

Couple are found guilty of Isis-inspired terrorist plot

Attack was planned for Christmas 2016, court told

Man sought out help of pharmacist on dating site

Jamie Grierson and agencies

A couple who met through a dating website were yesterday found guilty of plotting an Islamic State-inspired bomb or chemical attack over Christmas 2016.

Munir Mohammed volunteered for a "lone wolf" UK mission as he chatted on Facebook with a man he believed was an Isis commander.

He enlisted the help of Rowaida El-Hassan, a pharmacist, drawing on her knowledge of chemicals needed to make a bomb after seeking her out on SingleMuslim.com.

At the time of his arrest in December 2016, Mohammed had two of the three components to make a lethal explosive as well as bomb-making manuals, mobile

phone detonators and deadly ricin poison. Mohammed, 36, from Derby, and El-Hassan, 33, from north-west London, denied preparing terrorist acts between November 2015 and December 2016, but a jury found them guilty following an Old Bailey trial.

Judge Michael Topolski QC remanded the pair in custody and warned them that they faced jail when they are sentenced on 22 February.

The prosecution had claimed Mohammed was drawn to El-Hassan, a University College London graduate, because she referred to having a master's degree in pharmacy in her dating profile.

She wrote that she was "looking for a simple, very simple, honest and straightforward man who fears Allah" who she could "vibe with on a spiritual and intellectual level".

Jurors were told the pair had a "rapidly formed emotional attachment and a shared ideology" and by the spring of 2016 were in regular contact on WhatsApp, and had met more than once in a London park near El-Hassan's home. As well as argu-

ments, jokes and everyday concerns, they also shared extremist views and videos.

The prosecutor, Anne Whyte QC, said Mohammed "resolved upon a lone wolf attack" and El-Hassan was well aware of his plan.

In August 2016, Mohammed was put in touch via Facebook with a man he believed was an Isis commander, known as Abubakr Kurdi.

He pledged allegiance to Kurdi and offered to participate in "a new job in the UK", said to mean an act of terrorism, jurors heard.

In September 2016, Mohammed complained he had not received his instructions, saying in coded language: "if possible send how we make dough [explosives] for Syrian bread [a bomb] and other types of food."

El-Hassan, a mother of two, advised Mohammed, also a divorcee, on what chemicals to buy for a bomb, jurors were told.

In November, Mohammed got hold of a video containing information on how to manufacture ricin, the court heard.

In the days before his arrest, Mohammed was captured on in-store CCTV buying "acetone-free" nail polish from Asda, in the mistaken belief it was a chemical component of the explosive TATP.

He also looked at pressure cookers at AceDiscounts, which the prosecution said could be used to contain the explosives.

When police raided his home on 12 December 2016, they found hydrogen peroxide in a wardrobe and hydrochloric

acid in the freezer. Mohammed denied the chemicals were for a bomb, claiming the hydrochloric acid was to clean the alloys on his car and the peroxide was to treat a burn.

El-Hassan, who came to Britain from Sudan at the age of three, told jurors she had sulphuric acid for her drains and got face masks to wear as she dealt with a damp problem in her flat.

Asked if she had feelings for Mohammed, El-Hassan said: "It was mixed feelings at the time. Yes, there was emotional attachment."

Mohammed, a Sudanese national, arrived in Britain in the back of a lorry and claimed asylum in February 2014, the court heard.

After waiting for more than two years, he appealed to Margaret Beckett, MP for Derby South, for help with his immigration problems.

The long-serving Labour MP was informed by the authorities that Mohammed's case was "not straightforward" and had been referred to a "specialist unit for consideration".



Munir Mohammed shared extremist videos with Rowaida El-Hassan