Tanweer for two months.

Attempting to justify why the surveillance of Khan and Tanweer was not maintained, British intelligence stated that they believed them to be peripheral figures. But the American journalist Ron Suskind has claimed that United States authorities gave MI5 a detailed file on Khan at the time, and that he was refused entry into the US on security grounds 2 years before the London attacks because he was regarded as a major figure within Al Qaeda circles.

According to Suskind, the US National Security Agency (NSA) had monitored phone calls and emails between Khan and several Islamic radicals from the US and the UK. The NSA had intercepted email exchanges between Khan and some of his associates in which they discussing their wish to “blow up synagogues on the East Coast”.

Further evidence emerged within days of the bombings revealing that MI5 had previously made a “quick assessment” of Khan after his name had been linked to an alleged plot to explode a 600-pound truck bomb outside a target in London.

Another vital question that remains unanswered is why was there such an extraordinary security stand down in London prior to the bombings?

In June 2005, on advice from MI5’s Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), a decision was made to downgrade the national security alert from “severe, general” to “substantial”. This was despite the pending G8 summit in Scotland, a gathering of the heads of state of the most wealthy and powerful countries. Over the previous decade these summits had been held under military-type security, with entire urban centres sealed off and the most intensive and sophisticated anti-terror measures put in place.

In addition it is inconceivable that the British state does not have numerous spies in and around the various Islamic fundamentalist groups, including spies in mosques and community centres, etc., in heavily populated Muslim communities.

In February 2005, the Islamist cleric Abu Hamza El-Masri was sentenced to prison on 6 charges of soliciting murder,

other lesser offenses and 3 and a half years for having a document useful to terrorists. There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that Britain’s security services sheltered Hamza for years, and that his organisation, Al-Muhajiroun, and the Finsbury Park mosque where he preached were heavily infiltrated. Amongst those who attended the mosque were shoe bomber Richard Reid and Zacarias Moussaoui, the only man charged in the US in connection with 9/11 after pleading guilty to conspiracy.

The government has consistently refused to hold a public inquiry into the events surrounding the London bombings. The families of a number of those killed have demanded an inquiry. Graham Foulkes, whose 22-year-old son David was killed at the Edgware Road Tube station bombing, said, “For almost 4 years, we have been asking for an inquiry into what led up to 7/7.

“We are not looking for people to blame, but we also know that we have not been told the whole truth”.

Robert Webb, whose 29-year-old sister Laura also died in the Edgware Road bombing, said, “The trial... raises again the awful question of whether the bombings could have been prevented”.

Further damning evidence regarding the failure of MI5 and the police to prevent the London bombings is scheduled to be made public this month. According to the *Guardian*, the parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) is to release a document that was withheld from the court case in case it prejudiced the trial. The report will disclose how, “MI5 and West Yorkshire police missed opportunities to follow—and possibly stop—two of the 7 July suicide bombers”.

The *Guardian* adds, “More intelligence is also believed to have emerged about what the security and intelligence agencies knew about the training camps in Pakistan, the number of people connected with the 7/7 bombers who visited them and how many times”.

The “ISC report details how MI5 officers monitored 4 meetings in early 2004 between Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer—the ringleaders of the 7/7 attacks—and Omar Khyam, the ringleader of a plot to blow up shopping centres and nightclubs who was jailed for life in 2007. Ali was also at some of the meetings”.



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