

Court urged to lock up alleged armed terror fan, but Melbourne magistrate lets him go free

Wayne Flower, Jon Kaila, Herald Sun, January 11, 2015



Khodr Taha allegedly supports Islamic State. Source: HeraldSun

AN alleged violent armed terrorist sympathiser who threatened to attack police officers has sensationally been bailed despite protests from the force. Khodr Moustafa Taha, 35, from Brunswick, allegedly tweeted Victoria Police with the chilling message: “I’m going to hurt your officers.”

Police raided his home and allegedly discovered ammunition and three swords. Mr Taha, who is Australian-born of Lebanese heritage, was also accused of running several additional Twitter accounts posting material supporting Islamic State. Another contained a profile picture of the al-Qaeda flag.

Police argued in Melbourne Magistrates Court last week that Mr Taha — suspected of brutally bashing his mother and attacking his ex-boss with a hammer — posed an unacceptable risk of reoffending. But Deputy Chief Magistrate Jelena Popovic let him walk from court, despite saying: “We live in heightened times and everyone is very concerned about this kind of behaviour.

“I’ve taken a view, on balance, that any risk can be fixed by the (bail) conditions.

“The reality is I’m not in a good position to determine how much of a risk you are.”

The unemployed drug user was ordered to undergo counselling, report to police daily, stay off social media and live with his brother.

But Detective Senior Sergeant Ron Iddles, secretary of the Police Association of Victoria, said he hoped the case would be reviewed.

“Police do a very difficult job and under the current circumstances, that job is even more difficult,” he said. “I think this case needs to be examined to see whether the bail conditions need to be reviewed.”

Police raided Mr Taha's home after he allegedly tweeted Victoria Police on December 14 from an account with a profile picture of a skeleton with a sword — described by police as "the Angel of Death".

Detectives allegedly found child abuse images on his computer.

Tweets from several Twitter accounts, allegedly run by Mr Taha, made threats to journalists, bank staff and politicians, with intimidating images posted to Treasurer Joe Hockey and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and a death threat to US President Barack Obama.

Ms Popovic said she hoped the time Mr Taha had spent in custody might help keep him on the straight and narrow. "It seems to me you needed a shock like this," she said. "You've now had that shock." She added even if Victoria Police could prove the charges against him, she was unsure Mr Taha would be jailed.

Mr Taha — allegedly using the "Angel of Death" account — posted a photo of Russian President Vladimir Putin holding a gun alongside a comment accusing Victoria Police of - corruption. The court heard police raided Mr Taha's Brunswick bungalow on January 2, seizing a rifle bullet, three swords and what is believed to be a stolen bike.

Mr Taha told police the bullet was from a hunting trip 10 years ago and he brought two of the swords legally into the country from Bali. The third sword was a gift, he claimed. Detective Sen-Constable Liam McGuire said one of Mr Taha's Twitter accounts featured a profile photo of an al-Qaeda flag.

Mr Taha faces charges of using a carriage service to menace, harass or causing offence, possessing ammunition, three counts of possessing a prohibited weapon, possessing child exploitation material, possessing property suspected of being the proceeds of crime, criminal damage and unlawful assault with a weapon. Police have not charged him over the alleged assault on his mother.

He was bailed to reappear in court on January 22.

wayne.flower@news.com.au