

London to be militarised for 2012 Olympics

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Last weekend, residents at Lexington Building in London's Bow Quarter received an unexpected item in the post. A leaflet from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) informed them that the Army planned to install a High Velocity Missile system on the roof of the complex, as part of the security arrangements for the 2012 Olympic Games in July.

According to the Army website, these High Velocity Missiles (HVMs) are "designed to counter threats from very high performance low-flying aircraft." They can travel at more than three times the speed of sound.

The MoD leaflet explains, "The location has been chosen as it is situated close to the Olympic Park and offers an excellent view of the surrounding area and the entire sky above the Olympic Park." According to the MoD, the Water Tower "proved to be the only suitable site in the area for the HVM system", as others "suffered from obstructed views and the presence of various health and safety hazards".

Clearly, the danger to Londoners who might be killed or injured if a missile were fired does not count as a "health and safety hazard."

The MoD leaflet asks, "Will having missiles on our building make us a target?" and then blandly asserts, "Having a 24/7 Armed Forces and Police presence will improve your local security and will not make you a target for terrorists".

The MoD has identified six potential locations for ground-based air defence systems:

- Lexington Building, Fairfield Road, Bow, Tower Hamlets—high-velocity missiles
- Fred Wigg Tower, Montague Road Estate, Waltham Forest—high-velocity missiles
 - Blackheath Common, Blackheath (Lewisham/Greenwich)—Rapier
 - William Girling Reservoir, Lea Valley Reservoir Chain, Enfield—Rapier
 - Oxleas Meadow, Shooters Hill,

Greenwich/Woolwich—Rapier

- Barn Hill, Netherhouse Farm, Epping Forest—Rapier.

The Rapier is a technologically advanced Short Range Air Defence System that provides limited-area air defence cover against fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs) and cruise missiles. It can engage two targets at once.

The missile systems are a small part of a massive military, police, and security mobilisation in the capital. Britain's largest helicopter carrier, HMS Ocean, will be berthed at Greenwich and will patrol the Thames to deploy Royal Navy Lynx helicopters. Advanced Typhoon fighter jets are being stationed at RAF Northolt, close to the capital, for the first time since the end of World War II. RAF Puma aircraft and Royal Navy and Army Lynx helicopters will carry teams of RAF snipers to intercept aircraft in restricted airspace.

Naval assets are being deployed to Weymouth Bay and Portland Harbour, where Olympic sailing events are scheduled. These include HMS Bulwark, an amphibious assault warship capable of deploying Sea King helicopters and sending large numbers of troops to shore.

Operations will be directed by airborne surveillance and control aircraft.

In total, some 13,500 military personnel will be deployed during the Olympics, compared to the 9,500 troops currently operating in Afghanistan.

The military is presently conducting a nine-day training exercise, "Olympic Guardian", due to run until May 10.

The MoD plans to site missiles on top of an apartment complex were initially exposed by resident Brian Whelan, a journalist, saying the missiles "would shower debris across the east end of London".

Whelan said, "At first I thought it was a hoax. I can't see what purpose high-velocity missiles could serve

over a crowded area like Tower Hamlets”.

He has posted a video on his blog showing unguarded military equipment left outside the building. In another video, he questions an MoD spokesman who appeared at Lexington Buildings: “Who authorised you to turn a civilian premises into a military base? Can you explain under what legal precedent you can do that?” The MoD official replies that it is because of “national security” (see <http://brianwhelan.net/>).

Alongside the military, up to 12,000 police officers will be on duty in the capital during the busiest times. These include officers drafted in from Scotland.

Britain’s spies are being put on high alert. The MI5 website reports that the Security Service will be involved in making the Olympics and Paralympics “safe and secure”.

The Home Office will be carrying out “rigorous” background checks on more than 380,000 athletes, officials, workers and media personnel as part of the “accreditation process” for those who require access to Olympic and Paralympic venues. This will involve immigration, criminal record, and security checks. The Home Office will be the sole arbiter, and states that accreditation “would be refused to any individual it believes may present a safety or security risk.”

Exact figures on the cost of the overall security operations are hard to find. An investigation by Sky Sport using Freedom of Information requests estimates that £1.1 billion is being allocated to the police, with the security and intelligence services having a budget of £4.4 billion.

Billions of pounds are provided to the police, military and intelligence agencies to fund a mobilisation of state forces on a scale never seen in London in peacetime. Once more, the “war on terror” is being used to accustom Londoners to seeing soldiers on the streets, warships on the Thames, and fighter aircraft in the skies.

Yet no government minister or civil servant has provided any evidence that there is a concrete danger of terrorism facing the 2012 Games. Secretary of State for Defence Philip Hammond has said “there is no specific threat to the Games”.

Instead, Charles Farr, director general of the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism at the Home Office, told a conference in April that the most likely serious threat to the Olympics came from crime and disorder

similar to Britain’s 2011 summer riots.

The Metropolitan Police are stockpiling rubber bullets. Just before last August’s riots, the Met had just 700 baton rounds, but by December the number had skyrocketed to 10,024. To date, such rounds have never been used to control civil disorder on mainland Britain, being confined to the streets of Northern Ireland where they have claimed the lives of 17 people, 8 of whom were children. An ex-Metropolitan Police commander told the BBC that the huge rise suggested a change of policy on the weapons and an increased willingness to use them.

In April, the Metropolitan Police underwent a “re-branding” exercise, and adopted the strap line “Total Policing”—an echo of the phrase “Total War”, coined in 1936 by General Ludendorff, one of Hitler’s most fervent supporters.



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