

What Does It Take to Arouse Suspicion?

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The controversy last week in France, over why French officials failed to act on all the warning signs that Mickaël Harpon gave that he was in sympathy with jihad violence and hence might one day engage in jihad himself, recalls the instructive case of Khalid Masood, which revealed numerous problems with how officials all over the West deal with suspected jihadis.

Khalid Masood drove a car into pedestrians at Westminster Bridge in London on March 22, 2017, killing five people. The Times of London reported [here](#) last year on the inquest.

The Westminster terrorist moved to areas in Britain known as breeding grounds for extremism after converting to Islam in prison, an inquest heard today.

Khalid Masood was serving his sentence for a brutal knife attack when was encouraged to convert by a visiting imam. Masood had been convicted of slashing a man in the face with

a flick-knife in 2000, the inquest into his Westminster victims' deaths was told. The imam, whom police have failed to identify, was known as "Khalid" by prisoners, DCI Brown told the Old Bailey.

So the prison authorities do not keep track of visiting imams, do not even know their names? Shouldn't they be able to vet such visitors before they are allowed to meet with prisoners? Perhaps some of these visiting imams are on record as preaching what some now like to call "extremism," that is, emphasizing the need to engage in Jihad. Why can't such vetting be done? In order to avoid the charge of discrimination, prison officials could require the same vetting for Christian and other clergy. And knowing how many violent prisoners convert to Islam, shouldn't there have been informants among the prison population, reporting on those who, with violent pasts, had converted and seemed to be particularly fanatical in their new faith? Or is this for some reason impermissible?

Gareth Patterson, representing the families of the four [the fifth was a policeman] victims who died on Westminster Bridge, suggested that the imam was a "significant influence" on the attacker, who changed his name by deed poll to Khalid Masood in 2005.

After leaving prison for a second time in 2003, Masood moved to Crawley, where members of the fertiliser bomb cell were at the time planning the plot that would have killed hundreds of people.

"When he was freed in 2003, Masood chose to live in a succession of places that had been associated with extreme Islam: Crawley, Luton and Birmingham," said Mr Patterson. "All three of these places were strongholds of the Islamist group ALM.

When someone legally changes his name to one that is Arabic-sounding, this ought to arouse the interest of the security services. It's a sign both of conversion to Islam, and of fervency in the new faith. If, in addition, this person of interest has served several prison terms for violent offenses, that is even more reason to have been watching him. But no one did. And Masood had been living in Muslim neighborhoods in cities "associated with extreme Islam" and apparently, was constantly trying to convert others. This too did not matter to the security services. He was off their radar, until March 22, 2017.

The court heard that Masood was involved in converting other people, including a succession of young women. His brother told police that he would "push his religion on others."

DCI Brown said: "From what we've uncovered, I think he saw it as his Islamic duty to convert others to his faith."

A prisoner at HMP Lewes at the time of Masood's incarceration said that there was no imam and that "Muslim prisoners were leading the prayers."

Mr Patterson said that a prisoner called Jamil "kept approaching him in prison and kept talking to him about Islam and Masood began to listen." It was at this point that a "new life began" for Masood. Mr Patterson said that "all of these strands suggest this was a pretty zealous convert to Islam."

One of Masood's closest associates, Jamie Lowe, also known as Yusuf Kumar, told police after the attack that he had been taking religious direction from Masood. According to an arrest log shown in court, shortly before the attack Masood became "more extreme and [started] talking about jihad."

Masood read the same Qur'an and the same Hadith as mainstream Muslims. But there was this difference: he was willing to carry out the Qur'anic commandments about waging violent Jihad

and killing Infidels. The “extremists” do not read different texts. They are the Muslims who take those commands about killing Infidels to heart and act upon them. Long before he plowed into the pedestrians on Westminster Bridge, Khalid Masood had given every sign of being a potential menace. But the police were not paying attention.

Masood was an avid “reader and researcher” and began sharing extremist literature with friends and associates after leaving prison for the second time, the court heard.

*In 2004 he gave a collection of literature to a friend, including **Lofty Mountain** by Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, the founder of Hamas, Bin Laden’s inspiration. This was material that “celebrated jihad and celebrated the role of Bin Laden in battle,” Mr Patterson said.*

It was not discovered by police until after the attack. DCI Brown said: “If any of this material was found earlier then clearly we would have done other things.”

If the police had known that Khalid Masood, twice imprisoned for acts of violence, had converted to Islam, had changed his name to an Arabic one, had moved to live among other Muslims in neighborhoods known to harbor “extremists,” had been known for “sharing extremist literature with friends and associates” (apparently there were no police informants in these neighborhoods to have reported about that), and pushed Islam on those non-Muslims, especially women, who would listen to him, they would have had him under close surveillance. But they apparently knew only that he had a violent past and had converted to Islam, as his name change indicated. He was not being watched, but was free to plan, and even managed to rehearse, his attack on Westminster Bridge.

Mr. Patterson told the court that the material suggested that in “a very short space of time, this recent convert had been radicalised”.

Stacks of books about Islamic subjects, including the Crusades, fights between Muslims and Christians and jihad were discovered after the attack at the home in Birmingham where he lived with his wife.

Many of the texts were annotated and underlined. DCI Brown said: "He was a man that clearly read a large amount of material. It is fair to say that Masood is a man who did a lot of research into the Muslim faith. He was very much a researcher and a reader."

Mr Patterson said: "There is a wealth of material that shows from the early stage of his conversion, right back to 2004, he was an extremist."

Masood was a man who took the Qur'an commandments, and the example of Muhammad in the Hadith, to heart. And he represents a colossal failure by the British security services to protect the public. He was a violent man who converted to a violent faith, a faith that legitimized attacks on Infidels. Those who are already criminals in the West can, in converting to Islam, find religious justification for their criminal behavior. Theft of Infidel property could now be seen as helping oneself to a proleptic jizyah. Sexual assault on Infidel women could be justified because of their putatively loose morals – just look at the way they dress. As for killing Infidels – well, that commandment is in many Qur'anic verses (e.g., 2:191-193, 4:89, 8:12, 8:60, 9:5, 9:29, 47:4). No one was vetting the visiting imams, nor noting the reading material he either had in his cell or read in the prison library. Out of prison, he changed his name to an Arabic one. He then moved to three different Muslim neighborhoods. He tried to convert others not just to Islam, but to his same level of fanatical faith. The authorities were not paying attention to any of this.

As soon as he had changed his name by deed poll to "Khalid Masood," the police ought to have looked into his history.

They would have soon discovered that he had been imprisoned twice for violent offenses. That should have triggered heightened interest. If they had been alert, they might have had an informant in his neighborhood learn more about Masood, even possibly meeting with him, the informant presenting himself as a non-Muslim interested in Islam. If he began to supply "extremist" literature to that informant, then there would have been still greater cause for close surveillance of Masood. And that, in turn, might have led to an earlier visit by the police to his house, and discovery of all the "extremist" material he had there, including those books he so heavily annotated. There might have been enough evidence to have charged him with planning a terror attack. There were many opportunities to derail Masood and his deadly plans. But they were all missed. The police, of course, were constrained by their hypertrophied fear of being thought "Islamophobic." (That same absurd fear was what prevented the police from investigating the Rotherham grooming gangs.) A failure of nerve. The result was that five people were murdered by the addle-brained fanatical Muslim convert who told his children he "was going to die fighting for God." And so he did.

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