

Failed intelligence could increase security threats

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Academics at the University of Birmingham have warned that mistakes being made by the intelligence services in the fight against terror will only serve to strengthen the impetus of terrorism breeding further.

Recent events such as that in Forest Gate, where community members are arrested in highly visible raids and later released without charge, continue to bring into question the accuracy of intelligence.

Dr Steven Hewitt from the University's Department of American and Canadian Studies says that the consequences of failed intelligence are so damaging that the ultimate irony is that as intelligence and police services attempt to unearth threats to security, the actions resulting from flawed results are actually contributing to sustaining and intensifying terrorist activity.

Dr Hewitt says: "Community co-operation is absolutely crucial for good intelligence; intelligence gathered through human informants is much more effective than technical surveillance or electrical bugging. The people who know best what is going on in their own communities are obviously the people that live there. It is precisely these people that intelligence services should be engaging with, rather than alienating."

Dr Tahir Abbas, Director of the Centre for Culture and Ethnicity, concurs. He says that it is the actions of a few radical extremists that are becoming the focus: "We are making this more complex than is necessary. Fundamentally, Muslims and non-Muslims share common ideals and values - Muslims and Christians are united in a common cause."

Dr Hewitt concludes: "It's absolutely vital to keep these communities onside and that's why heavy handed tactics will ultimately fail and lead to us being less safe instead of having a more secure and safe society."

ENDS

Notes to Broadcasters:

Moving footage/interviews are available free of charge as a package to broadcast media via Research TV, due for streaming via APTN on Tuesday 27 June 2006 at 12:15 GMT. Go to <http://www.Research-TV.com> for more details or to request footage. Footage includes interviews with Dr Tahir Abbas and Dr Steve Hewitt.

Dr Tahir Abbas is Director of Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Culture at the University of Birmingham. Among other interests he specialises in ethnic inequalities, multiculturalism and ethno-religious identities of British Muslims and Islam in Britain.

Dr Steve Hewitt is a lecturer in the Department for American and Canadian Studies. His particular expertise is in security and intelligence, the war on terror and anti-Americanism in the UK and worldwide.

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