

water instructor says: 'I just wish I'd let them fall in'

Men on rafting trip 'all in same group'

By Deborah Colcutt

THE two bombers who went on a whitewater rafting trip five weeks before the July 7 outrages were part of a larger, organised group, it was claimed last night.

One, Mohammed Sidique Khan, was the ringleader of the 'bonding' trip to North Wales, said rafting instructor Kate Blyth. He was joined by fellow suicide bomber Shehzad Tanweer, 22, and ten other Asian men.

'No one has been able to explain to me who the other unidentified men in the group are and whether or not they had any involvement in the July 7 attack or the failed July 21 bombings,' said Kate. 'I find that astonishing.'

She is convinced the men all knew one another and that the trip was part of a group training exercise. The university graduate, who went trekking in Argentina after the bombings and returned to Britain only three weeks ago, said: 'I am sure they were on some sort of bonding weekend. They seemed to know each other very well.'

Khan, 30, from Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, and his July 7 accomplices killed 52 innocent people and injured 700.

Last week the Arab TV station Al Jazeera broadcast a videotape in which Khan said he was a soldier in a war against the West and warned many more civilians would be killed. The tape is believed to have been made some months before Khan's party visited the National Whitewater Rafting Centre near Bala on June 4.

Kate said of Khan: 'He appears brainwashed in the video. He is not the arrogant loudmouth I remember from the rafting expedition.'

'He doesn't come across in the video as being terribly intelligent. It's like he's just repeating words. He was far more opinionated when he came to Wales. He was the ringleader, without a doubt. He was telling the other men in the group what to do. One of them didn't speak English and he was translating what I said into their language. Khan was definitely in charge.'

It is believed the day's rafting was booked over the internet by one person operating out of the Hamara Youth Centre at Beeston in Leeds - where police later found traces of explosives - and the nearby Iqra Learning Centre, which has distributed anti-Western propaganda.

Anti-terrorist police visited the rafting centre after it was discovered that Khan and Tanweer had been there, but since her return from Argentina, Kate has heard nothing from Scotland Yard even though she can provide a unique description of the interaction between members of the group.

SHE believes the 12 men travelled to North Wales together in two separate cars. After registering at the rafting centre, they were split into two groups of six and Kate was assigned instructor to the first group. A male tutor led the other.

'Most people take rafting seriously but I struggled to get their attention,' said Kate. 'They were very badly

BEFORE THE TERROR: Khan, circled left, and Tanweer on their rafting trip with instructor Kate Blyth, right



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behaved and disrespectful, I think because I'm a woman. They didn't listen and kept talking to each other and messing around, threatening to push each other in the water. I wish now that I had let them fall in.

'I remember them very well because it was the first Asian group I'd ever taken out rafting. When I first saw them, they were all standing together, dressed in jeans and jumpers. They changed into wetsuits and I took the 15-minute safety briefing. They didn't concentrate on the briefing, which is crucial.'

'Then one guy - whom I now recognise as Khan - turned to

a guy in Andy's group and began interpreting what I was saying. That's what convinced me that they were all together - that and because they were all Asians. The odds of the centre putting two Asian groups together at random is unlikely.'

The only time the group paid attention to her, Kate said, was when she told them to smile for the official photographer, standing above the river on a bridge, about halfway into the descent.

While Khan raised his fingers in a cocky 'victory' salute, Tanweer appeared to duck forward and hide his face from view.