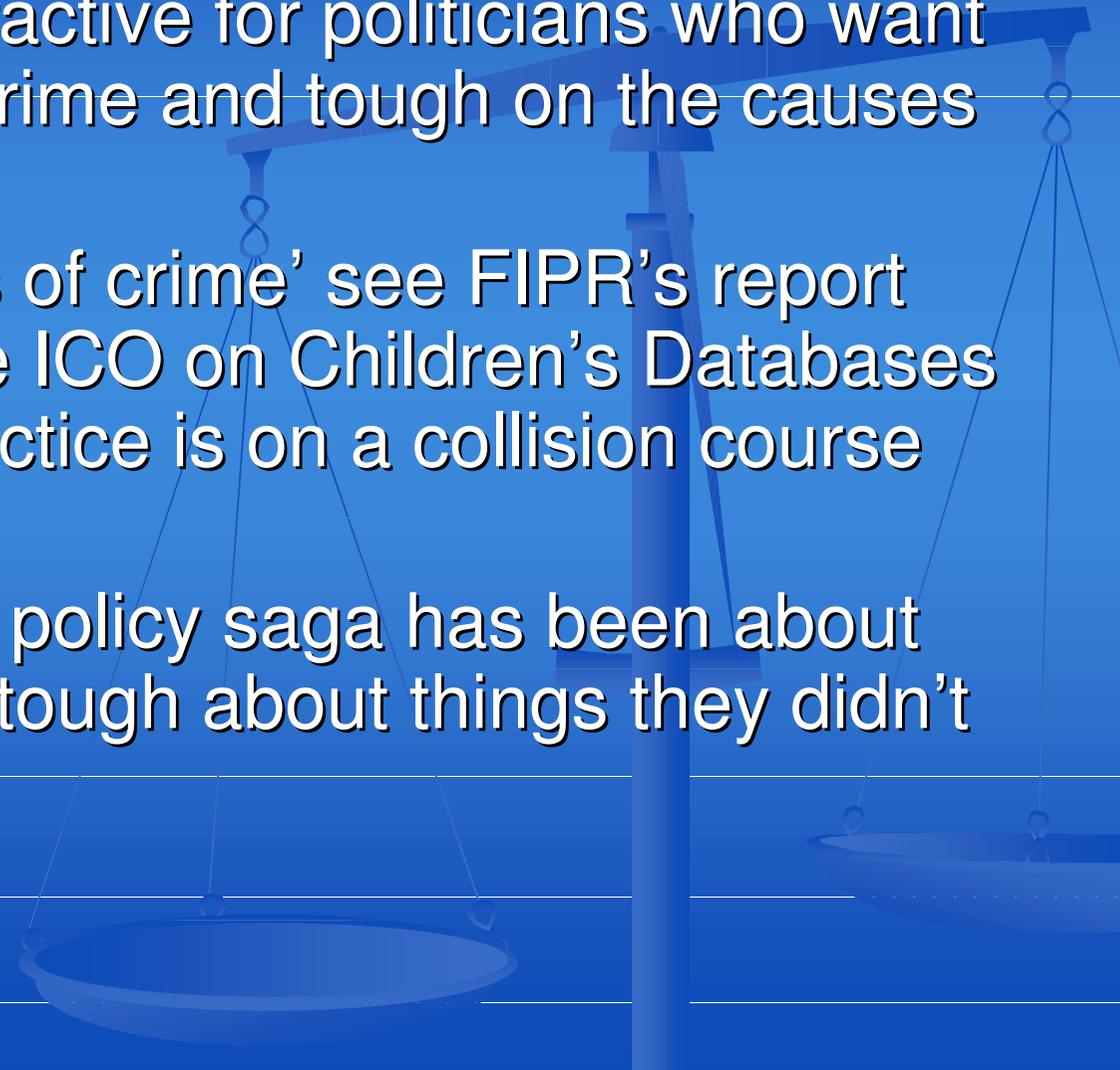


# Detention, Technology, Conflict and Spin

Ross Anderson

Cambridge University and  
Foundation for Information Policy  
Research

# The Story so Far ...



- Technology is attractive for politicians who want to talk 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime'
- As for the 'causes of crime' see FIPR's report next month for the ICO on Children's Databases (synopsis: UK practice is on a collision course with Europe)
- This whole crypto policy saga has been about politicians talking tough about things they didn't understand

# The Story so Far (2)

- Crypto didn't stop the FBI getting their man, as Al Gore fretted in the early 90s
- Crypto didn't stop people being prosecuted for kiddie porn (as Chris Smith agonised in 1995)
- Export controls on knowledge didn't stop mujahideen learning to make explosives
- Increasing the penalty for nondisclosure of a key, when the law hadn't even been implemented yet, was a particularly bizarre example

# Terrorism Detention

- 2 days, 4 days, 28 days, or 90 days...!??!
- Excuse: 'we need time to decrypt data'
- But modern encryption is generally good – you guess the password or give up
- The real arguments – 'we don't have enough interpreters / computer forensic capacity' are less persuasive to MPs
- Ministers exploit ignorance of technology to push through bad policy (ID cards too!)

# Data quality issues...

PLUS WIN CYCLOPS'S HARLEY-DAVIDSON  
PACK ONE IS INSIDE YOUR POLYBAG. COLLECT PACK TWO NEXT WEEK

# BRANDED AS CRIMINALS

Yet another blunder as thousands of innocent people are given criminal records... and Home Office say it's their fault for having wrong names

By **Christopher Leake**  
HOME AFFAIRS EDITOR

**NEARLY 1,500 innocent people have been wrongly branded as criminals by the Home Office, leading to them losing jobs or being barred from taking up courses, The Mail on Sunday can reveal.**

In an extraordinary series of blunders, law-abiding citizens ranging from court ushers to teenage students have been labelled pornographers, thieves and violent robbers by the department's Criminal Records Bureau.

The errors have led to people being refused jobs or university

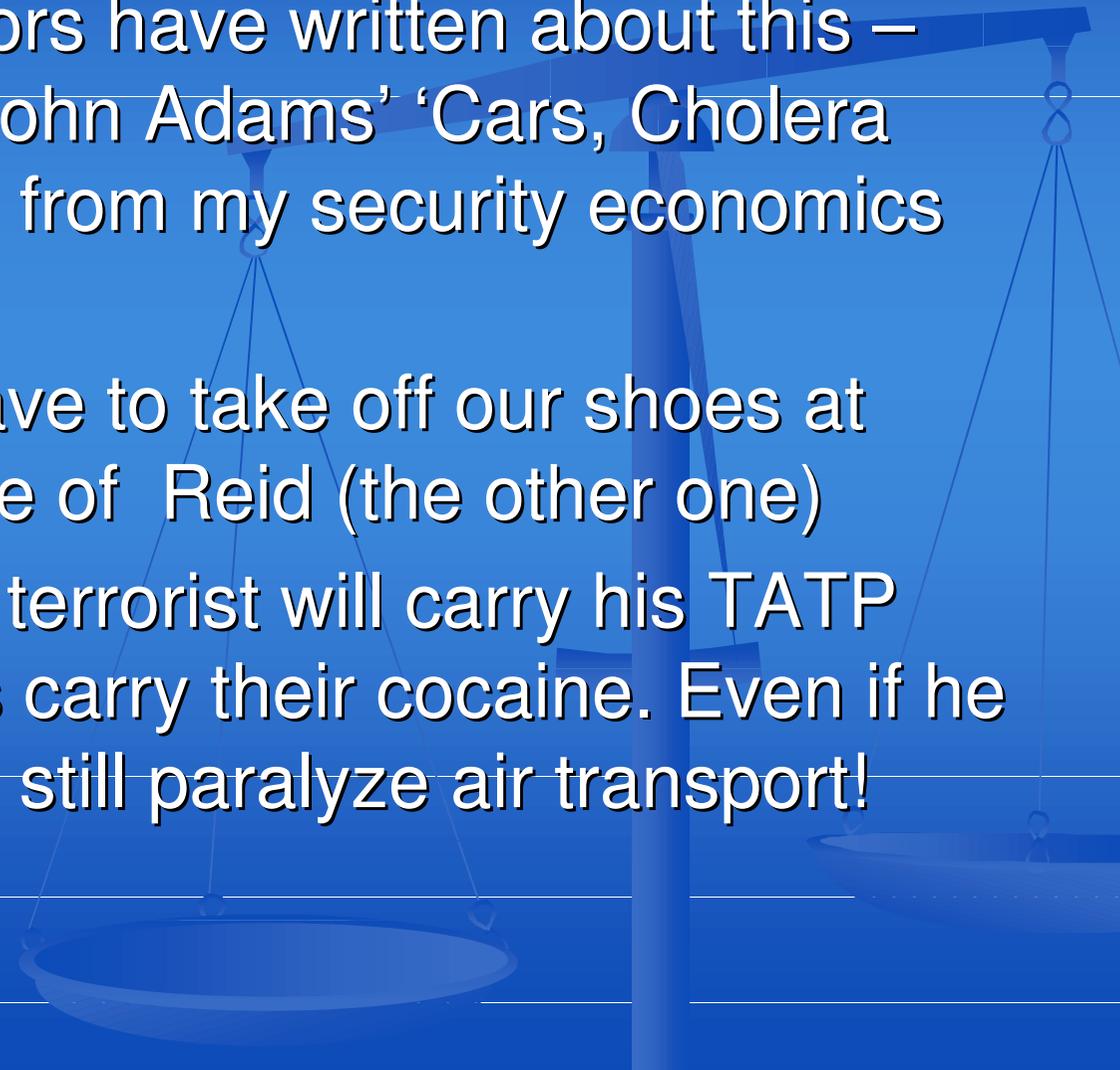


**EXCLUSIVE**  
**The daughters of Donor X**

FOR the first time two British children of the same sperm donor – known only as Donor X – have tracked each other down and met face-to-face. They tell their dramatic and emotional story inside.

**FULL REPORT Pages 22, 23**

# Pathological Risk Aversion



- Many commentators have written about this – see for example John Adams’ ‘Cars, Cholera and Cows’ (linked from my security economics web page)
- The reason we have to take off our shoes at airports is because of Reid (the other one)
- Sooner or later, a terrorist will carry his TATP where drug mules carry their cocaine. Even if he gets arrested he’ll still paralyze air transport!

# Government by Soundbite

- 28 July: Reid announces that he will cut muggings by reducing street value of mobile phones
- Vendors 'will blacklist IMEIs within 48h'
- No likely effect on market – most phones exported, most of the rest easy to chip
- Much 'theft' actually school bullying, or bogus insurance claims after phone dropped in loo
- And the same soundbite was used in 2002!

# The Mail on Sunday said...

- 9-10 August arrests foreshadowed in Downing Street media plan for 4 August
- 13 August was the '100 days' within which Reid promised Home Office reform – whatever happened to that?
- Arrests heralded by Reid, Cheney speeches the previous day
- Harry Reid (Democrat Senate leader): 'In their minds, our national security and their continued hold on power are one and the same'
- Security as protection – or as political theatre?

# What Reid should have said

‘This morning the police arrested 21 men who were apparently planning to blow up aircraft in flight across the Atlantic. These arrests took place because the Muslim community itself turned them in. There is no doubt a continuing threat, but these arrests give us all confidence that together we will prevail, and build a society in which all Britons of whatever faith or race can live at ease with each other.’

# Conclusions

- The UK has had terrorist problems more or less continuously since the 1850s. That it's now a Muslim fringe rather than an Irish or Indian fringe is no big deal
- What may be a big deal is the pathological risk-aversion of Western societies, plus the Blair government's media obsession
- The bad guys are learning, and they will use this better and better against us