

Britain's MI6 trained Abbas in suppression of Palestinian opposition

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Secret documents show that Britain's intelligence service, MI6, and civil servants played a key role in crushing all opposition by militant groups, including Hamas and other Islamist factions, to Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine by developing a "security" blueprint for President Mahmoud Abbas' Palestinian Authority (PA).

The papers are just a few of the 1,600 confidential documents that Jazeera and the *Guardian* have published, relating to the secret US-brokered peace talks between Israel and the PA over the last 10 years. They shed light on Britain's role in shoring up the PA in the interests of Tel Aviv and Washington.

The revelations underscore the degree to which the peace talks were a cover for reorganizing the region in the interests of Israel and the US, aided and abetted by Britain, the European Union and Egypt, at the expense of the Palestinians. The deal, insofar as one was even on the table, was so wretched that it could only be imposed through the most brutal, and necessarily criminal means—under the rubric of "security".

Britain, with its long and violent history as a colonial power, has the most impeccable credentials for such a venture.

The first document from late 2003 contains a detailed draft of a security plan. Its origins are significant. It was faxed from the Egyptian embassy, indicating MI6's close working relationship with Egypt's , the secret police so notorious for their brutality that Washington rendered prisoners to Egypt to be interrogated and broken before being sent to Guantánamo Bay.

This was worked up into a seven-page document, dated 2004, entitled "Palestinian Security Plan" and marked "confidential". Its purpose was to "encourage and enable the Palestinian Authority to fully meet its

security obligations under Phase 1 of the Roadmap".

The Road Map was the Bush administration's 2003 initiative, under which Israel agreed to stop settlement building and the Palestinians agreed to clamp down on militant activity prior to negotiating a Palestinian entity. The plan set out detailed proposals for setting up a new security taskforce using Britain's "trusted PA contacts" that would be outside the control of "traditional security chiefs", a British/US security "verification team", and "direct lines" to Israeli intelligence. It dealt with issues such as suicide bombing, weapons smuggling, Qassam rockets and "terror finance".

Under the heading, "Degrading the capabilities of rejectionists", meaning Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the al-Aqsa Brigades, Fatah's armed faction, the document recommended disrupting their leaders' communications and command and control capabilities, detaining key middle-ranking officers, and confiscating "their arsenals and financial resources held within the Occupied Territories".

The document goes on to call for the detention of oppositionists without charge or trial, overturning corpus and the rule of law. It said, "We could also explore the temporary internment of leading Hamas and PIJ figures, making sure they are well-treated, with EU funding."

The PA's security forces had, by then, been cited by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other groups for widespread allegations and evidence of torture.

These proposals were subsequently worked up into a series of official papers drafted by the British Consulate's military liaison office in Jerusalem. This liaises with Britain's elite Special Air Service (SAS), specialising in counterterrorism and aerial

reconnaissance, and Special Boat Service, specializing in both maritime and dry land counterterrorism and reconnaissance operations. From there, they were passed on by an MI6 officer to Jibril Rajoub, then security chief in the West Bank, and implemented by the PA security forces under the supervision most recently of US Lieutenant General Keith Dayton and British forces.

British support for the fraudulent peace process also included extensive funding of the most controversial parts of the PA security apparatus, including general intelligence, special forces and preventive security, under the heading of “UK-Palestinian projects”.

Alistair Crooke is a former MI6 officer who also worked for the European Union in Israel and the Palestinian territories and now heads up Conflicts Forum, a think tank that supports a dialogue with Islamic forces in the Middle East. He commented that the plans reflect the flawed decision in 2003 by then Prime Minister Tony Blair to tie UK and EU security policy in the West Bank and Gaza to a US-led “counterinsurgency surge” against Hamas.

Both the talks and Britain’s support for the suppression of those who refused to come to the table on Israel’s terms are also a conspiracy against the British people. The revelations confirm that Britain’s embassies and consulates are used as bases for clandestine operations and dirty dealings. That the British government has lied and previously denied directly funding the PA’s preventive security is because it cannot admit the truth, which is at odds with the wishes of the British population—who are overwhelmingly sympathetic to the Palestinians—and its own oft-repeated claims that it condemns the abuse of human rights.

The British Consulate spokesperson in East Jerusalem refused to answer questions, saying that it would not depart from its policy of never commenting on the operations of British intelligence services.

Despite the fact that these activities were funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department of International Development (DFID), by British taxpayers, Whitehall arrogantly dismisses the need to explain how the money has been used.

The compliant private media and the state-owned BBC cynically accept both the revelations and the government’s “no comment” without any further

analysis or discussion. The refusal of the Conservative Liberal Democrat coalition to repudiate the actions of their Labour predecessor demonstrates that they would have done and will do exactly the same.

While the FCO is widely seen as the arm of British imperialism, DFID has tried to cultivate an image of benevolent philanthropy towards “developing countries” with its aid budget. That aid, as it turns out, pays for the “security forces” of corrupt local elites that will jump to their paymasters’ tune, and is packaged under the tag-lines of “capacity building” and “good governance” that litter the “economic development” plans of the international financial institutions and major powers. This explains why British Prime Minister David Cameron made great play of the fact that the international aid budget would be “protected” from the full force of his austerity measures.



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