

REX V. ALEXANDER DIGHTON

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. On 28<sup>th</sup> March, you pleaded guilty to eleven offences. All the offences arise out an attack you carried out on and around Talbot Green Police Station, South Wales, on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025. The offences cover attempted arson with intent to endanger life, attempted murder, attempted grievous bodily harm with intent, threatening with an offensive weapon, battery, having an offensive weapon and bladed articles in a public place as well as criminal damage. The matter was put over for sentence and I must now sentence you.

The offences.

2. On Friday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025, you left your home in Pontyclun. When you did so you were wearing a bullet proof vest and had with you a hatchet [count 9], a knife [count 8] and a large wooden pole adapted by the addition of sharpened metal plates [count 7]. In the rucksack you were carrying were the materials required to construct Molotov cocktails. All those items show your intentions as you approached the police station and the officers based there. Serious violence was clearly your motivation.
3. You arrived at the Police Station just before 7pm that evening. After placing the rucksack on a wall and started to remove items from it. You put a white cloth in a glass bottle, set light to the cloth and then threw the bottle in the direction of a police van parked outside the Police Station two metres from the front entrance. The Molotov cocktail hit the ground in front of the van, but did not ignite.
4. You then took a further bottle from the rucksack and tried to set light to it. When that did not work, you walked to the police van and poured the contents of the bottle behind the bonnet of the van before then setting light to the fluid. This caused a small flame to ignite under the bonnet. Tobacco tins were taken from the rucksack. These tins had burger fat and wood chippings. You had prepared these items to be incendiary devices. You lit them and put them under the police van.

5. Next you used the knife to open two containers of lighter fluid. You then placed the knife behind your back inside your belt before going to the police van and placing the containers with lighter fluid under the bonnet.
6. Count 1 covers your actions in seeking in various ways to set light to the police van, positioned as it was in immediately outside the police station. The actions were intended to bring about a confrontation with police officers and endangered the lives of those in the police station and any members of the public who may have passed the scene.
7. Your efforts to set light to the police van failed. Using the adapted wooden pole you struck and broke the windows of the police van [Count 11]. You also caused damage to another police vehicle [Count 10].
8. Police officers inside the police station became aware of what was going on and they confronted you. PC Steph Fleming drew her Taser. As the doors to the police station opened, you smashed the window of the police car with the pole you had with you. PC Fleming shouted to you with her Taser raised: *“Right, put that down now.”* You continued to strike the police car. PC Fleming continued with her shouts to you and moved from the police station towards you shouting: *“Drop it or I will Taser you now.”* You turned to face the officer and said: *“I’m fed up”* and *“I’m done”* whilst you advanced towards the officer with the wooden pole raised in your left hand. [Count 5]. You also made reference to the number ‘75’. PC Fleming backed away and began to fire her Taser, but it had no effect as you were wearing a bullet proof vest.
9. PS Coleman advanced towards you as you reached the threshold of the entrance to the police station. You then struck PS Coleman forcefully with the wooden pole. PS Coleman produced his PAVA spray and ordered you to the ground. When you refused to comply, the officer deployed his PAVA spray. This had little impact on you. You called out: *“Your government is vulnerable.”*
10. It appears that you then went into the police station and swung the wooden pole at PS Coleman’s head. You made contact and the officer stumbled. You then continued to try and assault PS Coleman by swinging the pole. You lost possession of the pole, but continued the assault using your hands. [Count 4].

11. DC Emlyn then approached. You punched him to the left side of his head [Count 6]. He was then able to restrain you in a head lock and other officers then assisted in restraining you. Whilst this was being done, you used the knife you had and stabbed DC Jack Cotton. He was stabbed to the inner thigh narrowly missing the femoral artery. The wound is estimated to be some 4 inches deep. DC Cotton's injury required stitches to the stab wound and also had a graze to the forehead and another wound to his elbow. You also made a further stabbing motion to DC Cotton's chest, but other officers disarmed you before any further injury was caused. The attack on DC Cotton is the subject of Count 2.
12. Officers realised there was a fire burning under the police van. PS Coleman managed to kick the cause of the fire away from the van and prevented the fire catching further. You were arrested. On arrest you said: *"I've been damned since birth."*
13. Parts of the incident captured on CCTV was shown in the course of the hearing.

Events following arrest.

14. A police interview took place on 1<sup>st</sup> February. An appropriate adult was present. You declined legal assistance. It is clear from what you said that your actions were deliberate. The reference to '75' was said to be your belief that Muslim grooming gangs have been operating since the 1950s. You expressed your intention during the incident was to let it be known that your *"tolerance for the government had come to an end"* by causing as much damage as possible. You said you had *"teetered whether you wanted to kill someone"* and had not been fully decided. You had targeted the police as the *"keystone of government power."* You said you were opposed to the *"left wing homogeny of British politics"* and said that right wing parties that rise up, such as the BNP, get shut down. You explained that a week before this you had received a letter from the police in relation to providing samples connected to a public order offence – you were on bail for that matter. You expected police officers to attend your home and had they done so, you intended to attack them with a shovel you had sharpened and that your intention was to kill any police officers who attended.
15. In relation to the incident at the police station your intention was to so as much damage as you could. *"I don't know whether I would intend to kill. I don't know". "I didn't consider the scope of damage, merely that blood had to be spilled. To make them bleed. I don't know if that answers your question. I know its not detailed. But I didn't think I want to chop that person's head off, and that person's foot off, I don't think in such detail...."*

16. You spoke of wanting an outcome ... *“an acknowledgment that the functions of government on all sides have failed to uphold their duties in the state themselves, to protect our children, to enforce our borders, to uphold law and order, to ensure we don’t get invaded and an acceptance that all those have failed... ..”* You explained the preparation of various items you took with you making sure the knife was sharp, that you had the materials for making the Molotov cocktails and obtained a bullet proof vest so as to prevent the police from disabling you with Tasers.
17. Since your arrest there has been a close investigation in to you and recent activity. A schedule of events has been prepared and set out as part of this sentencing hearing. Of particular significance is a report to Prevent on the basis of the racist and anti-Muslim views you hold and the likelihood of being involved with incel groups. I note too various online activity that which shows an increasing fixation on issues such as diversity, paedophilia, immigration, anti-Islamic sentiments and dissatisfaction with the British government.

Victim Impact.

18. There are statements from a number of police officers. They speak of the shock of your actions on 31<sup>st</sup> January. They are all experienced police officers – many with in excess of 10 years’ service as serving police officers. Whilst they accept potential violent and difficult confrontations are part of the role of being a police officer, they were all deeply shocked by the nature and ferocity of your attack on the police station, vehicles, them as individual officers and on their fellow officers. Some thought they were going to die as a result of what you had with you and what you were doing. Many speak of the anxiety, worry and sleepless nights for them and their families that have followed your attack. Their families are proud - and rightly so – of the work they do as police officers to ensure the safety of us all. They and their families are also very concerned going forward of any repetition of such violence as they witnessed on this occasion.
19. DC Jack Cotton was stabbed. He has 14 years of service and has dealt with many violent incidents and individuals. He says the events on that night was something he had never experienced before and that he will remember for the rest of his life. When he realised he had been stabbed he knew straight away from the location of the femoral artery, the stab could be fatal. Believing it had missed the artery he felt a sense of relief. He says that was short-lived as the medics dealing with him were concerned about the location of the wound. He underwent various assessments and thankfully only required stitches to close the wound. He knows the outcome of the incident so far as he is concerned could have been completely

different and could have been fatal. He was unable to go to work for over a month. He was not able to care and play with his children as he would do normally. Whilst physical wounds may have healed, he speaks of the psychological impact of your actions.

20. There is also a statement from the Chief Constable, Jeremy Vaughan, setting out the impact of your actions on his officers. As he sets out, the actions of all on the night were brave in undertaking their duties. At the end of his statement he says this: “ *Police officers serve and protect the communities of South Wales with courage, integrity and compassion on a daily basis and I am immensely proud of the actions of those officers who apprehended Alex Dighton on the night. Their actions exemplified their professionalism and dedication in trying to save life and in doing so putting their own lives at risk. They demonstrated sheer courage and determination, and their actions in really difficult and dangerous circumstances prevented tragedy.* ” I entirely agree with those comments and in my view they all deserve commendation.

#### Defendant.

21. You are aged 28 and of previous good character. I have seen and read a psychiatric report from Dr Shuja Reagu dated 16<sup>th</sup> March, and a Pre-Sentence Report [PSR] dated 9<sup>th</sup> May 2025. Throughout these proceedings you have not sought the assistance of any lawyers to represent you. At the hearings before this Court each stage of the proceedings has been explained to you and you have been given the opportunity to obtain legal advice and representation. It is clear that you are aware of the inevitability that a lengthy custodial sentence is the only outcome of this case.
22. I invited you to say anything you wished to say in mitigation. It was clear that you continue to hold entrenched views of the type you expressed back in January. Other than the early pleas of guilty there is little else that can be said to your credit. You clearly engaged with the author of the PSR and I will turn to the effect of that in a moment.

#### Approach to sentence.

23. Taking your actions on 31<sup>st</sup> January together with statements you made before the offences as well as what you were to say in interview afterwards, I am entirely satisfied that all of the offences here have a terrorist connection. That is a statutory aggravating factor. In my judgment the offences here was all aggravated by that determination.

24. Turning next to the relevant sentencing guidelines, and counts 1 and 2 in particular where the maximum sentence is life imprisonment, and taking attempted murder first of all as the lead offence, I will need to consider whether you are dangerous. The test is whether I am of the opinion that there is a significant risk to members of the public of serious harm occasioned by the commission by you of further specified offences? Having considered all of the materials before me in this case in my view that test is clearly met here. I have regard to the offending, your comments before and since, alongside the contents of the reports I have read. The author of the PSR notes your extreme mindset, that you are unapologetic for your actions and that you display little or no sense of remorse. On page 11 of the report the author refers to that fact that you have repeatedly expressed your intentions to cause further serious harm on release. On pages 12 and 13 the author identifies a number of factors relevant to the issue of dangerousness. Of the matters identified I note the following:

*In terms of the potential for future harm, there has been no shift in Mr Dighton's attitudes since his arrest. He holds a somewhat cavalier attitude to this offending, and he expresses no remorse.*

*Whilst his behaviour in custody appears to be settled, there have been ongoing concerns raised in respect of his comments to other prisoners.*

*Mr Dighton is neurodiverse and is diagnosed with mood disorder which may make him susceptible to the influence of others. Whilst he does not appear to have been experiencing any significant symptoms at the time of the offences, Dr Reagu has noted that Mr Dighton's symptoms will return at some point and will require management. The concern is that he is currently not willing to access mental health support, therefore it is difficult to formulate any understanding of factors that would indicate when his mental health is deteriorating.*

*Mr Dighton does not believe he poses a risk to the public; however he asserts that anyone working for the public, including police and probation staff would be legitimate targets.*

*Mr Dighton remains rigid in his thinking and asserts he ... "100% will do the same thing if the government doesn't change ....."*

25. The next matter I need to consider by reference to s.285 of the Sentencing Act 2020, is whether the offence of attempted murder and the other offences associated with it, in

particular the arson and the other offences of violence, is such as to justify the imposition of a sentence for life? If the answer to that is yes, then a life sentence must be imposed.

26. On the offence specific guidelines for attempted murder, in relation to culpability you went to the police station intent on serious violence having undertaken significant planning and preparation. There are two characteristics that point to this case being one that comes within very high culpability: *‘Attempted murder of a police officer’* and *‘Offence committed for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause’*. Within category B I note *‘Offender took a knife or other weapon to the scene intending to commit any offence or have it available to use as a weapon, and used that knife or other weapon in committing the offence.’* Whilst I acknowledge the contents of the interview with the police as well as the psychiatric report, in my judgment this is not a case that would come within categories C or D. In my judgment this is a case to be dealt with as one of very high culpability.
27. On harm, this is within category 2: *‘serious physical or psychological harm not in category 1.’*
28. For category A 2 the guidelines provide a starting point of 30 years’ imprisonment and a category range of 25 to 35 years’ imprisonment. In terms of statutory aggravating factors you were on bail at the time in relation to a public order offence. In addition the offence is aggravated by the other offences on the indictment. Of particular note is the offence of arson, the attempted grievous bodily harm, threats and battery with the various weapons you had. On the mitigating factors that apply you have no previous convictions. I note the contents of the psychiatric report and the pre-sentence report about your mental state and background. Much of this is in the form of self-reporting by you to the interviewer. It is important I note what is said, but in my judgment there is limited impact in terms of mitigation of any sentence that would otherwise be appropriate.
29. Before allowing credit for plea, taking into account the aggravating factors and in particular the other offences, a sentence just above the category range at 36 years’ would be appropriate and then allowing for the mitigating factors, produces a sentence of 33 years’ imprisonment. You pleaded guilty to all matters and are entitled to full credit of one-third, so that would reduce the sentence to one of 22 years.
30. As indicated earlier, I do find the test for dangerousness to be met. Having regard to s.285 of the Sentencing Act 2020, taking the offence of attempted murder and the other offences associated with it, in particular the arson and the other offences of violence, in my judgment this is a case such as to justify the imposition of a sentence for life. For all of the reasons I

have identified in the offences and in your approach to it, such as approach is justified. Having come to that determination, a life sentence has to be imposed.

31. In coming to this decision I note what is set out in paragraph 22 of the judgment of the then Lord Chief Justice in the case of Burinskas & Others [(Attorney General's Reference (No.27 of 2013)) [2014] EWCA Crim 334] in relation to discretionary life sentences. I need to consider the seriousness of the offence and any previous convictions, and here there are none. I need also to consider the level of danger to the public posed by you, and the available alternative sentences.
32. On count 2 there will be a sentence of life imprisonment with a minimum term of 22 years. As there is now no early release for terrorist offenders, the minimum term is the same as what is termed the determinate term. The days on remand, which I am told number 130 days, will count towards that sentence and so the sentence of the Court on count 2 is one of imprisonment for life with a minimum term of 21 years' 235 days.
33. What that means is that before you will first be considered for parole there will be a period of 21 years' 235 days. If the information which I have been provided as to the days on remand proves to be inaccurate then the prosecution or defence must notify the court so that the case can be relisted to correct the calculation as soon as possible and in any event within 56 days.
34. When it comes to the minimum term that you will serve, I make plain that I am not ordering that you are to be released at the end of it. Whether you will be released or not at that stage will be a matter for the Parole Board to consider. Only when the minimum term has been served can the Parole Board decide whether it is safe to release you or not. If the Board does release you, then you will remain on licence and liable to recall for the rest of your life.
35. On count 1 (attempted arson with intent) a sentence of 3 years' imprisonment; count 4 (attempted grievous bodily harm) 3 years' imprisonment; count 5 (threatening with an offensive weapon) 18 months' imprisonment; count 6 (battery) 8 months' imprisonment; count 7 18 months' imprisonment; counts 8 and 9 18 months' imprisonment on each; and counts 10 and 11, 3 months imprisonment on each. Those sentences to be concurrent to each other and concurrent to the life sentence on count 2. I direct that count 3 will lie on the file.
36. In the light of my determination that the offences have a terrorist connection, you will be subject to the automatic imposition of the terrorist notification requirements under Part 4 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008. Those notification requirements will apply for 30 years.



37. Under s.23 Terrorism Act 2000, I order the forfeiture of the knife, hatchet, wooden pole as well as the other items in your possession or under your control at the time of the offences.
38. If the statutory surcharge applies to your case, then the appropriate orders can be drawn up.

The Recorder of London

His Honour Judge Mark Lucraft KC

Central Criminal Court.

London EC4M 7EH

13<sup>th</sup> June 2025.