

Ten Years Ago: London 7/7 Bombing Terror Suspect Linked to British Intelligence

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A British citizen named Haroon Rashid Aswat, living in Lusaka, Zambia is wanted for questioning in relation to the 7/7 London bomb attacks.

Haroon Rashid Aswat comes from the same town in West Yorkshire, Dewsbury, where three of the alleged bombers lived. "He is suspected of visiting the bombers in the weeks before the attacks." (New Republic, 8 August 2005).

"Scotland Yard declined to shed any light on claims Mr Aswat was the possible mastermind of the July 7 attacks."

Haroon Rachid Aswat is said to have played a central role in the London attacks:

"Cell phone records show around 20 calls between him and the 7/7 gang, leading right up to those attacks, which were exactly three weeks ago." (Fox News, 28 July 2005)

Links to British Intelligence?



The same source (Fox News) which presents Aswat as the "mastermind", also points to Aswat's relationship to British and US intelligence, through a British based Islamic organization Al-Muhajiroun.

In an interview with Fox News (29 July 2005), intelligence expert John Loftus revealed that Haroon Rashid Aswat had connections to the British Secret Service MI-6 (emphasis added): "the entire British police are out chasing him, and one wing of the British government, MI-6 or the British Secret Service, has been hiding him... "

The Loftus interview suggests that the suspect was being used either as an informer or a "double agent":

MIKE JERRICK [FOX NEWS]: John Loftus is a terrorism expert and a former prosecutor for the Justice Department. John, good to see you again. So real quickly here, have you heard anything about this Osman Hussain who was just picked up in Rome? You know that name at all?

JOHN LOFTUS: Yeah, all these guys should be going back to an organization called Al-Muhajiroun, which means The Emigrants. It was the recruiting arm of Al-Qaeda in London; they specialized in recruiting kids whose families had emigrated to Britain but who had British passports. And they would use them for terrorist work.

JERRICK: So a couple of them now have Somali connections?

LOFTUS: Yeah, it was not unusual. Somalia, Eritrea, the first group of course were primarily Pakistani. But what they had in common was they were all emigrant groups in Britain, recruited by this Al-Muhajiroun group. They were headed by the, Captain Hook, the imam in London the Finsbury Mosque, without the arm. He was the head of that organization. Now his assistant was a guy named Aswat, Haroon Rashid Aswat.

JERRICK: Aswat, who they picked up.

LOFTUS: Right, Aswat is believed to be the mastermind of all the bombings in London.

JERRICK: On 7/7 and 7/21, this is the guy we think.

LOFTUS: This is the guy, and what's really embarrassing is that the entire British police are out chasing him, and one wing of the British government, MI6 or the British Secret Service, has been hiding him. And this has been a real source of contention between the CIA, the Justice Department, and Britain.

JERRICK: MI6 has been hiding him. Are you saying that he has been working for them?

LOFTUS: Oh I'm not saying it. This is what the Muslim sheik said in an interview in a British newspaper back in 2001.

JERRICK: So he's a double agent, or was?

LOFTUS: He's a double agent.

JERRICK: So he's working for the Brits to try to give them information about Al-Qaeda, but in reality he's still an Al-Qaeda operative.

LOFTUS: Yeah. The CIA and the Israelis all accused MI 6 of letting all these terrorists live in London not because they're getting Al-Qaeda information, but for appeasement. It was one of those you leave us alone, we leave you alone kind of things.

JERRICK: Well we left him alone too long then.

LOFTUS: Absolutely. Now we knew about this guy Aswat. Back in 1999 he came to America. The Justice Department wanted to indict him in Seattle because him and his buddy were trying to set up a terrorist training school in Oregon.

JERRICK: So they indicted his buddy, right? But why didn't they indict him?

LOFTUS: Well it comes out, we've just learned that the headquarters of the US Justice Department ordered the Seattle prosecutors not to touch Aswat.

JERRICK: Hello? Now hold on, why?

LOFTUS: Well, apparently Aswat was working for British intelligence. Now Aswat's boss, the one-armed Captain Hook, he gets indicted two years later. So the guy above him and below him get indicted, but not Aswat. Now there's a split of opinion within US intelligence. Some people say that the British intelligence fibbed to us. They told us that Aswat was dead, and that's why the New York group dropped the case. That's not what most of the Justice Department thinks. They think that it was just again covering up for this very publicly affiliated guy with Al-Muhajiroun. He was a British intelligence plant. So all of a sudden he disappears. He's in South Africa. We think he's dead; we don't know he's down there. Last month the South African Secret Service come across the guy. He's alive.

JERRICK: Yeah, now the CIA says, oh he's alive. Our CIA says OK let's arrest him. But the Brits say no again?

LOFTUS: The Brits say no. Now at this point, two weeks ago, the Brits know that the CIA wants to get a hold of Haroon. So what happens? He takes off again, goes right to London. He isn't arrested when he lands, he isn't arrested when he leaves.

JERRICK: Even though he's on a watch list.

LOFTUS: He's on the watch list. The only reason he could get away with that was if he was working for British intelligence. He was a wanted man.

JERRICK: And then takes off the day before the bombings, I understand it-

LOFTUS: And goes to Pakistan.

JERRICK: And Pakistan, they jail him.

LOFTUS: The Pakistanis arrest him. They jail him. He's released within 24 hours. Back to Southern Africa, goes to Zimbabwe and is arrested in Zambia. Now the US-

JERRICK: Trying to get across the-

LOFTUS: -we're trying to get our hands on this guy.

JERRICK: John, hang around. I have so many questions now.

LOFTUS: Oh, this is a bad one....

(Fox News, 29 July 2005, emphasis added)

The interview conveys the impression that there were "disagreements" between American, British and Israeli intelligence officials on how to handle the matter. It also suggests that "the Brits" might have misled their US intelligence counterpart.

More substantively, what this interview reveals is something which news coverage on the London 7/7 attacks has carefully ignored, namely the longstanding relationship of Western intelligence agencies to a number of Islamic organizations. In this specific case we are dealing with a British based organization Al-Muhajiroun.

Amplified by official documents, Al Qaeda was a creation of the US intelligence apparatus. Both the CIA and its British counterpart MI-6 are known to have links to Al Qaeda

operatives.

The Kosovo Connection

In the Balkans in the 1990s, both US, British and German intelligence (BND) were involved in training the Kosocvo Liberation Army (KLA), which was also being supported by Al Qaeda.

Mujahideen mercenaries from the Middle East and Central Asia were recruited to fight in the ranks of the KLA in 1998-99, largely supporting NATO's war effort.

According to a report published in 1999, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) had approached MI-6 to arrange a training program for the KLA:

"MI-6 then sub-contracted the operation to two British security companies, who in turn approached a number of former members of the (22 SAS) regiment. Lists were then drawn up of weapons and equipment needed by the KLA." While these covert operations were continuing, serving members of 22 SAS Regiment, mostly from the unit's D Squadron, were first deployed in Kosovo before the beginning of the bombing campaign in March [1999].(The Scotsman, Edinburgh, 29 August 1999).

While British SAS Special Forces in bases in Northern Albania were training the KLA, military instructors from Turkey and Afghanistan, financed by the "Islamic jihad", were collaborating in training the KLA in guerrilla and diversion tactics .("Kosovo in Crisis", <http://www.truthinmedia.org/>, 2 April 1999)."Bin Laden had visited Albania himself. He was one of several fundamentalist groups that had sent units to fight in Kosovo.... Bin Laden is believed to have established an operation in Albania in 1994. (Sunday Times, 29 Nov 1998)

Haroon Rachid Aswat belonged to Al Muhajiroun, which was involved in the recruitment of Mujahideen in Britain. The latter were also sent to Kosovo to fight in the KLA in support of the NATO-US led war: .

LOFTUS:But the US was used by Al-Muhajiroun for training of people to send to Kosovo. What ties all these cells together was, back in the late 1990s, the leaders all worked for British intelligence in Kosovo. Believe it or not, British intelligence actually hired some Al-Qaeda guys to help defend the Muslim rights in Albania and in Kosovo. That's when Al-Muhajiroun got started.

IJAZ: Which is by the way why we know so much about them right now.

LOFTUS: Yes, I'm afraid so. The CIA was funding the operation to defend the Muslims, British intelligence was doing the hiring and recruiting. Now we have a lot of detail on this because Captain Hook, the head of Al-Muhajiroun, he sidekick was Bakri Mohammed, another cleric. And back on October 16, 2001, he gave a detailed interview with al-Sharq al-Aswat, an Arabic newspaper in London, describing the relationship between British intelligence and the operations in Kosovo and Al-Muhajiroun. So that's how we get all these guys connected. It started in Kosovo, Haroon was 31 years old, he came on about 1995.

The Pakistan Connection

In the last couple of weeks, the London 7/7 police investigation has focussed on a “Pakistani connection”: the alleged British bombers are said to have visited Pakistan. While in Pakistan, they allegedly had contacts with several Islamic organizations, including a madrassa (coranic school) controlled by Islamic fundamentalists. They allegedly also had contacts with the two main Kashmir rebel groups Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Toiba. Two of the British bombers, Khan and Tanweer, were allegedly “associated with Jaish -e-Mohammed or one of its splinter groups” (India Today, 1 August 2005):

“In Pakistan, [British] police are painstakingly analyzing the mobile phone records of the two 7/7 suspects who visited the country. While officials stress that it is a tedious process, it has already yielded the name of at least one significant suspect: Masoud Azhar, leader of the Jaish -e-Mohammed (Army of Mohammed). (Christian Science Monitor, 1 August, 2005).

Both Jaish and Lashkar are said to have links to Al Qaeda.

The Role Of Pakistan’s Military Intelligence

In their endeavours to uncover these various links to Pakistan based terrorist organizations, British police investigators sought the collaboration of Pakistan’s Military Intelligence (ISI).

While collaborating in the British investigation, Pakistan’s Military Intelligence is known to have actively supported and financed the Kasmir rebel groups, which allegedly had contacts with the London bombers.

The ISI was instrumental in the creation of the militant Jammu and Kashmir Hizbul Mujahideen (JKHM) in the late 1980s. (See K. Subrahmanyam, “Pakistan is Pursuing Asian Goals”, India Abroad, 3 November 1995). It has also supported the other two main Pakistan-based Kashmir rebel groups, Lashkar-e-Taiba, (Army of the Pure) and Jaish-e-Muhammad (Army of Mohammed), which claimed responsibility for the attacks on the Indian parliament in October 2001.

See Council on Foreign Relations, “Terrorism: Questions and Answers, Harakat ul-Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad”, <http://www.terrorismanswers.com/groups/harakat2.html> , Washington 2002.)

Moreover, according to intelligence sources and the FBI, the ISI also provided support to the alleged 9/11 hijackers.

(See <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO111A.html>)

Concluding remarks

The Fox News report raises some very serious considerations.

Haroon Rachid Aswat was reportedly in London for two weeks before the July 7 attacks, “fleeing just before the explosions”.

If Haroon Rashid Aswat had been working for MI-6, as suggested by intelligence analyst John Loftus, his movements and whereabouts, including his contacts with the alleged Yorkshire bombers, might have been known to British intelligence.

The nature of Haroon Rachid Aswat’s links to Western intelligence agencies inevitably has a

bearing on the conduct of the police investigation.

The broader role of Al-Muhajiroun since its creation in the 1990s, as well as its alleged links to MI-6 requires careful review.

Pakistan's ISI should not, for obvious reasons, be involved in the police investigation. In fact, Pakistan's ISI should be the object of the investigation in view of its documented links to the terror network, including Al Qaeda.

More generally, the intelligence agencies including M-I6 should not be involved in the police investigation.

An independent public inquiry should be launched as demanded by the Conservative opposition.

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