



WHO WAS BEHIND THE LONDON BOMB ATTACK?

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London officials say the four young men thought to be suicide bombers in the July 7 attack were ordinary young men who were probably “foot soldiers” for a larger terrorist network.

The four suicide bombers detonated nearly simultaneous bombs in London's underground train system and on a double-decker bus the morning of July 7. At least 55 people died in the attacks and more than 700 were injured.

Who were they?

Police have officially named the four suspected bombers: Hasib Hussain, 18, who blew up the double-decker bus; Shahzad Tanweer, 22; Mohammed Sidique Khan, 30 and Lindsey Germaine, 19.

Three of the men came from the Leeds area of England, an area that attracted a large number of Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants to work in their textile mills in the 1960s. Many of the mills closed in the 1980s, leading to economic devastation and high unemployment in the immigrant community.

The suspected bombers were fans of the British game cricket; they played soccer together once a week. One was an elementary school mentor whose wife was expecting a second child. Three were British nationals of Pakistani decent and one was a Jamaican-born British resident.

Many expressed shock that the perpetrators were born and raised in Britain.

“It will take us a long time to come to terms with the fact that these attacks appear to have been committed by those who were born and brought up in our midst,” Conservative British politician Michael Howard told the BBC.

Part of a larger network?

But the question remains as to who might have supported the suicide bombers. Investigators do not think the four young men acted alone.

They “are in the category of foot soldiers. So, therefore, what we have got to find is who encouraged them, who trained them, who is the chemist. Those are the things that we are

now so interested in,” London police Commissioner Ian Blair said, the New York Times reported.

Last week authorities in Cairo, Egypt detained and questioned chemist Magdy el-Nashar. It is not known if the Egyptian chemical engineer, who studied in both North Carolina and Leeds, is a suspect or witness in the case. It is believed that Nashar knew some of the bombers, the New York Times reported.

Over the weekend, Pakistani officials confirmed that the three suspected bombers of Pakistani descent visited the country last year. It is not yet known what they did or who they met during their visits. Officials are trying to determine if there is an al-Qaida or Pakistani connection to the bombings.

History of suicide bombings

Suicide bombings were first used by the Shiite Muslim group Hezbollah in Lebanon in 1982 and have been used widely throughout the Middle East and Asia, the New York Times reported.

In the last decade, Palestinians have carried out more than 200 suicide attacks in Israel and the occupied territories. There have been more than 500 suicide bombings in Iraq since the U.S. invasion of 2003.

And while those who attacked the United States on Sept. 11, 2001 died, they used a sophisticated plan involving hijackers and jetliners.

But the recent London attack is the first suicide bombing in the West. Even the terrorist attacks in Madrid in March 2004, which killed 191 people, were done remotely.

And many believe that preventing suicide attacks will be very difficult.

“A suicide attacker could be anyone,” terrorist expert Daniel Benjamin told the New York Times. “He doesn’t have to be trained, just indoctrinated. There’s no profile; that’s what makes it so hard to defend against.”

British Prime Minister Tony Blair has said since the bombings that he plans to explore new anti-terrorism laws.

“We will look urgently at how we strengthen the procedures to exclude people from entering the UK who may incite hatred or act contrary to the public good, and at how we deport such people, if they come here, more easily,” Blair said.

--Compiled by Annie Schleicher for NewsHour Extra

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