

'A worrying development'

By David Hill

If these alleged criminals really were planning a kidnapping, then that is a worrying new development. It is a reminder that criminals are always looking to adapt their behaviour to achieve their aims.

This kind of terrorist is particularly persistent, resilient, and willing to fail and try something different.

We have got used to the idea of terrorists threatening us with bombs, but we also have to be aware that there are a number of other ways these people can and will attempt to achieve publicity. They could target electricity and water sources, for instance, or look to disrupt British life in other ways.

Nevertheless, kidnappings of the sort seen in Iraq, where the hostage is held for some time and perhaps demands made, would be very difficult to achieve in the UK. Iraq is a big, chaotic country, Britain is not.

The British police response to kidnapping is also extremely well researched and rehearsed. I have worked with experts on kidnapping and the response is swift and effective.

However, the horror of this scenario is that the terrorists would kidnap someone in Britain purely to execute them, for the publicity.

They may even carry out the execution in public, while filming the result. And the longer the criminals hold onto the captive, the more chance they will be stopped. So they are likely to carry out the execution quickly, leaving police a very small window of opportunity.

- **David Hill worked with the police for 30 years, both as an area commander for the National Crime Squad and as a counter-terrorism advisor for Cobra. He is now a consultant for private security firm red24.**