

Terror accused Hisham Muhammad 'believed IS was US creation'

From the [Daily Mail](#)

A man accused of planning a terror attack has told a court he researched the Islamic State group because he believed it was "created by America". Hisham Muhammad, of Victoria Avenue, Bury, is accused of planning both a "lone-wolf attack" and a drone attack.

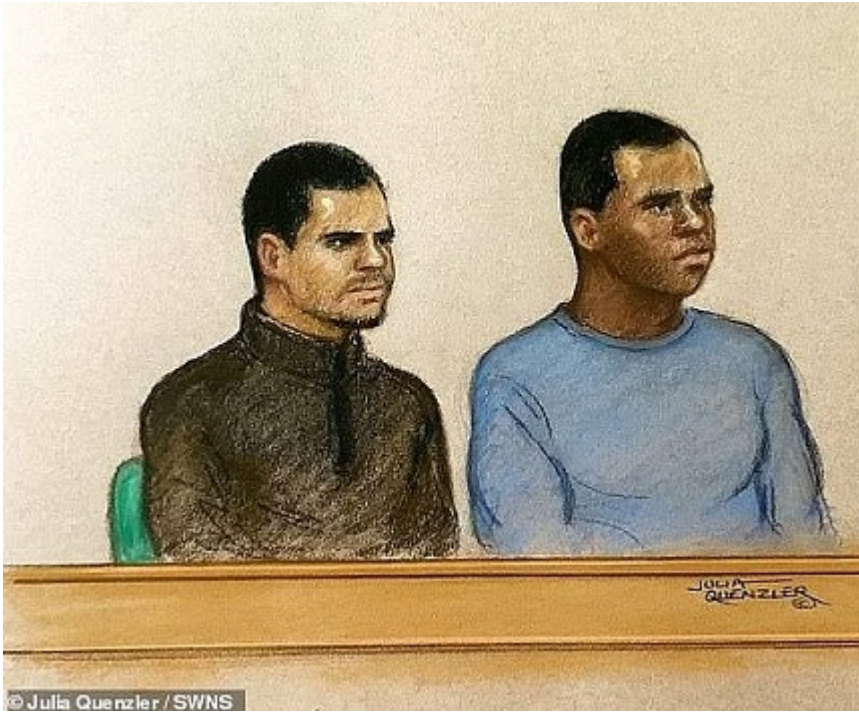
The 26-year-old told the Old Bailey he had "long held the suspicion" the group was "misrepresented or exaggerated in order to increase Islamophobia". He denies engaging in conduct in preparation for acts of terrorism.

In a defence statement read to the court, Mr Muhammad said he had watched extremist videos as research because he had "long held the suspicion as a devout Muslim that much of the material about Islamic State is misrepresented or exaggerated in order to increase Islamophobia".

He said that was "especially" the case in countries like the UK "where there is a desire to restrict Muslim immigration".

He told the jury "a lot more research" needed to be done into the group, adding: "I don't believe it exists... I believe it was created by America to take away the rights of Muslims."

Mr Muhammad watched dozens of videos "umpteenth times", which contained "nothing nice", prosecutor Anne Whyte QC said. She said of one that it was not a film of "civilians harmlessly praising their god", but of "jihadis speaking of holy war".



Responding to a song he watched, which had the lyrics “by the knife of horror we cut their necks”, Mr Muhammad said he did not support the violence, but “liked the tune”

A second video shown to the jury on Thursday featured balaclava-clad men singing ‘the bridges of jihad are stepping forward’. The 26-year-old told jurors he also listened to genres such as gangster rap and drill, which can also feature violent lyrics. ‘The point I am trying to make is that I listen to gangster rap but I don’t support it,’ he said.

Jurors were also told he had searched terms including “armed police Manchester”, “suicide belt”, “Isis”, “machete” and “Manchester Victoria Station” in May 2018, shortly before the first anniversary of the terror attack in the foyer of Manchester Arena, which stands adjacent to the station. He said he had had a job interview near the station and told Ms Whyte he could not remember if the interview was arranged after the searches.

Muhammad’s cousin Faisal Abu Ahmad, 25, also of Victoria Avenue, denies failing to alert authorities of the alleged attack plan.