

This paper is for Government departments and statutory organisations dealing with counter-terrorism. It is intended to inform you about CT issues that have been covered in the media and to help you to respond to any concerns generated as a result. It is not intended to provide detailed briefing about Government policies, and explaining these issues to the media is the role of relevant departmental press offices.

British Airways worker Rajib Karim convicted of terrorist plot

This week Rajib Karim, a former British Airways (BA) employee, was found guilty of plotting to blow up an aircraft. He was also found guilty of three related charges. Media coverage has focused on the influence of Anwar al-Awlaki on Karim and highlighted how the internet can be used to radicalise and recruit people for acts of terrorism.

Who is Rajib Karim?

Karim was born in Bangladesh. He studied electronics at Manchester University before returning to Bangladesh where, according to media reports, he supported the terrorist organisation Jammah-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh. In September 2007 he joined BA as a graduate IT trainee. The police believe that when he returned to the UK he had already committed himself to violent jihad and sought a job where he could best help the terrorist cause.

What has he been convicted of?

The jury ruled that Karim was guilty of plotting to blow up an aircraft whilst working for BA. In addition, they ruled that he was guilty of looking for a job in the UK to exploit for terrorist purposes; sharing information of use to Anwar al-Awlaki and offering to help carry out financial or disruptive attacks on BA.

Who is Anwar al-Awlaki and how is he linked to Karim?

Anwar al-Awlaki is an English-speaking terrorist ideologue linked to Al Qa'ida (AQ) in Yemen. He is a key AQ propagandist, broadcasting "terrorist instructions in fluent English over the internet". Awlaki's support for the Fort Hood attack; the Detroit airline bomber, and the attempted New York car bomb attack have all raised his profile over the last few years. Roshonara Choudhry, who was convicted in November 2010 of attempting to murder MP Stephen Timms, is said to have become radicalised watching online videos of Awlaki.

The media has reported that a number of e-mail exchanges took place between Awlaki and Karim discussing acts of terrorism. The e-mails included information about BA which Karim gained through his employment.

What is the Government doing to tackle online radicalisation?

Where radicalising content is hosted online in the United Kingdom the police have the ability to sanction its removal under the Terrorism Act 2006. Where unlawful content is hosted overseas the Government works closely with international partners and the internet industry to remove it. The public can refer potentially unlawful radicalising material to the police via the following link:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/reportingonlineterrorism>

In cases where the content falls below the existing legal threshold an effective route to removal is a direct challenge to the hosting company. If the content breaches the hosting company's conditions of use criteria, it could remove content referred by users. A good example is You Tube's new e-safety 'Promoting Terrorism' referral flag.

The Assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti

On March 2nd, Shahbaz Bhatti the Pakistani Minister for Minorities, was assassinated in Islamabad. It has been widely reported in the media that members of Tehrik-e-Taliban Punjab (TTP) were responsible.

Why was Bhatti assassinated?

Media reports have said that Bhatti was assassinated because he believed in the reform of blasphemy laws in Pakistan. The group responsible for the attack accused Bhatti of acting in “favour of and support of those who insult the Prophet”. They also said that putting the “cursed Christian infidel Shahbaz Bhatti in charge of the blasphemy laws review committee” resulted in this “fate”.

What is TTP?

TTP is often referred to as the Pakistani Taliban, a terrorist organisation that is based in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan along the Afghan border. It was formed in 2007 and its stated objectives are resistance to the Pakistan Government and enforcement of its version of Sharia law. TTP is linked to AQ – both in terms of its ideology and at an operational level.

On 17th January 2011 the UK Government proscribed the group, which means that membership of TTP is now a criminal offence in the UK, as are any attempts to operate, recruit or fundraise on behalf of the organisation.

What are Pakistan’s blasphemy laws?

According to the media, Pakistan uses its Penal Code to prohibit and punish blasphemy against Islam. Penalties for blasphemy range from a fine to death. Those accused of blasphemy are often subjected to harassment, threats and attacks.

These laws have been in the spotlight since a Christian mother-of-five, Asia Bibi, was sentenced to death in November 2010 for insulting the Prophet Muhammad. In January 2011, Punjab Governor Salman Taseer, a prominent critic of the law, was assassinated for the same reason as Bhatti.

What was the UK Government’s response to the assassination?

The Foreign Secretary, William Hague extended his “deepest sympathies to Mr Bhatti’s family” and said that he was “appalled by the assassination”. He condemned the actions of the extremists, and said that they “fly in the face of the courageous fight for democratic rights and justice being waged in other parts of the Islamic world”. The UK has made it clear that it supports the reform of the blasphemy laws, to ensure that they are not used to restrict freedom of expression or to target religious minorities.

What was the response in Pakistan?

There was widespread condemnation of the assassination by leading politicians, religious leaders, civil society and human rights groups in Pakistan. A spokesman for President Asif Ali Zardari said “this is a concerted campaign to slaughter every liberal, progressive and humanist voice in Pakistan. The time has come for the federal Government and provincial governments to speak out and to take a strong stand against these murderers to save the very essence of Pakistan.”

Prime Minister Ghilani announced a three-day national mourning over the assassination and rallies have taken place in Lahore condemning the assassination and demanding that the Government “take a clear stand on blasphemy law”.

[DFID overseas aid to prioritise tackling instability](#)

On March 1st, Andrew Mitchell Secretary of State for International Development announced the key findings of a review of UK overseas aid programmes. The review was largely welcomed by the media, though it was suggested that the change in policy direction would face its toughest test in countries such as Yemen.

What changes are being made?

One of the main priorities emerging from the review is the need to deal with the root causes of conflict because it is recognised that conflict is a major cause of poverty and suffering. Accordingly, over two thirds of future overseas aid will go to countries judged to be fragile or on the brink of war.

Is there a risk of confusing development with national security?

No. Development aid is used to support the world's most vulnerable people, but it will also contribute to protecting Britain from external threats. Conflict abroad threatens our security and can create under-governed spaces overseas where terrorists are able to recruit and operate.

[Other News](#)

Please also see the following interesting news items from the past week, commenting more generally on the nature of terrorism and terrorist organisations, which you may want to circulate more widely:

[How I fell into the clutches of radical cleric Abu Hamza](#)

A man radicalised by Abu Hamza has told teenagers in Derby about the dangers of violent extremism. Munir Zamir said he could have ended up in Guantánamo Bay if he had continued along his path but that he had turned his back on extremism and now worked to raise awareness of the issues.

[The West should not fear recent uprisings, as they address legitimate grievances](#)

In an Al Jazeera article a former CIA official says that ordinary citizens are overthrowing dictators and hurting Osama Bin Laden's rhetoric that people in the Middle East are beholden to oppressive outside forces. The article states that throughout the Middle East, people are revealing the lie which is at the heart of the terrorist narrative which says that the Muslims are condemned to a life of injustice and humiliation. What people are demonstrating now is that they can be the masters of their own fate and that they themselves carry the means of redressing the injustices and humiliations that have been visited upon them.