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Counter Terrorism Policing \ News \ **Former soldier jailed for plotting terror attack in Nottingham**



# Former soldier jailed for plotting terror attack in Nottingham

21 December 2023

**A former British soldier, who was found guilty of preparing to commit a terrorist attack, has been jailed for four years and ten months.**

William Howitt, formerly of Holme Road in West Bridgford, Nottinghamshire, wrote a comprehensive and detailed plan to commit an arson attack at an independent bookstore in Nottingham.



William Howitt's custody image

William Howitt's custody image

He denied the offence, but was found guilty following a three-week trial at Birmingham Crown Court in November 2023.

The 27-year-old's phone was seized when he was stopped by Counter-Terrorism officers at East Midlands Airport on 5 January 2023.

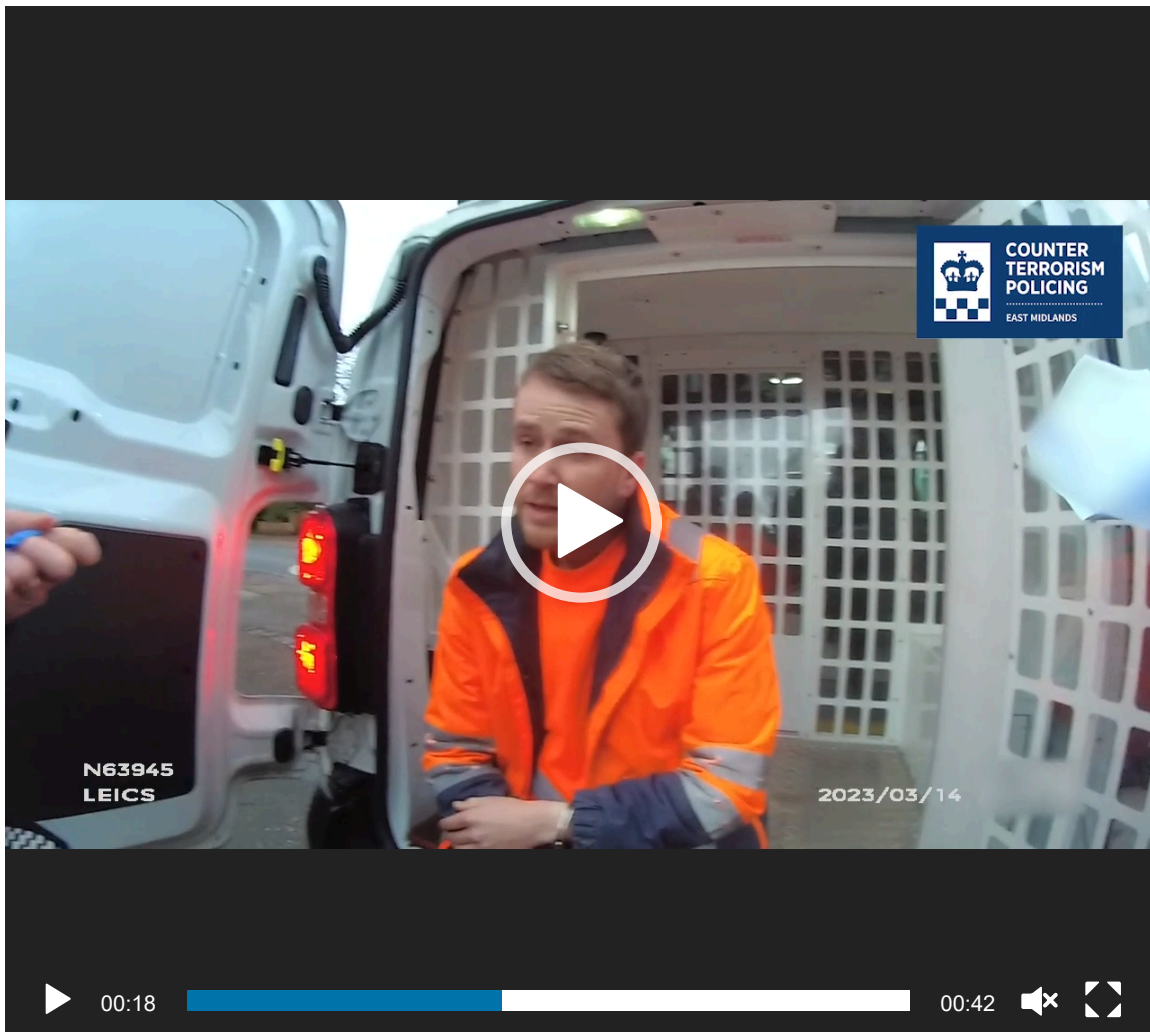
On it, they found 'Plan A', detailing an attack on the city centre bookshop.

Also on the device were a number of anti-Semitic, anti-Marxist and pro-Nazi messages, pictures and videos, which Howitt had started sending to friends from 2020.

'Plan A' was written on the notes app of his phone, and was created during the evening of 7 September 2020. It remained there.

Howitt (pictured right) claimed he was drunk and under the influence of drugs when he wrote it, and that the messages he sent were to create a persona and for bravado, and not a true representation of his views.

Howitt was arrested on Tuesday 14 March 2023, and charged with preparing an act of terrorism (under Section 5 of the Terrorism Act 2006).



The bookstore was identified as a target by Howitt, as a reflection of his strongly opposing views – namely left-of-centre political and social issues, such as the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement.

Using his former military knowledge and training, his plan set out the steps he would take in order to set fire to the location, and then escape, avoiding detection.

In the hours around the writing of the plan, Howitt went online and purchased the tools outlined he would need. A glass hammer and tarpaulin sheet were found at his address when officers from Counter Terrorism Policing East Midlands (CTPEM) searched the property.



Following his trial, Howitt also pleaded guilty to a series of acts to pervert the course of justice, having convinced a friend to take driving licence points for a speeding offence.

For this, he was sentenced to four months, which will run consecutively to the four years, six months he was sentenced to for the terrorism offence.

He will also be subject to 12 months on licence on his release, as well as a 15-year notification order, under Part 4 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008.

**After sentencing at Birmingham Crown Court on Wednesday 20 December 2023, CTPEM Detective Inspector Chris Brett said:**


*“This sentencing sends a clear message that people are not free to act upon their own hateful beliefs.*

*“Despite the fact that Howitt did not commit an attack, he did take steps to create a detailed and comprehensive plan to do so.*

*“He thought that his beliefs were not only acceptable, but even cool, and something that if he acted on, would make him seem like even more of the ‘tough guy’ who he so desperately wanted to be regarded as.*

*“This is never the case. His plan showed a clear intention to make a targeted attack on a business, and thus people, he deemed held differing views to himself. Livelihoods and lives could have been lost for the sake of intolerance.*

*"The guilty verdict from the jury was based around Howitt's intent. The judge clarified that they must decide only that the intent was formed and should make their decision on that basis.*

 Grey tarpaulin

Grey tarpaulin

*"I am pleased that he also clarified that drunken intent was still intent, however informed the jury that a certain level of intoxication can affect this intent.*

*"This helped them see through Howitt's defence, and took his extreme right wing views for what they were – meaning he will now no longer pose a risk of acting upon his dangerous thoughts.*

*"In Counter Terrorism Policing we work hard to root out those who hold such damaging ideologies and pose risk of committing potentially deadly actions and will bring them before the courts."*

**Head of CTPEM, Superintendent Steve Riley, added:**

*"This was a detailed plot, fuelled by a hateful ideology and intent on destroying property in a busy city centre. Had Howitt gone through with it, the damage and harm caused could have been significant.*

*"Today's sentence is testament to the hard work that goes on, day-in and day-out, to keep people safe from terrorism."*

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