

2012 Olympics: Police-state measures for London as super-wealthy party

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When London's Conservative mayor Boris Johnson travelled to Beijing in 2008 to receive the Olympic flame from the Chinese state, the promise was that the 2012 games in Britain would be a "people's games". This would involve the maximum participation of the local population of East London where the main Olympic site is based.

However, with four years of austerity and the districts surrounding the Olympic site sinking into desperate hardship, and the eruption of riots this summer, the games are being approached based on the calculation that Britain is a country on the edge of mass social conflict.

Preparations have assumed the character of an orgy of luxury and ostentatious displays of wealth by the financial elite, coupled with police-state measures directed against working class districts.

The main Olympic site in Stratford East London is surrounded by 17 kilometres of electrified fencing, with up to 900 cameras 50 metres apart and patrols by attack and search dog teams. New software has integrated the entire CCTV network, enabling an individual to be followed across the whole of London. "Threat Assessment and Behavioural Analysis Software" is under development. The government is planning "exclusion zones" around key Olympic sites.

The *Times* reported that Section 44 of the Terrorism Act, which allows the police to stop and search without any cause or even suspicion, will be applied throughout Britain. This is combined with the Olympic Act, which gives the police the right to force their way into private property and remove protesters and banners. Limits on the powers of police have been lifted, and this has been extended to security staff contracted to the Olympic authorities.

Yesterday, it was confirmed that spending on security has almost doubled from £213 million, and is now approaching £553 million.

This was only the latest twist in the extraordinary events surrounding the Olympic preparations, which include the proposed deployment of ground-to-air missiles for the first time on the British mainland.

According to government ministers, one option will be to

station one of the new missile-equipped Royal Navy Type 45 destroyers on the Thames near the games.

Despite ministers describing all operations as "police-led," the role of the military has expanded from police support operations off the coast of Weymouth to a broad involvement in all operations. This involves a number of deployments on the British mainland, involving "civilian" protection. The Ministry of Defence initially offered the London Olympic committee 3,000 soldiers, with a further 2,000 in reserve. This has now risen to more than 6,000.

Defence Secretary Liam Fox remarked, "I can assure you that all necessary measures to ensure the security and safety of the London Olympic Games will be taken, including, if the advice of the military is that it is required, appropriate ground-to-air defences."

A base for the elite Special Air Services (SAS) is under construction beneath the central stadium in Stratford. Locals have witnessed months of activities, from Chinook helicopters to live ammunition training as the equipment to construct the bunkers is flown in. An SAS riverside base is also under construction that will house water-borne attack vehicles. Military attack helicopters, armed with high-powered snipers, will patrol the airspace over the Olympic sites.

The *Daily Mail* reported with sadistic excitement that snipers are "capable of killing an attacker at a range of more than a mile using a Barrett 'Light Fifty' rifle, which fires a powerful .50-calibre half-inch bullet at 2,799 feet per second. Even at night, the flying snipers can kill an enemy 1,000 yards away using night sights and infra-red lasers for target-marking.... The airborne sharpshooters were deployed in Iraq, where they were described by the Ministry of Defence as a 'special weapon' against the insurgent threat."

The military will be joined by 300 MI5 agents. The redeployment will close down almost half of its intelligence operations for the period of the games.

Fully 12,000 police will be joined by 20,000 security guards hired and trained by private firms such as G4 Security, twice the original estimate of 10,000.

US officials from the FBI Events Management Unit are to bring over 1,000 operatives to protect US “citizens.” It is still undecided whether they can openly carry weapons on British streets. According to numerous reports, FBI officials are demanding and influencing the entire security operation.

On top of this, each country will bring its own massed ranks of intelligence agents and security personnel. Sponsors at the games such as Coca Cola will also provide their own private security firms to protect their corporate guests. They will help police the suspension of the democratic right to protest and to enforce the commercial and advertising rights of major corporations such as McDonald’s.

Corporate limousines will have exclusive use of designated roads, each fitted with technology to change traffic lights to green on approach and red after departing. Estimates say a hundred miles of public roads will be taken over for private use. The London Underground will be patrolled by police wielding machine-guns.

State repression is designed to protect the billionaires, the political and financial elite and their hangers-on, who have snapped up the best seats and accommodation, as they drive past areas that have been devastated by their economic policies.

Evening Standard columnist Steve Jenkins was forced to declare that “the run-up to the Games suggest that the event is fast parting company with fun. For London Olympics, read war zone.... At this rate, the Stratford Olympics site will resemble Camp Bastion in Helmand. It is in danger of hosting a festival of world security, with a handful of athletes tagging behind.”

Philip Stephens of the *Financial Times* wrote, “Welcome to London 2012: the apparatchiks’ games.” He described the Olympics as an “exercise in authoritarian elitism,” adding, “More than one million ordinary families have failed to secure a single ticket even to the opening stages of the most obscure Olympic sports. Civil liberties are to be suspended for the duration of the games.... Advertising sponsors have been promised what is chillingly called a ‘clean city’, handing them ownership of everything within camera distance of the games....

“The crackdown extends to what the Olympic Stasi call ‘advertising on the human body’. Freedom of expression can go hang.”

Canary Wharf and the Royal Docks are being prepared for dozens of billionaires’ super yachts to dock, with charges ranging from £2,000 to £11,000 a day. Part of the services provided will be speedboats to take the elite directly to the Olympic park along the River Thames. Mark Upton, director of the yacht advisory company MGMT, explained, “We have Michelin-starred chefs who can come and cook for you, plus personal shoppers, helicopters, tailors and

jewellers on stand-by.”

Leeds Castle trustees have hired an exclusive estate agent to contact wealthy parties to see if they want to hire the former royal castle in the heart of Kent as an “Olympic playground” for the duration of the games. Whoever rents the venue, replete with banquet hall and a maze, will have a flag designed in their honour and be able to drive the local steam train. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, “The former royal castle, built in 1119 and remodelled by Henry VIII as a home for Catherine of Aragon, is part of an increasingly popular range of luxury accommodation designed to draw wealthy sports fans to Britain for the 2012 Games.”

As to the costs involved, a source said, “They are looking at £1 million, minimum spend, to shut the castle down for private use, but the price would be determined by what services you require. I imagine the buyer would be a Russian billionaire or perhaps interested parties from China or maybe America.”

Not to miss out, the monarchy is said to be readying Buckingham Palace to hire out rooms at £30,000 a day for parties.

Stephens’s article described measures designed “to make life comfortable for the privileged elite that goes by the name of the “Olympic family”...the “family” comprises the 40,000—yes 40,000—Olympic bigwigs, national bureaucrats, commercial sponsors, hangers-on and politicians who are preparing to slip into all the best seats at all the best events.”

These measures have been accompanied by a media campaign to demand a Red Arrow fly-over, military bands playing at the opening ceremony and a general effort to force a greater military presence. When ministers have refused to go along in a feigned nod to Olympic “tradition”, they have been accused of betraying the armed forces.

The Olympics will underscore one point in a very dramatic way: that despite all the propaganda regarding the deepening economic crisis, we are most definitely not “all in it together”.



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