

Why is the fascist background of anti-migrant Dover arsonist being played down?

Robert Stevens
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After days in which police refused to comment on the political background of the man who firebombed a migrant processing centre in Dover, England on Sunday, it emerged on Tuesday that the perpetrator was a deranged fascist.

Andrew Leak attacked Western Jet Foil migrant processing centre at 11.22am on October 30. He threw three firebombs, with two minor injuries reported. He was seen by an eyewitness laughing as he tossed three petrol canisters with fireworks attached from the window of his car.

After the attack Leak drove to a nearby petrol station where he killed himself. A fourth canister was found in his car by police.

Leak wasn't named by the police for three days, before they finally identified him around 3pm on November 1. The day after the attack, police revealed only that he was a 66-year-old pensioner who had travelled to his home from High Wycombe 115 miles away to commit the attack.

By that time, they undoubtedly knew everything about him after searching Leak's house. Yet as reported by the *Guardian* at the time "police said they were keeping an open mind on the motive for his actions, but that they were not treating it as a terror attack."

On Tuesday, the police finally declared the crime was "likely to be driven by some form of hate-filled grievance." Even then the incident was played down by Head of Counter Terrorism Policing South East Chief Superintendent Olly Wright. "We understand that when counter-terrorism policing become involved, it can be worrying for some people, but I would like to reassure people that there is nothing to suggest any ongoing wider threat at this time. What appears clear is that this despicable offence was targeted and likely to be driven

by some form of hate-filled grievance, though this may not necessarily meet the threshold of terrorism.'

Sir Roger Gale, Conservative MP for North Thanet, Essex, said before Leak's identity was revealed, "There is no known connection with either asylum seekers generally, or any right-wing organisations... All the indications are he was a very, very sad mental health case, who did what he did."

Articles in the *Times* and *Telegraph* adopted an even more overtly sympathetic tone towards Leak, giving the impression that all this was out of character as this was someone who wouldn't hurt a fly. Among the neighbours cited was Allan Abbott, a local vicar. The *Telegraph* reported, "He questioned whether the attack on the migrant centre was an act of terrorism, adding that the only time Leak had mentioned migrants to him was last summer when he expressed sadness that 'another boatload had drowned'."

Everything known so far shows that Leak was a rabid racist, who associated online with fascists and fascist groups, making threats against migrants and Muslims that he stressed he intended to act on.

It emerged that on Monday the police knew—even as they were reassuring everyone that there was nothing to worry about—that after attacking the migrant centre, Leak had shouted at coach drivers waiting to transport migrants: "Do you know what you're doing? Your children should be raped and killed!".

He was active on social media, sharing the content of numerous far-right organisations including Traditional Britain Group, Turning Point UK and the US-based anti-Islamic movement ACT for America. The *Times* noted, "He liked several anti-Islamic Facebook pages including "England Fight Back", "Enoch Powell was right" and "God hates Islam".

Anti-fascist group Hope not Hate director of research

Joe Mulhall told the *Guardian*, “Two minutes after Leak’s name was announced we found links to far-right groups. It is clear to us that this guy was a far-right extremist with quite a long history of sharing content from far-right, extremist groups within the UK and abroad, including [fascist former English Defence League leader] Tommy Robinson. It begs the question, why it’s taken two days before the investigation was handled to counter-terror police. This sort of content was all over his social media.”

Leak stepped up his fascistic activity from October 2021, in response to the killing of Conservative MP Sir David Amess by Ali Harbi Ali, a 25-year-old Briton of Somali heritage. The *Times* reported Wednesday, that after the murder, Leak said on social media that “it was ‘time for payback’ and listed his location as ‘in the trenches waiting’”.

In July this year, Leak posted that he was “near the end of my journey”.

The *Times* revealed that Leak was “banned from Twitter last week over offensive posts and suspended on Facebook on multiple occasions. He had a history of sharing far-right content and making racist comments.” Only a week before he set off to firebomb the migrant centre, he posted on Twitter “get ready, if you’re not ready you will not survive” and declared “stand your ground”. On one of his social media profiles, reports the newspaper, “he said that he would be ‘standing at the front when the bullets start flying’”.

Since his death Leak’s social media accounts have been suspended. On October 26, four days before he bombed the centre, Leak responded to a video tweet from the far-right National Housing Party UK—founded by Pat McGinnis, a former activist in the fascist British National Party (BNP) and John Lawrence, a former member of the English Defence League, BNP and Britain First. The video showed migrants in France with the accompanying message: “Many camps like this are massing on the French coast. They are preparing for the next available dinghy. They will all be using the 1951 UN Refugee Convention to gain entry to the uk & then be housed before our own. NHPUK say no more refugees & we must #ExitUNRefugeeConvention NOW.”

As Leak’s account is suspended his reply cannot be read but among the many other replies are: “We need a few strafing Spitfires”; “Sink a few boats, that will

slow the tide of people wanting to cross the channel”; “More rapists and criminals waiting for the free life we are dishing out.”

Leak was a pensioner suffering with cancer, but in other circumstances he could have easily have become the UK’s Anders Breivik or Brenton Tarrant—fascists who mass murdered 128 people between them. It is a miracle that no-one was killed at Dover. Just before the attack, dozens of asylum seekers, who had just made the hazardous English Channel crossing in dinghies, were led into the processing centre through the gates that Leak bombed.

The dregs of capitalist society such as Leak are being emboldened and encouraged by a putrid political atmosphere in which the official political discourse is barely distinguishable from that spewed out by fascists.

As the WSWS noted, just hours before Leak’s attack the *Times* ran a headline, “Desperate’ new arrivals drive Dover into taking up arms”. This hysteria was based on claims that an asylum seeker wandered into a house in a village near Dover and asked to be taken to safety in London or Manchester. Speaking after the attack to LBC Radio, Dover MP Natalie Elphicke said “tensions have been running high” in her constituency since the incident.

Conservative Party Kent county councillor Nigel Collor, also after the bombing, whipped up animosity against asylum seekers, stating, “I’d like to see them stop the boats coming across... I know this is something that’s been going on for a few years and if they stopped the boats coming in you wouldn’t have the problem.”

Twenty-four hours after the fascist attack, Home Secretary Suella Braverman defended her anti-immigration agenda, telling MPs—including Labourites equally frothing over immigration, “Let’s be clear about what is really going on here: the British people deserve to know which party is serious about stopping the invasion on our southern coast and which party is not.”



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