

# Abu Hamza 'was British agent' [Edition 2]

Pavia, Will. **The Times**; London (UK) [London (UK)] 08 May 2014: 17.

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## Abstract

Abu Hamza, who was extradited to the US in 2012, is on trial on charges of helping to supply al-Qaeda with money and recruits, involvement in a hostagetaking in Yemen in which three Britons were killed and attempting to establish a terrorist training camp in Oregon.

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## Full Text

Abu Hamza secretly worked with British intelligence and advised Scotland Yard on terrorist activities in the years before he was convicted for inciting murder, his lawyer claimed yesterday.

Joshua Dratel, the lawyer defending the Egyptian imam at his trial in New York, said documents from Scotland Yard showed Abu Hamza was in "constant dialogue with British security forces". They sought his aid in anti-terrorism operations and looked to him to "keep the streets of London safe" while he was leader of Finsbury Park mosque.

Abu Hamza, who was extradited to the US in 2012, is on trial on charges of helping to supply

al-Qaeda with money and recruits, involvement in a hostagetaking in Yemen in which three Britons were killed and attempting to establish a terrorist training camp in Oregon.

The claim that he was helping the lawyers said that they had 50 pages of Scotland Yard documents proving that he had helped Britain by restraining his followers in times of tension between May 1997 and August 2000.

Mr Dratel said officials had sought his help after the kidnapping of a Briton by a terrorist organisation in Kashmir. "The British specifically asked him to do something because [they said] we know you have a relationship with this organisation dating back to the 1990s when [Abu Hamza] was in Afghanistan. So he makes a few phone calls, comes back and says, I don't think it's going to work out."

When police made two arrests in London in relation to embassy bombings in Africa, "there was a discussion about cooling hot heads", said Mr Dratel. "His intention is to de-escalate, his intention is to avoid a wider war, to keep the streets of London safe."

Abu Hamza was arrested in 2004 and spent six years in a British jail for inciting charges. Yesterday he gave evidence in his defence, describing how he came to Britain from Egypt in 1979, looking for "a western life, American style".

He had worked as a receptionist at a hotel in London before taking work as a bouncer. He found what he called "protection jobs" in Soho and the West End. "It was on the wrong side of morality. I was the co-manager of a strip club that was in Soho."

He said he had studied civil engineering and helped to build car parks and lay earthworks at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Married three times, he said it was his first wife, a British woman from Gibraltar, who first pushed him to study Islam. Abu Hamza said he had thought this was something best done later in life, but "she was passionate, she was just pushing me".

He told the court this was his first public address since police kicked down his door on May 27, 2004. He claimed that prison had affected his memory

Credit: Will Pavia New York

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