OPUS₂

Manchester Arena Inquiry

Day 118

June 17, 2021

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Phone: +44 (0)20 3008 5900

Email: transcripts@opus2.com

Website: https://www.opus2.com

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1	Thursday, 17 June 2021	1	When the mistakes and shortcomings set out in the
2	(2.00 pm)	2	report are considered, it needs to be at the forefront
3	Comments by THE CHAIRMAN	3	of that consideration that responsibility for what
4	SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Today I am publishing the first volume	4	happened and for causing so many deaths and serious
5	of my report into the Manchester Arena bombing on	5	injuries lies with Salman Abedi, the suicide bomber, and
6	22 May 2017. My report when finished will consist of	6	his brother Hashem, who assisted with the preparations.
7	three volumes. The first considers the security	7	Hashem Abedi is now serving sentences of life
8	arrangements at the arena, both generally and in	8	imprisonment for offences including the murders of
9	particular on the night of the Ariana Grande concert,	9	22 people.
10	and whether they were adequate in view of the risk at	10	The brothers intended to cause as much harm as they
11	the time of the terrorist attack occurring.	11	could. No other person or organisation acted with the
12	I set out in the report the circumstances in which	12	intention of causing any injury or with any idea their
13	the attack happened and I consider what more could and	13	actions or lack of action would or could assist
14	should have been done to improve security.	14	a suicide bomber carrying out his evil intentions.
15	As everyone knows, a suicide bomber evaded the	15	There will be those who consider that I have been
16	security outside the arena and detonated his bomb just	16	overcritical in reaching the conclusions that I have.
17	as the concert was coming to an end, killing 22 people	17	They will suggest that I have used hindsight in reaching
18	and injuring many, many more.	18	my decisions and have made scapegoats of some
19	It should not be necessary to have security to	19	individuals . Others may consider that I have not been
20	protect us from murderers who have formed the intention	20	critical enough.
21	to kill innocent members of the public, including	21	In reaching my conclusions, I have considered all of
22	children, in pursuit of their distorted beliefs, but	22	the evidence. There are not many people who, like me,
23	while the terrorist threat remains, and it shows no	23	have heard it all. I have tried to avoid any
24	signs of going away, we do need to have in place	24	impermissible use of hindsight and above all I have
25	protective measures which provide security against the	25	tried to be fair.
	1		3
1	threat, but do not prevent us enjoying the freedoms	1	I was urged by everybody to avoid looking for
2		_	
	which are part of our way of life .	2	scapegoats. I have not looked to blame anyone, but
3	which are part of our way of life . The inquiry has examined in detail the security		scapegoats. I have not looked to blame anyone, but where, having considered the evidence, I considered that
3 4		2	· -
	The inquiry has examined in detail the security	2	where, having considered the evidence, I considered that
4	The inquiry has examined in detail the security provision against terrorist attacks at the Manchester	2 3 4	where, having considered the evidence, I considered that individuals have fallen below a proper standard in
4 5	The inquiry has examined in detail the security provision against terrorist attacks at the Manchester Arena and in the City Room on 22 May 2017. I heard	2 3 4 5	where, having considered the evidence, I considered that individuals have fallen below a proper standard in carrying out their important roles in protecting
4 5 6	The inquiry has examined in detail the security provision against terrorist attacks at the Manchester Arena and in the City Room on 22 May 2017. I heard evidence from 53 witnesses over a period of 32 days	2 3 4 5 6	where, having considered the evidence, I considered that individuals have fallen below a proper standard in carrying out their important roles in protecting concertgoers, I have said so.
4 5 6 7	The inquiry has examined in detail the security provision against terrorist attacks at the Manchester Arena and in the City Room on 22 May 2017. I heard evidence from 53 witnesses over a period of 32 days lasting 154 hours and considered over 1,000 documents.	2 3 4 5 6 7	where, having considered the evidence, I considered that individuals have fallen below a proper standard in carrying out their important roles in protecting concertgoers, I have said so. It should be remembered in relation to a number of
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opportunities to identify Salman Abedi's activities as

being suspicious on the night before he detonated his

bomb. What I cannot say with any certainty is what

would have happened if those opportunities had not been

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the inquiry, $\, I \,$ have concluded that there were serious

organisations which had responsibility for it and also

shortcomings in the security provided by those

failings and mistakes by some individuals.

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missed. Salman Abedi might have been deterred from committing this outrage or might have done the same thing elsewhere. He might have detonated his bomb earlier in a different location, in or close to the City Room.

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The report deals in details with the shortcomings in security. I will not go into detail now and I invite those interested to read that detail in the report before forming a judgement. For now I will talk only about some of my overriding impressions.

On 22 May 2017 the threat level set by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre was severe. That meant that a terrorist attack was highly likely. Whilst the threat was not specific to any particular premises, the arena was always a possible target for a terrorist. There had been previous attacks in Paris and Bavaria which had shown that popular music events such as those held at the arena could be a target.

Everybody concerned with security at the arena should have been doing their job in the knowledge that a terrorist attack might occur on that night. They weren't. No one believed it could happen to them.

The threat level had been at severe for a period in excess of two and a half years and it is difficult to maintain a level of preparedness over a long period.

That is not a criticism of the threat level: while the

It was the responsibility of managers to ensure that the message that the threat level was severe was refreshed in such a way that people did not become complacent about it.

The essential message is that all employees need to be on the lookout for suspicious behaviour which, when they see it, they should report to their relevant supervisor. Employees must know how to identify suspicious behaviour, be encouraged to report it, and not feel that they may be criticised if it turns out to be a false alarm.

Further, there was insufficient sharing of information between those people concerned with security at the arena. Another recurring theme in this inquiry is the need to efficiently share information with partners and neighbours. The effect of this will be to greatly increase the efficacy of the response.

I will now briefly say something about the recommendations that I have made in my report. I have made a number of recommendations which, if accepted, will, I hope, bring about changes which will make a further attack less likely.

Central to my recommendations has been consideration

of a Protect duty. The idea of a Protect duty has been around for some time, but it has been given new impetus by the hard work of Figen Murray, whose son was one of the victims of this outrage.

A government consultation is ongoing, and people need to understand how important a Protect duty will be if introduced and the wide range of people who will be affected by the proposal. I would encourage people to participate in the consultation if they have not already done so. There is limited time to respond. The consultation ends on 2 July of this year.

I have concentrated on considering a Protect duty for large premises such as the arena. I fully support the introduction of such a duty. I have not dealt with the other categories of a Protect duty proposed by the government because I have not heard evidence relating to them and very different issues arise.

In relation to premises like the arena, I have recommended that the requirements of the duty are stringent. There seems to me to be no reason why large commercial organisations should not take all reasonable precautions to protect their customers from a terrorist attack.

There will be different views as to how stringent the duty should be, and ultimately it is for Parliament,

representing the public, to decide the appropriate, proportionate level.

Having heard about the effect of the deaths of the 22 people who died on their families and friends and the effect on those left permanently injured, I consider that a rigorous duty is appropriate.

I hope that the consultation will lead to a lively debate on what is an important matter and that it will be possible for it to be passed into law quickly.

I will not deal with my other recommendations as they are set out in my report. As the inquiry will continue to hear evidence until the end of this year, I hope that I will be able to review the progress that has been made on those of my recommendations that are accepted.

I am grateful to the Chairman of the Manchester Bench and the Clerk to the Justices for allowing us to use part of their court. I am very grateful to all the core participants and counsel and solicitors to the inquiry for their hard work and for the assistance which they have given me. It has not always been an easy process, particularly as it has taken place during the COVID pandemic.

I am grateful to all those who provided the equipment and the expertise which enabled us to keep

1	water area when we were only permitted to have a limited	1	
2	going even when we were only permitted to have a limited number of people in the hearing room. I am grateful for	2	
3	the tolerance of those who have been put to	3	
4	inconvenience as a result of the alterations that we	4	
5	have had to make due to the pandemic.	5	
6	We will continue next week with our hearings into	6	
7	the adequacy of the emergency response, which will form	7	
8	the subject matter of the volume 2 report.	8	
9	Finally, we will deal with the radicalisation of	9	
10	Salman Abedi and what the intelligence services and	10	
11	counter—terrorism police knew and in the light of that	11	
12	what, if anything, they could and should have done to	12	
13	prevent the attack.	13	
14	My conclusions on those matters will form volume 3.	14	
15	I will see some of you at 9.30 on Monday morning.	15	
16	Thank you.	16	
17	(2.14 pm)	17	
18	(The hearing adjourned until Monday, 21 June 2021 at	18	
19	9.30 am)	19	
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