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By Michael Whine

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Introduction

On 17 July 2012, Shasta Khan was found guilty of conspiring to bomb Jewish targets in Manchester. Her husband Mohammed Khan had pleaded guilty and therefore did not stand trial. The following day, both were sent to prison.

On 18 July, a suicide bomber detonated a bomb inside his rucksack within a bus full of Israeli tourists at Burgas airport, Bulgaria, killing himself, the driver and five of the Israeli visitors. CCTV footage of the so-far unidentified bomber, showed a European with long blond hair wandering around the airport terminal building for over an hour before he boarded the bus.

On 7 July, the Cypriot police arrested a man on suspicion of gathering intelligence on El Al flights to the island, and of bus tours catering for Israeli tourists.

These three incidents encapsulate the nature of the ongoing threat to Jewish communities and Israeli institutions abroad: both are targets, and the threat comes from different sources, with Iran and its surrogates and Al Qaeda and its affiliates in the global jihad movement presenting the major concerns.

CST's report on terrorism against Jews and their and Israeli institutions around the world, published at the end of 2010, noted that during the previous 40 years there had been some 427 recorded plots and attacks. This paper brings the tally up to date, and as with the previous report, focuses attention on the direction from which these attacks come.[1]

The 2010 report (which was itself an update of a report published by ICT in 2003) noted that the terror threat to Jews comes primarily from three sources: Al Qaeda, its affiliates in the global jihad movement and self radicalised Islamists; Iran and its surrogates, of which the most active is Hizbollah; neo Nazis. During the late 1970s and until the mid 1980s, anarchist and extreme left terror groups also attacked Jews, synagogues and Jewish schools, but sustained counter terrorist strategies and changing economic circumstances led to a drastic decline in threats and attacks from this quarter. Palestinian secular terrorist groups reduced their attacks beyond the Middle East after the Madrid and Oslo peace accords, when most forswore terrorism beyond the immediate theatre of conflict, and after the deaths of many of the leaders (Abu Nidal, Naif Hawatmeh, Yasser Arafat, etc).

The report noted that antisemitism remains central to the ideologies of all three groups, and that they make little or no distinction between Jews and Israelis. Also, the ideologies of extremist groups provide a milieu within which activists are further radicalised, so that perpetrating acts of terrorism against Jews and Israelis becomes a fulfilment of their ideological aims.

It provided evidence that while the different sectors usually operate in isolation, there have been cases where they have cooperated across their ideological boundaries. Iran in particular has used surrogates, like Hizbollah, converts to radical Islam or mercenaries, who may appear as unknown 'clean skins' to security services. There is also evidence that terrorist groups are increasingly cooperating with criminal syndicates. Iran and Hizbollah have sub contracted terrorist attacks to criminals (as in Azerbaijan), and raised funds through black market criminal schemes (as in the USA and Latin America).

Since 2010, the number of self radicalised Islamists who follow the guidance of former AQAP ideologue Anwar Awlaki to attack domestic targets with devices manufactured from easily obtainable constituents, and of global jihad ideologue Abu Mus'ab al Suri, has increased. This has required security services to enhance their capabilities to search out those accessing the proliferating open and closed Internet and interactive social networks, which are designed to seduce and radicalise their viewers. Al Qaeda's core infrastructure may have been terminally degraded but its affiliates have been reinvigorated by new conflicts, such as Syria and Somalia, to which European and American Muslims have gone in order to join the conflict, or to seek training which they intend to use against domestic targets on their return home.

The Salafi 'gateway' organisations, such as Hizb ut Tahrir and the Al Muhajiroun successor groups, remain active in Europe and the USA and although they are themselves non-violent they radicalise members, some of whom follow the conveyor belt processes to recruitment into jihadi groups abroad. These groups promote a violent antisemitic ideology, although their public pronouncements and literature are constrained by laws against incitement. The consequences of this incitement are plainly seen in the prosecutions and convictions of their followers in those countries which use their domestic legislation to set legal parameters for what is, and what is not, acceptable speech in modern society.[2]

In addition to the incidents listed below, there have been other plots which were foiled in their early stages, and where few details have been made public. These include a perceived threat earlier in 2012 to Israelis in Bulgaria following which the Israeli press reported that its transport ministry had warned the Bulgarian authorities of a potential threat.[3] Later, in May 2012, the Israel media reported that the Turkish authorities had thwarted a potential plot to Israelis travelling to Turkey, and at about the same time that a plot had been thwarted in South Africa, again based on Israeli information provided to the local security services.[4]

A final introductory remark. In many cases, Jews were not the primary targets, but secondary or tertiary ones. Primary targets for global jihad movement terrorists are more usually American or Israeli institutions, or targets associated with states with armed peace keeping forces in Muslim lands, such as Iraq or Afghanistan. Nevertheless the fact that operational intelligence has also been gathered on Jewish targets underscores the antisemitic nature of those engaged in contemporary terror. The targets for Iran and its surrogates are primarily Israel and Jews, however.

Reversing the order used in the two reports previously published, this report lists them chronologically but starts with the most recent.

Chronology of plots and attacks

Manchester, 20 July 2012

Mohammed Sadiq Khan and his wife Shasta Khan were convicted of planning to bomb Jewish targets in north Manchester on 12 July at Manchester Crown Court, following a three week trial.

Mohammed Khan was given an indeterminate sentence of 15 years, of which he must serve a minimum of seven years; Shasta Khan was sentenced to eight years and must serve a minimum of four years.

The plot came to light after complaints to the police that the husband was abusing his wife. During the course of this complaint, the police were told of Mohammed Khan's plan to attack the Jewish community. The subsequent investigation found that he had been radicalised by watching Islamist material on the Internet, including terrorist videos, and that together they had amassed a substantial quantity of chemicals which could be used to construct powerful bombs. They had also carried out surveillance of Jewish areas in Salford and the offices of the United Jewish and Israel Appeal in Prestwich, by car over an 11 month period. They had also sought to purchase firearms.

In addition to the above, Mohammed Khan had also amassed a collection of antisemitic publications, which had propelled him towards a violent anti Jewish ideology.[5]

Bulgaria, 18 July 2012

Five Israeli tourists were killed on a bus which they boarded at Burgas airport, a Bulgarian Black Sea resort, after a bomb in the rucksack was detonated. The bomber was killed, as was the bus driver.

CCTV footage from within the airport terminal showed the bomber to be a casually dressed European male with long blond hair, but subsequent investigation suggested that he had been accompanied at some point by two others, and that the bomb he was carrying may have been detonated remotely. The bomber was carrying a fake Michigan driving licence.

The attack followed warnings by Israel that Bulgaria was a likely terror target, and it subsequently accused Iran of responsibility.[6]

Cyprus, 14 July 2012

On 14 July 2012, police in Cyprus arrested a Swedish citizen of Lebanese origin, in connection with information he was gathering on Israeli flights to Cyprus, and bus tours catering to Israeli tourists. Initial press reports noted that he admitted a connection to Hizbollah, but a later police statement suggested he was acting alone. The unnamed man was further remanded in custody on 24 July.[7]

Nairobi, 2 July 2012

Two Iranian nationals, Ahmed Mohammed and Sayeed Mansour, were arrested by Kenyan police in Mombassa, and subsequently charged with possession of substantial amounts of military explosives.

According to the Kenyan police, they had admitted membership of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force, and had planned to attack American British, Saudi or Israeli targets. Subsequent reports noted that they had surveilled the Nairobi synagogue and the Israeli embassy, and that more than 100 kilograms of their shipment, and a third person, were still missing.

Although bailed initially, the Nairobi court cancelled the bail on the request of the state prosecutor, and they remain in jail until their trial.[8]

Somalia, 7 June 2011

The unplanned killing by Somali security forces of Al Qaeda leader Fazul Abdullah Mohammed at Afgooye near Mogadishu, on 7 June 201, brought to light a potential Al Qaeda plan to attack Jewish areas of north London. According to plans found on Mohammed's memory stick, other targets were the central London Ritz and Dorchester hotels, Eton College, and some Arab embassies. Notes attached to the plan suggested attacking the predominantly Jewish London suburbs of Golders Green and Stamford Hill at Chanukah, as the areas would be full of Jews at that time.

Mohammed had been indicted by the US government for the 1998 bombings of the American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and was on the FBI's list of most wanted terrorists.

A subsequent press report speculated that Samantha Lewthwaite, the widow of London Underground bomber Jermaine Lindsay, who participated in the 7 July 2005 London transport bombings with three others, had carried out the reconnaissance for Al Qaeda before fleeing to Africa.[9]

Pune, April 2012

In April 2012, Indian authorities deported Hamid Kashkhoul, an Iranian PhD student at Pune University, after he had been arrested for spying on the local Chabad (Lubavitch) House and the Rasta Peth Synagogue.

According to a police spokesman, 'He came to India under the pretext of being a student but was keeping a close eye on the Jewish centres in Pune. He had collected information about visitor's movements at the Chabad House and the synagogue which he forwarded to intelligence officials in Iran.'

Intelligence officials zeroed in on Kashkhoul's movements when they discovered that he had no visa to study or research, and that in four years he had submitted no progress reports on his research.[10]

Toulouse, 19 March 2012

Mohammed Merah, a French citizen of Algerian origin, killed a teacher and three children at the Ozar Hatorah School in Toulouse.

Merah had also murdered two groups of French soldiers in nearby Montauban and Toulouse during the course of the preceding week, prior to visiting the school. On arrival at the school he shot and killed a teacher and his two children before pursuing another child into the school where he shot her at short range. A fourth child was also injured. After the attack, Merah escaped on his Yamaha T-MAX motor scooter, and was only traced to his apartment some days later. There he was killed by police after a twenty four hour stand off.

Subsequent investigations showed that Merah had sought to join terrorist groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan but had been arrested and returned to France, and that his brother and mother had participated in his radicalisation process. With his brother, he had engaged in petty crime and had a criminal record.[11]

Brescia, 15 March 2012

Italian police arrested Mohamed Jarmoune, an Italian of Moroccan origin, who they suspected of planning an attack on a synagogue, at his home in Brescia.

Investigators found on his computer an analysis of the security measures covering the main Milan synagogue, and that he had been accessing a passworded Facebook site which allows members to exchange information on the use of explosives and arms. An unnamed woman, thought to be an accomplice, was arrested by British police in connection with the same investigation.[12]

Baku, 13 March 2012

The Azerbaijan security services arrested 22 people in Baku in connection with a plot to bomb American and Israeli targets, possibly including a synagogue. The announcement was made in March but the arrests are believed to have been made in late January or February.

The Azeri plotters are reported to have amassed large amounts of military and espionage equipment, and are believed to have been recruited from 1999 onwards, and to have received training in Iran.[13]

Bangkok, 14 February 2012

An Iranian team of at least six people were involved in a plot to bomb the Israel embassy in Thailand, but failed after a premature explosion in the house they had rented in the Ekkamai neighbourhood.

The explosion sparked a dramatic attempt to flee the country, during which one of them threw a grenade at a taxi which had refused to pick him up. The grenade ricocheted and blew the legs off Saeid Moradi. A second man, Mohammed Khazaei, was arrested at Bangkok airport; a third man, Masaoud Sedeghat Zadeh was arrested in Malaysia after fleeing there; a fourth man Madani Seyed Mehrded was arrested after having overstayed his visa; a fifth man, Norouzi Shayan Ali Akba, said to be the cell leader, fled to Iran, as did Leila Rohani, who is believed to have found their accommodation.

The plot was discovered after investigators tracked down phone messages between the cell members and the group responsible for the New Delhi attack the previous day.[14]

New Delhi, 13 February 2012

An explosive fixed to the rear of an Israel embassy people carrier exploded as the car was being driven away from the building, which is 500 metres from the residence of the Indian Prime minister.

Mrs Tali Yehoshua-Koren, wife of the defence attaché, was moderately injured but was spared more serious injuries as she was able to jump clear of the burning vehicle. Two passers-by were also hurt.

The bomb had been affixed by a passing motor cycle passenger. An Indian journalist believed to have worked for an Iranian agency, Syed Mohammed Kazmi, was arrested on suspicion of involvement, but arrest warrants were subsequently issued in connection with the attack, naming four Iranian nationals.[15]

Tbilisi, 13 February 2012

Georgian police neutralised a bomb attached to the underside of the Israel ambassador's car, which was discovered by his driver.

Subsequent statements by the Israel authorities identified it as similar in construction to that used in the New Delhi attempt.[16]

Singapore, 13 February 2012

A plot to assassinate Israel Defence Minister Ehud Barak during a visit to Singapore was foiled by the local security services, following the arrest of three men said to be connected to Hezbollah.

Barak was in the country for Israel Singapore bilateral discussions, and to attend the annual air show.[17]

San Carlos de Bariloche, 27 January 2012

Argentinian police arrested three men in connection with a plot to attack the Chabad synagogue in the resort town by Lake Naheil Huapi.

The men are alleged to be connected to Hizbollah, and were apprehended after a tip off from the Israeli and US intelligence services.[18]

Bangkok, 13 January 2012

Thai security services disrupted an Iranian plot to attack Jewish community institutions, based on information reportedly passed to them by Israel in December 2011. The subsequent investigation found large amounts of chemicals which could be used to make explosives, in a commercial building on the outskirts of Bangkok.

Atris Hussein, a Lebanese national alleged to be travelling on a Swedish passport and to be a member of Hizbollah, was arrested at Bangkok airport as he tried to leave the country.[19]

Baku, January 2012

Azerbaijani police arrested 3 men in Baku in connection with a terror plot to bomb American and Israeli targets.

Two of the suspects were subsequently identified as Rasim Aliyev and Ali Huseynov, who it was reported, were recruited by Balargadash Dadashov, a member of a local criminal syndicate.

Their targets were revealed to have included the Ohr Avner Chabad Jewish Day School, one of its teachers, and the Chabad rabbi.[20]

New Jersey, 24 January 2012

Anthony Grazia, an unemployed teenager was charged with firebombing two synagogues, the Congregation K'Hal Adath Jeshurun in Paramus NJ on 3 January, and the Congregation Beth El in Rutherford NJ on 11 January.

The charges included nine counts of attempted murder, arson and aggravated arson. Although not a member of any terrorist group, he had been radicalised by material he had viewed on the Internet and his motivation was hatred of Jews, according to the county prosecutor, and would have led to deaths had the fires not been discovered.[21]

Rome, 14 December 2011

Five members of Militia, an extreme right wing group, were arrested on suspicion of planning an attack against Rome's Jewish community. A further 16 members of the group were also placed under investigation.

The group had issued threats against the head of the Rome Jewish community, Riccardo Pacifici, and local politicians, in what was described as part of a "revolutionary war".[22]

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