

'Beatles' terror cell members were identified after EDL counter-demo in London

From the [London Evening Standard](#) and the [Daily Mail](#)

I remember that day well; I had remained in Grosvenor Square observing when we heard about the attack outside the Tyburn pub. The police never took the violence against English patriots seriously enough, in my opinion, and took too long to realise how dangerous the Muslims Against Crusades group, in all its incarnations, was. Until recently, which is a bit late.

Members of an Islamic terror cell known as The Beatles were identified because they were arrested at an English Defence League (EDL) counter-protest in London, police have said.

Alexanda Kotey was jailed in the US in April for his part in the torture and murder of American hostages, while El Shafee Elsheikh will be sentenced on Friday over his role in the plot. On Wednesday, counter-terrorism chiefs at the Metropolitan Police detailed how officers provided evidence to prosecutors to bring the group to justice.

The investigation began in 2012 after British journalist John Cantlie and American photojournalist James Foley were taken hostage. Police had no indication of who was behind it, and interviewed released hostages who identified the group as UK nationals.

A "very significant" breakthrough came when one of the freed hostages told officers they had heard the men mention being arrested at an EDL march in London.

Investigators discovered that Kotey and Elsheikh had been

detained on September 11 2011 at a Muslims Against Crusades counter-demonstration.

Based on that snippet of conversation, the investigation team was able to go back and identify a particular EDL march that took place in London on September 11 2011

The march was a counter-demonstration against a march by Muslims Against Crusades to mark the tenth anniversary of the September 11 attacks, which began at the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square. *To be accurate, there was an official commemoration service held in Grosvenor Square, in the presence of HRH Prince Charles, the Prime Minister, the US Ambassador and other worthies which Muslims Against Crusades were allowed to demonstrate against; English patriots decided to tell MAC know that such behaviour was unacceptable. The EDL (and MfE) did not 'march'. We rallied (and were duly kettled)*

I have looked through my photographs of that day. I recognised several well-known jihadi faces prominent at that time; if I did see Kotey and Elsheikh they were either masked or unrecognisable. This below is typical of their stance during the solemn commemoration.



It has just been pointed out to me that the very tall burly man in the middle, with the yellow vest was Mohammed Reza Haque, known then for his role in the burning of the poppies during remembrance Day in 2010, who later went to Syria and also became an ISIS executioner, taking over from Jihadi John (Mohammed Emwazi) when he was killed in 2015. Haque and his wife died in 2019.

'He died, either in the final battle of Baghouz, or from his injuries shortly afterwards', a security source [told the Mail.](#)

There were a number of flashpoints around central London and around 6pm, police were called to the Tyburn public house in Marble Arch, where a stabbing had taken place and a number of men arrested on suspicion of involvement in the stabbing.

Records showed that two of those individuals were Kotey and Elsheikh.



El Shafee Elsheikh (centre) during his arrest at an EDL counterprotest in central London on September 11, 2011



Police were called to the Tyburn public house in Marble Arch, where a stabbing had taken place and a number of men arrested on suspicion of involvement in the stabbing. These men included Elsheikh (pictured right, in black, being arrested at the same event)

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n ultimately were released without charge for that offence, but the information was invaluable in helping us to zero in on them as being the men the hostages had described to us,' Commander Smith said.

Another crucial piece of evidence linking Elsheikh directly to terrorist activity in Syria came as a result of officers taking a fresh look at evidence in an unrelated case. In 2014, Elsheikh's brother, Khalid, was arrested by Operation Trident, the Metropolitan Police anti-gangs unit, and a handgun found at his address. His mobile phone was seized and found to contain disturbing images that led them to contact SO15, the Counter-Terrorism Command who undertook a fuller examination.

The pair were stripped of their British citizenship following their capture by the Western-baked Syrian Democratic Forces in 2018 and sent to the US for prosecution.

El Shafee Elsheikh, 33, from White City, faces sentence on Friday. Kotey, 38, from Shepherd's Bush, West London, was jailed for life, in Virginia, in April, after admitting kidnap, conspiracy to murder and providing material support for terrorism.

Mr Smith added: "I'm delighted, in this case, to see that these two very evil men have been brought to justice."