

MI5 and the Woolwich killers

Chris Marsden, Julie Hyland
27 May 2013

The extraordinary decision to arrest Abu Nusaybah at BBC headquarters suggests that British intelligence agencies MI5 and Special Branch know a great deal more than they have admitted about Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale, the killers of the soldier, Drummer Lee Rigby.

Rigby was hacked to death on the streets of Woolwich, southeast London on Wednesday, with his murderers stating on video that it was a revenge killing for Britain's actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and throughout the world against Muslims.

Within 24 hours of this gruesome attack, it was clear that Adebolajo was known to MI5 and had been under surveillance for eight years. Since then it has become apparent that Adebowale was also well known to the security services.

The arrest at the BBC came following an interview with the flagship *Newsnight* programme in which Nusaybah explained something about his close friend Adebolajo's biography and possible motivations for the horrific attack on Rigby. During the interview he also revealed that Adebolajo had been approached repeatedly by MI5 in recent months to act as an informer. Nusaybah was arrested as he left the studio, supposedly on an unrelated matter.

In reality, Nusaybah's interview, as well as other facts that have come to light on the two killers, refutes the self-serving claims of the media and the political elite that the murderous actions could never have been anticipated and have no explanation. The personal biographies of the pair fit the profile of a layer of disaffected youth who are attracted to Islamic fundamentalism as a source of identity and a means of social and political protest, in the absence of any mass-based progressive alternative.

By all accounts, Adebolajo and Adebowale were London youths of Nigerian descent and Christian backgrounds who drifted into petty crime in their

teenage years. In 2003 Adebolajo, then 19 years old, converted to Islam and became involved in groups advocating jihad.

That same year time Britain and America launched their criminal invasion and occupation of Iraq, based on lies and disinformation, accompanied by the "war on terror" at home, overturning democratic rights and targeting Muslims.

Adebowale reportedly converted to Islam five years ago, aged 17, following a racially motivated attack in which one person was killed and he was stabbed multiple times. The deranged attacker accused his victims of being members of Al Qaeda and plotting to carry out explosions.

Adebolajo came under surveillance by the security services almost from the moment he converted. In the past eight years he is said to have featured in several counter-terrorist investigations, although only as a "peripheral figure," according to official claims.

He reportedly attempted to travel to Somalia, although it is suggested he was put off by "a tap on the shoulder." According to Nusaybah, however, Adebolajo did make it to Kenya, which borders Somalia, where he was arrested by the Kenyan army in 2010. Accused of trying to join up with a Somali offshoot of Al Qaeda, Adebolajo alleges he was tortured before being deported. (Kenyan officials have now acknowledged that he was arrested and expelled from the country.)

Most sensationally, Nusaybah told *Newsnight* that it was after his deportation that MI5 approached Adebolajo to work as an informer. Subsequently, family members have spoken of Adebolajo and themselves being "pestered" by MI5 to inform on and infiltrate various groups.

It has also been confirmed that Adebowale was detained by police just two months ago—on what grounds and for how long have not been revealed.

This suggests a pattern.

For years, the media has dutifully echoed official propaganda that the main danger of terrorism comes from so-called “clean skins”—radicalised “lone wolves” unknown to the security services. In fact, every single real terrorist incident and every significant arrest for alleged terrorist plots have involved people known to MI5.

In the case of the July 7, 2005 suicide bombings in London, for example, Mohammed Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer had been known to the intelligence services and under surveillance for at least five months before they carried out their attack.

In some instances, strong evidence has emerged that MI5 both knew and even steered terror plots, including the fertiliser plot in 2007.

The approach taken by MI5 has an additional explanation. Behind the official rhetoric of the “war on terror,” both Britain and the United States have worked closely with Al Qaeda-style groups in Libya and Mali to bring about regime change. They are doing the same in Syria, where Britain is leading an international campaign to officially arm the Islamist-dominated opposition to the Assad regime.

Only a week before his savage assault on Rigby, Adebolajo had been out on the streets of Woolwich publicly campaigning for young Muslims to go to Syria and fight with the Western-backed rebel forces. Foreign Secretary William Hague has stated that of 600 Europeans presently fighting in Syria at least 100 come from London.

The implications are clear. There is no Chinese Wall between urging killings in Syria and carrying out such acts in the UK. Only earlier this month YouTube footage showed the leader of the jihadist Farouq Brigade, Khalid al Hamad, cutting the heart and lungs out of a Syrian government fighter, while proclaiming “Our slogan is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.”

These are the very words issued to camera by Adebolajo to justify the attempted decapitation of Lee Rigby.

Nothing justifies the brutal slaying of a young off-duty soldier. It is cynical and self-serving, however, for commentators to insist that seeking an explanation for this terrible event somehow denotes consent and even provides an apologia. This only paves the way for further atrocities.

The Woolwich killing is the product of the confluence of several related factors—the response of disoriented individuals to the crimes perpetrated by British imperialism all over the world; the fetid social environment that breeds discontent and profound alienation; and the general rottenness of official politics and the mass media, which function as apologists for Britain’s participation in one predatory war after another.

Into this noxious mix must be factored in the efforts of the security services to fish amongst those damaged by this state of affairs and utilise them for their own ends.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact