

## **NOMINATION**

### **IAP Special Achievement Award**

#### **The Crown Prosecution Service - Counter-Terrorism Division**

On 7 September 2009, Abdulla Ahmed Ali, Assad Sarwar and Tanvir Hussain were convicted at Woolwich Crown Court of conspiracy to murder in the "aircraft bomb plot", which radically altered travel security measures across the world for air passengers.

The men had intended to bring down several aircraft whilst in flight in a very short space of time, killing hundreds of innocent people by detonating bombs they had created in their own factory and smuggled on-board aircraft in soft drink bottles.

The plot was a sophisticated one, devised with the aim of murdering hundreds of passengers. To bring these men to justice was no mean feat for the Crown Prosecution Service's Counter-Terrorism Division (CTD). This case has perhaps been seen as the greatest success amongst its many achievements.

Prosecutors worked with the Metropolitan Police and the Security Services during the 28 day pre-charge period to build up sufficient evidence to charge and with partners scoured through 26,000 exhibits, 9,710 statements, 142 interviews with the defendants, 800 electronic devices with 14,000GB of data, including 15,000 CDs and DVDs and 500 floppy disks culminating in presenting the case in the two trials that followed.

The original trial had started on 3 April 2008 and ended on 8 September that year with Ali, Sarwar and Hussain convicted of conspiracy to murder people unknown. The jury was unable to decide on a verdict in respect of the other charges and the CPS applied for a retrial, which started on 2 March 2009, culminating in the conviction in September 2009. A second retrial of 3 remaining defendants will begin in April 2010.

The "aircraft bomb plot" has become widely regarded as the largest counter-terrorism operation in the UK and it is down to the hard work, resilience and determination of the CTD, led by Sue Hemming, that justice has been done in a wide range of terrorism-related cases since the Division was established in 2005.

CTD has been successful in the prosecution of many offences including Preparing for Acts of Terrorism, Training for Terrorism, Dissemination of Terrorist Publications, Possessing Information for Terrorist Purposes, Fundraising for Terrorism, Conspiracy to Murder and Conspiracy to Cause Explosions.

Other notable prosecutions successfully secured by the Division include that of Bilal Abdullah for conspiracy to murder in connection with the Glasgow Airport Attack in June 2007, a number of convictions in relation to the failed

bomb attempts on central London public transport on 21 July 2005, and Hamid and his co defendants who were involved in providing and participating in training for terrorism.

But the scope of CTD's work does not just deal with Islamic extremism-related terrorist offences, but includes the wide-ranging offences included under the Terrorism Acts whatever the motivation. This has included significant convictions of right wing activists including Gilliard and Lewington. More unusual cases prosecuted under the Act include the case of Robinson and Cooke who were prosecuted after preparing and sending miniature vodka bottles containing the highly toxic and corrosive caustic soda to a local councillor and a local journalist, along with notes setting out the threat that they would 'lethally poison England's water supplies if they do not withdraw totally from Scotland'. While terrorism still makes up the majority of CTD work the Division also deals with all allegations of incitement to racial and religious hatred, war crimes and crimes against humanity, official secrets cases, and hijacking.

CTD is a top-performing Division and last year received what has been regarded as the most positive report ever produced by independent HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPIS). It duly received the Attorney General's Award for Excellence, with inspectors praising the quality of its decision-making, excellent standards of early advice to police, case management, case progression and the high standard of its presentation at court.

But cases are not just won and lost in the courtroom, and the CTD is clearly a department which goes the extra mile to ensure it performs to the best of its ability – both in-between trials and post-trials. Post-trial conferences are often carried out to discuss the lessons learned, while the Division is also active in engaging with communities and working with other Departments to share lessons and good practice.

Terrorism has quite understandably captured the public's attention and CTD sees it as its duty to be honest and open with the public, sharing as much information as possible, which is why it has produced three public documents on The Summary of Terrorism-related Cases, Violent Extremism and War Crimes, and regularly takes part in community engagement events.

Events have included a series of Listening, Information, and Reassurance evenings for Muslim Communities and staff have recently had community seminars on issues affecting Muslim and Jewish Communities. CTD has also set up two Community Involvement Panels where prosecutors discuss and consult with representatives from community groups and has developed a web page to share information with the general public.

CTD is an exemplar for the type of complex and sensitive work which it handles endeavouring to bring those who would engage in terrorist activities to justice through trials of the highest standard, while constantly striving to

improve its work and never forgetting its duty to share its successes with the public it aims to protect.

I have no doubt that the CPS Counter Terrorism Division would be a worthy recipient of the IAP's Special Achievement Award and I commend this nomination the IAP Executive Committee for approval.

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