



MR JUSTICE WALL

IN THE CROWN COURT AT BIRMINGHAM

R -V- JAGGER STRANG

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Jagger Strang. You can remain seated until I ask you to stand.
2. I sentence you for two offences of possession of an explosive substance, two offences of collecting information capable of being of use to a terrorist, one offence of possessing a blowpipe, one offence of making a threat to kill, and one offence of making a threat to destroy or damage property. You pleaded guilty to those offences on the first day of your trial. You will receive 10% credit for entering those pleas at that stage.
3. You are now 18 years old. These offences were committed in September last year when you were only 17. I accept that you were at the time an isolated young man. You had problems at home about which I have read, and you had not come to terms with your family's move from South Africa to this country three years ago. You wrote in a note to yourself that you were being bullied and that you had developed "*a hatred for everything*". I take all this into account when I sentence you along with your good character, your health, the contents of the pre-sentence report and the mitigation advanced on your behalf, the letter you wrote to me, and the references I have read about you.
4. Against that background you developed unhealthy interests, summarised by the Probation Officer as an "*unhealthy attitude and behaviour towards violence*". You became obsessed with serial killers such as Anders Brevik, Jeffrey Dahmer, and the Sandy Hook killer. You

researched them, kept articles about them and even ranked them as to how significant you thought them to be. You wrote what you termed a manifesto in which you said that you planned to *“do something big, something violent, maybe serial killing, maybe a rampage”*. You had also written that you wanted to be like the serial killers in whom you were showing a deep interest. You told someone online that you worshipped killers. Although I accept that you had made no plans to do so, you were at times contemplating following in the footsteps of these notorious killers.

5. You also developed an unhealthy interest in explosives. You acquired the chemicals necessary to make both gunpowder and thermite. You then made them. You tested them by causing them to explode. You say that you did so in a safe manner, but you are not a trained chemist. Any amateur experimentation with explosives carries with it the danger that people might get injured. You experimented with your family in the house. They, at least, were potentially endangered by your actions.
6. At the time of your arrest, you were in possession of some gunpowder and thermite which you had already created, but also sufficient of the base chemicals to make a further 320g of gunpowder and 1.3kg of thermite. You had no other use for those base chemicals and I infer that you fully intended to pursue your interest by making more explosives.
7. On 8th and 9th September, you carried out internet research related to your passion for explosives. You accessed two documents which would be of use to terrorists. One gave instruction on how to make a detonator and the other on how to make gunpowder. There is no suggestion by the prosecution that you planned to take steps to make these videos available to terrorists, but it remains illegal for you to have accessed and possessed them.
8. Your offending came to the attention of the authorities when you told classmates at Stafford College that you idolised serial killers and that you wanted a pressure cooker so that you could make a bomb using explosives and shrapnel, which you would then use to blow up the college. Although it has been accepted that you had no such intention, you persuaded those to whom you spoke that you intended to make good on your threats. You said, for example, that you had identified a particular classroom to blow up because of the number of glass windows it had, and that you had worked out an escape route for yourself to use from the classroom to the college exit. When one of the group in which you confided sought proof that you were serious in your planning, you provided that proof by sending him images of homemade weapons, videos of you igniting substances in the kitchen and garden of your

family home, and video and images of serial killers. Their concern was such that they reported you to teachers at school the next morning. Your classes were cancelled. The police were called and you were arrested.

9. Your guilty pleas were entered on the basis that you had no intention of building a bomb. The prosecution accepted that basis, and therefore that is the basis on which I sentence you. It follows that I must also sentence you on the basis that you had no intention of carrying out your threats to kill and damage property.
10. I turn to sentence. In determining the right sentence in your case, I have considered the Sentencing Council definitive guidelines on sentencing young people, totality, the relevant offence specific guidelines and, where no specific guideline exists, the general guideline.
11. I take into account the guideline on sentencing young people because, although you are now 18 and were 18 when you pleaded guilty, you were only 17 at the time of your offending and maturity does not suddenly arrive at the moment of one's 18th birthday.
12. I have concluded that no sentence other than a custodial sentence could be justified for your offending. That is because of the seriousness and number of the offences you committed.
13. There is no offence specific guideline for possession of explosives. I fix your sentence by considering the maximum sentence for the offence (which is 14 years), relevant Court of Appeal guidance (which is to be found in *R -v- Harvey [2018] EWCA Crim 755*). and the Sentencing Council guideline for the closest offence, which I have concluded is the guideline for possession of a prohibited firearm. The explosives you possessed are akin to prohibited weapons which, like firearms, are capable of killing and injuring numerous people if misused.
14. Considering the Court of Appeal guidance in *Harvey*, I consider firstly the motivation for your offending. I accept that it was curiosity, but it was curiosity fuelled by an interest in killers and killing. It was not simply an academic interest in chemistry. Second, I consider the potential harm. You experimented in your home and thereby put yourself and your family at risk. It is of significance that you had the base chemicals to make significant amounts of each explosive. The longer-term potential for harm lies in the possibility that your obsessions for explosives and serial killing would align. Third, I must consider what the Court of Appeal called in *Harvey* the strong need for deterrence. It is easier now than ever before for people with interests such as yours to find instructions for making explosives on the internet and

then to buy through the internet the chemicals necessary for making such explosives. Gunpowder and thermite are not toys; they are akin to dangerous weapons. Those who act as you did must be clear that they will receive custodial sentences if they do so.

15. Next, using category B2 in the guideline for possession of a prohibited firearm as a guide, had you been an adult when you committed these offences, I should have sentenced you to 6 years imprisonment less credit for your guilty pleas. Your youth and mitigation mean that I should significantly reduce this. Someone of your age is to be taken as being more capable of changing the course of your life than someone who is older. Your sentence on each of these offences will be 3 ½ years in a young offender institution less 10% credit which equates to a sentence of 37 months. Those sentences will run concurrently with each other. The length of the appropriate sentence does not allow me to consider passing an extended sentence on you.
16. The sentences for collecting information of use to a terrorist will also run concurrently with those terms. They do not represent separate criminality. They relate to the internet resources you accessed to make and test the explosives. They fall into category C3 of the offence guideline. Culpability category C because there was no terrorist connection to your activity, and harm category 3 because the articles contained no instruction relating to any specific terrorist act. The starting point for sentence is 12 months. Your youth and other mitigation allow me to reduce that to 10 months and from there to 9 months to reflect your guilty pleas. These offences make you an offender of particular concern. I must therefore order that you will serve an additional 12 month on licence after your release from this part of your sentence. The sentence will therefore be a sentence of 21 months, comprising a custodial term of 9 months and a 12 month extension to your supervision.
17. The threats that you made to your college associates do represent a different strand of criminality and will attract consecutive sentences. The offence of making a threat to kill falls into category 2A of the offence guideline. Category 2 harm because there is evidence that one of those who heard your threats was caused some distress; category A culpability because the threats were made to children (that is, three youths aged 17). The starting point for sentencing an adult in these circumstances is 2 years. In order to reflect your youth and mitigation, and to ensure that your total sentence is not excessive, I reduce that to 12 months before applying a reduction for guilty plea. The final sentence for this offence will

therefore be one of 10 months in a young offender institution. It will be served consecutively to the 37 months I have already imposed.

18. The threat to damage property was part of that same offending. You will receive a concurrent sentence for that. Based on the relevant guideline and applying the appropriate discount for age, plea and mitigation, the sentence will be one of 2 months in a young offender institution.
19. Although the possession of the blowpipe represents a separate strand of offending, I pass a concurrent term of 2 months so that your overall sentence is not excessive.
20. Jagger Strand, stand up. I sentence you as follows:

Counts 3 & 4	37 months in a YOI
Counts 5 & 6	21 months, comprising a custodial term of 9 months in a YOI and a 12-month extension to supervision

All of those sentences are to run concurrently with each other

Count 7	A consecutive sentence of 10 months in a YOI
Count 8	A concurrent sentence of 2 months in a YOI
Possession of a blowpipe	A concurrent sentence of 2 months in a YOI

21. Your **total sentence is one of 47 months or 3y 11m**. You will spend up to half of that sentence in custody and then be released on licence. Any breach of your licence conditions can result in your being recalled to prison spend the remainder of your sentence in custody. The time you have spent on remand will count towards that sentence.
22. This is a much shorter sentence than I would have passed had you been an adult when you offended and a significantly shorter sentence than I would have imposed had the prosecution not accepted that you did not intend to use the explosives to create a bomb or carry out your threat to blow up your college.

23. The surcharge applies and the order will be drawn up appropriately.
24. You will be subject to the Terrorist Notification Requirements for 10 years. This will allow the authorities to keep track of you and ensure that you do not offend again.
25. I make a forfeiture order in respect of all of the property in the schedule served on this court by the prosecution.