

What Did the US and Britain Know Prior to the July 7 London Bombings?

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The release of terrorist Mohammed Junaid Babar, due to “exceptional cooperation” beginning before his arrest, raises the question: How much prior knowledge did the US and British authorities have about the July 7, 2005, terror bombings in London?

Babar was arrested in April 2004 by the FBI and confessed to US prosecutors that he had set up a training camp in northwest Pakistan in 2003. Among those he trained was Mohammad Sidique Khan, one of the four suicide bombers who participated in the London Tube and bus bombings that killed 52 people and injured more than 750. It now appears that Babar was a long-term informant, who is being described in the press as a “super-grass”.

Babar told the FBI that he had provided lodgings and transport for nearly a dozen Islamist radicals, training them in how to fire machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades, and build homemade bombs. When arrested in 2004, he told US prosecutors that he knew Khan as “Ibrahim”.

The Guardian writes that at that time, “British terrorism investigators showed Babar an unclear surveillance photo of Khan in August 2004, but Babar failed to identify him.” However, Babar claims that, upon seeing images of Khan in newspapers after the July 2005 London bombings, he contacted US authorities straight away. He said, “I told them [the American authorities] that was the person that was Ibrahim. I had mentioned Ibrahim before July 2005” (emphasis added).

In 2004, Babar pleaded guilty in as part of a plea bargain at a New York court to five counts of terrorism and was jailed, with his final sentence being deferred. He admitted to knowing leading figures within the Al Qaeda network and said he had provided them with money and equipment. Babar said he had been involved in running weapons, and the planning of two attempts to assassinate General Pervez Musharraf, the former president of Pakistan.

Babar was also given immunity from prosecution in Britain after pleading guilty to the terrorism offences. In 2008, he was granted bail and told by a judge that the offences he admitted to carry a maximum 70-year term. In July 2010, probation services authored a report stating that he should remain in prison for another 30 years.

His release after serving just four-and-a-half years poses the question of whether he was an agent of the US government and a long-time informer, even before the London bombings.

In an exclusive published Monday, the Guardian reported that Babar was released on December 10 of last year by a New York court—six years after his initial arrest and subsequent guilty plea. The Guardian states, “He was released early in a deal with

prosecutors for the US attorney's office," after he had "agreed to plead guilty and become a government supergrass in return for a drastically reduced sentence."

The US court document obtained by the newspaper revealed that he was sentenced to "time served" and charged \$500 (£310) by the court in a "special assessment" fee. In total, he spent just over four years in some form of prison and more than two years free on bail, the document stated.

The sentencing document that released him contains wording strongly suggesting that Babar was an agent of the US government prior to his April 2004 arrest. Judge Victor Marrero stated that Babar "began co-operating even before his arrest".

The Guardian reports that the US attorney's office compiled its own report, known as a 5K1, which was sent to the New York court. An extract of the document read out in court stated, "Over the last six and a half years the level of assistance provided by Babar to both the United States government and foreign governments has been more than substantial. It has been extraordinary."

The court transcript reveals that the government's letter stated that since his arrest "the defendant has testified previously at four different trials involving numerous terrorist defendants, three trials in the UK and one in Canada. Both governments and prosecutorial arms of those governments have made clear that they determined that Mr. Babar's testimony in that case was not only credible, but critical in the ultimate convictions secured in those cases".

It is now acknowledged by the US government that a man who admitted involvement in terrorist activities, including the UK's worst mainland terrorist atrocity, and who personally knew one of the London suicide bombers, was providing a "substantial" and "extraordinary" level of assistance "to both the United States government and foreign governments" prior to his April 2004 arrest.

In the aftermath of the July 7 bombings, then-Home Secretary Charles Clarke said the attacks came "out of the blue" and the four bombers—Mohammad Siddique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, Germaine Lindsay and Hasib Hussain—were "clean skins" with no known links to terrorism. Ministers and senior security officials insisted there was no warning of an imminent attack. Then-Prime Minister Tony Blair told Parliament on July 11, 2005, "I know of no intelligence specific enough" to have prevented the attacks.

These assertions are refuted by the Babar revelations.

A wealth of evidence has come to light, proving that the security services were tracking the movements of the would-be bombers and must have been well aware of the threat they posed. Many of these facts were documented in an Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) investigation into the London bombings, released in May 2009—despite its efforts to a whitewash the failure of MI5 to stop the four suicide-bombers.

It stated that in late March 2003, MI5 received intelligence that Mohammed Quayam Khan, from Luton, was the leader of an "Al-Qaida facilitation network" that provided financial and logistical support to the organisation. MI5 launched an investigation called Operation Crevice, about which it informed the ISC.

In May 2004, a detainee revealed that a man named "Ibrahim" had travelled to Pakistan in 2003 and met the future Crevice group members there. After what has emerged about the role of Babar, the question posed was whether he was the "detainee" named in the ISC report.

On April 12, 2005, following confirmation from another source that "Ibrahim" had been in Pakistan, MI5 launched Operation DO*** (the full name was redacted in the ISC report) to identify him.

The fact that Mohammed Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer had been known to the intelligence services at least five months before they made their attack was also revealed in the trial of seven men in the "fertiliser bomb plot" trial in London in May 2007. The London court heard that Omar Khyam, described as the "ringleader" of the fertiliser plot, held meetings with Khan and Tanweer on four occasions in 2004. These were recorded by Britain's MI5 intelligence service.

No one has ever been held responsible for the atrocities that took place. A 2009 trial found three men not guilty of helping to plan the July 7 bombings. Despite a massive police investigation costing some £100 million, they remain the only people to have faced any charges in relation to the London bombings.

A World Socialist Web Site article, dated July 11, 2005, drew attention to an Associated Press report published at 12:16 p.m. on July 7, authored by Amy Teibel in Jerusalem. It stated, "British police told the Israeli Embassy in London minutes before Thursday's explosions that they had received warnings of possible terror attacks in the city, a senior Israeli official said."

This report was taken down within hours, following denials by Israeli officials. Stratfor, which has links to US intelligence and military authorities, also alleged that Israel had given the UK prior warning of an attack on London.

The WSWS also noted "the extraordinary decision by the British authorities to downgrade the official threat level for the country, at a time when it was hosting the G8 summit of major industrial nations."

In June 2005, MI5's Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) downgraded the threat level because it deemed that the risk of an attack was at its lowest point since 9/11. There are seven threat levels, and on July 7, Britain was on "substantial," which is the fourth level behind "severe general," "severe specific," and "imminent." It had been at the higher level during campaigning in May for the British general election. The article stated, "With up to 4,000 police on duty at any one time in the environs of the summit, held outside Edinburgh, Scotland, the event was at the centre of the biggest security operation in UK history."

A coroner's inquiry into the bombings in 2005 is being held in London. Barrister on behalf of the bereaved families, Caoilfhionn Gallagher, told the coroner her clients wanted to know that that UK security services "were not aware of any basis for the suggestion that Babar had been an informant for the authorities for any country prior to his detention" in 2004.

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