

UK soldier killed in London in reprisal for Afghanistan and Iraq wars

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24 May 2013

The killing of drummer Lee Rigby, 2nd Battalion Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, near London's Woolwich army barracks on Wednesday was a horrific act. Rigby was first run down by two men in a car, who then set about him with knives and a cleaver.

One of the men who carried out the killing was identified as Michael Adebolajo, a 28-year-old British citizen of Nigerian descent. The other has only been identified as a naturalized Nigerian. Both were shot by police and are in hospital, one in a critical condition.

For reasons yet to be explained, it reportedly took up to 20 minutes for police to arrive on the scene. In that time Adebolajo spoke to several passers-by and was filmed by one making an extensive statement confirming that the attack was motivated by anger at the actions of British imperialism in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.

"The only reason we have killed this man today is because Muslims are dying daily by British soldiers", he said. "And this British soldier is one. It is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

"So what if we want to live by the Sharia in Muslim lands? Why does that mean you must follow us and chase us and call us extremists and kill us? Rather you lot are extreme. You are the ones that when you drop a bomb you think it hits one person? Or rather your bomb wipes out a whole family?"

Ingrid Loyau-Kennett, who approached Adebolajo in an attempt to calm him and prevent any further deaths, said, "I spoke to him for more than five minutes. I asked him why he had done what he had done. He said he had killed the man because he [the victim] was a British soldier who killed Muslim women and children in Iraq and Afghanistan. He was furious about the British army being over there".

From a devout Christian family, Adebolajo—according to Anjem Choudary, the former leader of the banned radical Islamist organisation, Al Muhajiroun—converted to

Islam in 2003.

It has now been admitted that both men were known to the security services. The BBC has revealed footage of Adebolajo taking part in an Islamist demonstration in 2007, standing next to Choudary. On Wednesday evening BBC's *Newsnight*, correspondent Richard Watson cited a "source who knows the British jihadi scene very well" who "suggested to me that just last year this young man was stopped or arrested ... on his way to join Al Shabaab in Somalia".

Yesterday the BBC substantiated this account, saying it was told by "senior Whitehall sources" that "one of the suspects was intercepted by police last year, while leaving the country".

The *Guardian* reported Thursday that the two suspects in Rigby's killing "had been known to the domestic security service MI5 and the police over an eight-year period, but had been assessed as peripheral figures and thus not subjected to a full-scale investigation". In fact, "Adebolajo ... had complained of harassment by MI5 in the last three years after he came to the intelligence agency's attention".

In addition, two further arrests were made yesterday, a 29-year-old man and a 29-year-old woman, on suspicion of conspiracy to murder—indicating that MI5 and Special Branch were aware of the two killers' associates.

The murder of a human being in London in broad daylight, the sight of blood running down the street, the savagery of the attack, all this has provoked understandable shock in the population.

At the same time, however violent and disoriented the act, can anyone doubt that it is related to what is taking place in the world and to the character of the operations of the British state? The very fact that more than one individual was involved points to the fact that this was not the work of an isolated madman.

To explain an action is not to legitimize it, much less to

lend political support. The Woolwich killing will have reactionary consequences. Such acts serve to benumb the population and play into the hands of the most sinister forces. The state will seek to exploit popular sympathy for the slaughtered individual to build up the military and police and deepen the assault on basic democratic rights.

The statement by Adebolajo, the eyewitness account of Loyau-Kennett and subsequent events refute the attempts by sections of the media and the political elite to deny the obvious connection between the murder and British foreign policy.

Prime Minister David Cameron flew back from talks with French President François Hollande in Paris on news of the attack, to chair a meeting of the governmental emergency COBRA committee. Afterwards he made a statement denying that Rigby's death had anything to do with Britain's actions in Africa and the Middle East over the last years.

The attacks were “solely and purely” the responsibility of the individuals involved. “Britain works with our international partners to make the world safe from terrorism, terrorism that has taken more Muslim lives than any other religion. It is an utter perversion of the truth to pretend anything different”.

London Mayor Boris Johnson stated, “It is completely wrong to blame this killing on the religion of Islam but it is also equally wrong to try to draw any link between this murder and British foreign policy or the actions of British forces who are risking their lives abroad for the sake of freedom.

“The fault lies wholly and exclusively in the warped and deluded mindset of the people who did it”.

Such statements should convince no one. The terrible events in Woolwich are blowback for more than a decade of uninterrupted military adventures that have left hundreds of thousands dead, whole countries in ruins and which have seen countless acts no less savage than those in south London.

Accompanying such criminal violence has been the systematic abuses carried out as part of the so-called “war on terror” targeting Muslims in particular—including rendition, detention without trial, and torture by Britain and the United States.

The actions of Adebolajo and his accomplice are described as “terrorism”. Yet in Syria forces with an identical ideological and political outlook are hailed as “freedom fighters” and provided with finances and weapons to commit sectarian atrocities in order to further the predatory designs of the imperialist powers.

These are individuals whose outlook has been poisoned by having matured during years in which brutal state violence has become the norm all over the world. Their actions are declared to be inexplicable only so that British imperialism can continue with its crimes unabated.

To this end the media responded to the killing with demands that the nation rally behind the military. *The Sun* tabloid editorialized that “Yesterday a young man was horrifically killed simply for serving his country. Today we must defy the extremists and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our armed services”.

Labour Party Shadow Defence Secretary Jim Murphy pledged “full support” for the government and security services and said of the armed forces, “They protect us, and today each of us can send a loud message of support, solidarity and gratitude to all service personnel serving in our towns and cities at home and overseas”.

Immediately following the killing a decision was taken by the Ministry of Defence that soldiers keep their uniforms concealed in public as a “precaution”. At the COBRA meeting Cameron personally authorised the reversal of that decision and stated that soldiers will now wear their uniforms in public.

Just as surely will there be a further strengthening of the raft of anti-democratic legislation enacted in the name of combating terrorism. Lord Reid, the former Labour Party Home Secretary, called for the draft Communications Data Bill to be imposed immediately. The draft bill gives the home secretary the power to retain data on any citizen without a specific purpose. The measures will not be open to judicial review and will cover all methods of communication, including text messages, online social media and telephones. Reid's call was echoed by Lord Carlile, a Liberal Democrat and a former government reviewer of counter-terrorism.



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