

In London as in Boston, terrorist-killers were known to security services

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One of the Woolwich terrorists after murdering British soldier

The two Islamist terrorists who hacked a British soldier to death on a London street Wednesday, May 22, chanting Allahu Akbar, were born in Britain of Nigerian descent and known to British security authorities. Motivated by revenge for Muslim deaths in Afghanistan, they selected as their victim a soldier from the Woolwich barracks who had served there. One of the terrorists was identified as Michael Adebolajo, 28, a convert to Islam and self-styled Muslim preacher from a street stand, from which he handed out leaflets condemning the British government and troops fighting in Muslim lands.

His stand was located in the southeastern London suburb of Woolwich, not far from the Royal Artillery barracks near which he committed his savage murder. Adebolajo's crime was long planned. He spent time watching the soldiers coming and going around the barracks. He may even have singled out his victim from a chance acquaintance.

Thursday, the day after the murder, British anti-terrorist operatives carried out searches at various London addresses which the terrorist had used as a student at Greenwich University.

The British authorities have made no statements about arrests or even the interrogation of either of the two terrorists, who are in separate hospitals recovering from police gunshots.

Neither have they revealed why the accumulation of carving knives, a machete and a firearm in their possession never attracted notice. The police are also extremely cagey about the two men's friends and contacts. As in the case of the Boston Marathon bombing, the relevant information began seeping out by chance much later.

The extreme savagery of the killing in broad daylight on a busy London street, culminating in a beheading, recalled the fate of Western hostages at the hands of Al Qaeda's Iraq commander Musab al-Zarqawi in the years between 2004 and 2006. His custom of beheading victims became a hallmark of al Qaeda savagery. What also stands out about this episode is that the jihadis did not run away, but waved their blood-stained hands in the faces of horrified passersby, boasting: "We swear by Almighty Allah we will never stop fighting you. The only reason we have done this is because Muslims are dying every day. The British soldier is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!"

The British government held two "Cobra" emergency committee meetings, whose deliberations were kept secret. Its first response to the discovery that this horrific crime was committed by homegrown terrorists was to assign official spokesmen to make as their main theme the drawing of a strong distinction between Islamist terrorism and the large Muslim communities living in most British towns.

Prime Minister David Cameron set the tone in his address to the nation by declaring that nothing in Islam justified this crime and branding the terrorists traitors to Islam.

DEBKAFfile reported after the murder Wednesday:

The terrorists drove up to their victim in a car, jumped out and after the murder wandered about in the area, apparently lying in wait for more soldiers to come out of the Royal Artillery barracks 400 meters from the site of their attack. London police reached the scene after 20 minutes after they were summoned. When the two killers ran towards them brandishing knives and a firearm, police officers shot and injured them. They were taken to separate hospitals and placed under heavy guard in case of attempts to rescue them.

Police sources said later they were treating the incident as a politically-motivated Islamist terror attack without identifying the killers.

In the absence of Prime Minister David Cameron, Home Minister Theresa May summoned the Cobra emergency committee into urgent session. After examining intelligence input, the committee must decide whether the Woolwich outrage was a lone incident or raise the terrorist alert level in London and the rest of the country. Cameron cut short his trip to Paris and returned to London Wednesday night.

Barack Obama, Syria, Israel, Bashar Assad, Binyamin Netanyahu, Hizballah, Iran nuclear, chemical weapons, Iran, Al Qaeda, Syrian rebels, Russia, Lebanon, John Kerry, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Chuck Hagel, Moshe Yaalon, US, Turkey, Vladimir Putin

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