



## **Judiciary of England and Wales**

### **IN THE CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT**

THE KING v. MCKENZIE MORGAN

(d.o.b. 8.1.2008)

### **SENTENCING REMARKS**

1. McKenzie Morgan: you're in court today to be sentenced for one offence which is for the possession of information likely to be of use to a person engaged in terrorism. You were born on 8th January 2008 and so you turned 18 just a few days ago. You have no previous convictions.
2. I will have to set out in some detail how you come to be here, and how I've decided on your sentence. I'm afraid that some of it may be difficult to follow and that what you're most anxious to know is what your sentence will be. So I hope it will help you if I tell you straight away that I will be sentencing you to 14 months' detention in a Young Offender Institution.
3. On the 2nd of June 2025, the police came to your home and they searched it. On your mobile phone they found that you'd saved a copy of a 188-page PDF file called 'Al Qaeda Training Manual – Complete Version'. They found three other files as well, containing extracts from that training manual. That manual contains information likely to be of use to a person engaged in terrorism and it's a criminal offence to possess it.
4. I'm going to set out a little of the background to explain why the police came to your address. I must stress that you are being sentenced only for possessing the manual. However, in deciding on what is the right sentence, I have to consider all the surrounding circumstances.

5. From April last year you were messaging other people on Snapchat. These messages included praise for Axel Rudakubana, the Southport attacker. You also said that you wanted to carry out a terrorist-style attack and that you were planning to bomb the Oasis music concert taking place in Cardiff in July. You claimed that you were trying to make Ricin, which is a highly dangerous toxin. One of your messages asked how to burn people's faces.
6. You were also searching for information on-line about a children's playground and dance club in your local area and you twice tried to buy a 15cm kitchen knife on Amazon.
7. One of the people you were sending messages to told the police about what you were saying. At around the same time, your mother asked for an assessment by the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services because she was so concerned about your behaviour. You went to an appointment on 2nd June 2025 and you told the community psychiatric nurse that you wanted to hurt people, and that you had been researching how to kill people and how to make bombs and poison. You said you enjoyed watching terrorist acts. The nurse very properly reported this to the police.
8. You went home after speaking to the nurse and carried on searching on the internet for information about knives and a local school. You also sent images of extracts from the Al Qaeda training manual which included information about torture methods, explosives, torture and how to manufacture Ricin.
9. The police arrived at your house later that same day and found the Al-Qaeda training manual on your mobile phone. When you were later interviewed about this you accepted that you'd searched for the Al-Qaeda training manual and that you had saved it and read it. You also accepted that you'd forwarded it to others.
10. You said that you were sending Snapchat messages because you were bored and that you didn't mean what you'd said about carrying out attacks or making Ricin. You just intended to shock people. You did admit that you'd tried to buy knives on-line but you couldn't because you couldn't prove that you were over 18. Your mother had hidden all her kitchen knives after finding one in your bedroom. You said that you were unhappy, had been bullied at school and had been experiencing suicidal thoughts.

11. You appeared before the Westminster Magistrates' Court on 21st June 2025 and said that you intended to plead guilty. You are therefore entitled to full credit which means a reduction of one third from the sentence that would have been passed if you hadn't pleaded guilty.
12. You were remanded to youth detention but on 7<sup>th</sup> October you were transferred to Ardenleigh Medium Secure Unit under the Mental Health Act and you have been under the care of the psychiatrists there ever since. I have initial and updated reports from Dr Katie Dichard-Head, under the supervision of Dr Hamid Hassan at Ardenleigh. I also have reports from Dr Heidi Hales and Dr Catherine Cunning who are independent experts. I have three reports from the Monmouthshire and Torfane Youth Offending Service.

*Reports*

13. This is a summary of what these reports tell me. You struggled at school, where you were isolated and bullied. You were assaulted in the secure unit where you were initially detained. You suffered a broken nose and bruising. That led to severe anxiety and panic attacks. You also began self-harming, scratching yourself and putting objects into your ears which have sometimes had to be removed in the Accident and Emergency department at the hospital. You have also developed non-epileptic attack disorder, which means that you've often had seizures.
14. You have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and that means that you struggle with uncertainty, social interaction and communication. You have sensory sensitivities, and you like rigid routines.

*Risk*

15. Dr Hales and Dr Cunning are uncertain as to the risk you pose to others. You told them that you do not now have thoughts about hurting other people, but the youth offending team, using an assessment tool, have assessed the risk posed to others as high.

You are a danger to yourself because you self-harm and have thoughts of suicide. You are also at high risk of harm from others because you have autism and are vulnerable to being bullied or being groomed and radicalised.

*Recommendations*

16. All the psychiatrists say that you have complex needs but that you are not suffering from an acute treatable mental illness. They also say that it will help you to have a clear end date for your sentence so that you know exactly when you will be going home. A Hospital Order will have an uncertain end date and so on balance they say that a sentence of detention is preferable. If your mental health were to decline in prison then arrangements can be made under the Mental Health Act for an urgent transfer back to hospital.
17. The Youth Offending service have significant reservations about managing your risk in the community. However, there have already been consultations between the Youth Offending Service and the Counter Terrorism Specialist Probation Practitioners within the Joint Extremism Unit. Your post-risk release will be managed on a multi-agency basis.
18. I will also make a Community Behaviour Order to provide additional oversight and supervision when you return to the community.

*Sentencing Council Guidelines*

19. You committed this crime when you were 17 and so still a child within the justice system. You are now 18. That means that although I take as my starting point the sentence that you would have been likely to get back in June when you were 17, I have to apply the purposes of sentencing adult offenders.
20. I have considered the Sentencing Council Guidelines on Sentencing Children and Young People, Sentencing Offenders with Mental Health Disorders and the offence specific guideline, Collection of Terrorist Information.

*Culpability*

21. There is no clear evidence from any of the reports or other material that you have any specific political, religious or racial ideology. That leads me to conclude that you have no terrorist connection or motivation. Your motivation appears to have been to emulate the extreme level of violence used by Axel Rudakubana in the Southport attack. I will place this offence in culpability category C.

22. I have to assess the harm that was or might have been caused and I place this in the highest category, that is category 1. This training manual provides instruction for methods of carrying out specific terrorist activity endangering life, and while I have considered carefully the submissions made by your counsel, my assessment is that harm was very likely to be caused, either by you or by someone else, since you sent the manual to others.
23. A category C1 offence carries a starting point for an adult of 3 years' imprisonment with a range of 1 to 5 years.

However, when courts pass sentence on those under 18, which you were when you pleaded guilty, the Youth Guideline suggests that it may be appropriate to apply a sentence broadly within the region of half to two thirds of the adult sentence. That is a very rough guide.

#### *Aggravating factors*

24. The deliberate use of technologies to avoid or impede detection is an aggravating factor. You used Snapchat, which deletes content by default after it has been viewed and you used a virtual private network internet connection which would disguise your true location. I can't be sure, however, that you used Snapchat and a VPN deliberately and so that you could avoid detection. Many people use Snapchat simply because it's convenient and they use VPNs to protect private data.

#### *Mitigating factors*

25. You have no previous convictions and you are young. Your time in custody has been, and will be, especially challenging for you in particular. Your counsel tells me that you are very sorry and that you wanted me to know that. These are all mitigating factors.

#### *Collection of terrorist information*

26. The offence is listed in Schedule 13 of the for the purposes of ss. 252A and s. 265 of the Sentencing Code. I have to impose an appropriate term of detention plus a further period of 1-year for which you will be on licence.

#### *Ancillary Orders*

27. I'm going to make a Criminal Behaviour Order. That will be explained to you in detail and given to you in writing as well. It sets out all kinds of things that you mustn't do: in

particular, you must not go to places where children are, such as youth clubs, and you mustn't try to buy knives. There are also rules about using the internet. It's very important that you stick to all those rules because, again, if you don't, you could be returned to prison. That order will last for 3 years.

28. You are also subject to what we call the automatic notification requirements under the Terrorism Act 2008. Those will also be explained to you in detail and given to you in writing. You have to make sure that the police have details such as where you're living. This will be for the next 10 years.
29. Mackenzie Morgan: If you had not pleaded guilty, the sentence would have been one of 21 months' detention. I give full credit for your guilty plea and so the sentence is one of 14 months' detention in a Young Offender Institution with a further period of one year for which you will be on licence.
30. You will be considered for release after serving 2/3 of the sentence. If you are not released at that stage then you will be released at the end of the 14 months. The time you have already spent in detention on remand will be deducted from that sentence.
31. After that you will be on licence for whatever remains of your sentence, plus an extra one year. While you're on licence you must do whatever you're directed to do by the people supervising your licence. If you don't, you could be returned to prison.

HHJ Sarah Whitehouse KC

16<sup>th</sup> January 2026