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## Lee Rigby murder trial hears how attacker had 'pure evil' in his eyes

Witness to soldier's death in Woolwich tells court Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale hacked at victim like butchers

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Michael Adebolajo is captured on CCTV as he enters Tesco to pay for petrol at 8.48am on 22 May 2013. Photograph: Metropolitan police

A court has heard how one of Lee Rigby's attackers had "pure evil" in his eyes as witnesses described how the young soldier was repeatedly stabbed and hacked with a cleaver in a south London street.

The trial of Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale, who both deny murder, heard graphic descriptions of the attack on 22 May 2013 outside the Woolwich military barracks.

Witnesses described the two accused using a cleaver and knives to strike Rigby, 25, repeatedly and slash at his neck, causing blood to spray out.

After a day of harrowing evidence, Adebolajo, through his barrister, tried to comfort a witness who described the attackers hacking at their victim like a butcher would hack at meat.

David Gottlieb, for Adebolajo, told James Henegan, who was fighting back tears as he testified in the witness box: "My client is anxious that you know there was nothing you could have done to stop what happened."



Lee Rigby. (AP)

Henegan, who had been driving by the scene, described the attack as "the most traumatic thing" he had ever seen.

The jury had earlier heard the alleged attackers claim they were motivated by wanting to carry out a strike against the west in retaliation for the deaths of Muslims.

The Old Bailey trial heard that Private Rigby, a drummer and machine-gunner in the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, was first run over by a car driven by the defendants. As the two men got out of the vehicle, some witnesses said they initially thought the pair were going to help the young man that the witnesses thought they had hit accidentally.

Instead, the Old Bailey jury heard, the occupants of the car began a horrifying attack. Witnesses described one attacker wearing a hat setting about Rigby's head with a cleaver, with the other man repeatedly stabbing the body.

In a statement read by prosecutor Richard Whittam QC, witness Cheralee Armstrong told the jury how the attackers were "prancing around" after mutilating their victim, almost "showing off".

Armstrong, 38, who was in a car driving past the scene, said she shouted for the men to stop. "The man in the hat stared at me. His expression was blank, but pure evil, and his eyes were bulging."



Michael Adebolajo purchases a knife set and sharpener from Argos at 2.13pm on 21 May 2013. Photograph: Metropolitan police

Armstrong said she saw one of the suspects "ramming two knives into [Rigby]", the jury heard. "It was like they were mutilating his body ... it was like they were trying to remove his organs from his torso."

Armstrong said she was shouting "They're stabbing him. They're killing him," when a bus pulled up and 40 to 50 passengers got off to see what had happened. She described how the attackers dragged Rigby's body "like a rubbish bag" and tossed it into the road.

"Lots of people from the bus were filming the attack on their mobile phones," she added.

By this point, Adebowale is said to have walked away from the body. He "looked mad," she said, "like he'd escaped from a mental hospital".

Witness Gill Hucks, was left screaming hysterically at what she saw. In a statement read to court by Whittam, Hucks described one of the men, who she said was almost laying on top of Rigby, "cut into the victim's neck from ear to ear". She added: "They did not care that they were being watched."

Witness Amanda Bailey said one attacker "grabbed the young man's head" then started "hacking below the jaw line", which opened up a large cavity and left blood spraying.

At least two witnesses thought the victim was black because of the amount of blood they could see on him. Others thought the attack was a gangland hit and feared they could be targeted.

Another witness, Saraj Miah, who was chatting outside a shop as Rigby was run over, said one of the men threatened him (Miah) with a gun when he urged them not to kill Rigby.

In a statement read to court, Miah said: "I thought that the two black men with knives were going to kill him. I told them not to kill him. They did not listen to me.

"The black man in the passenger seat with knives in both his hands stabbed the fallen man six times in his chest."

Miah said: "I was very shocked by the incident," he added. "I could not sleep for two weeks."

Rigby's widow Rebecca left the courtroom in tears as the statements were read.

Adebolajo, 28, and Adebowale, 22, are accused of murdering Rigby as he walked back to Woolwich military barracks on 22 May. The accused deny murder, conspiring to murder and attempting to murder armed police who came to the scene. They have admitted possessing a firearm.

The case continues.

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Directions for this week's AoW

1. Which three words show up the most in this article? How many times do those words show up?
2. According to the article, what does evil look like? What do you think evil looks like?
3. How do Adebojao and Adebowale rationalize their deed?
4. What is your reaction to the article?
5. Be thorough.