Foley execution used to call for UK military action in Iraq

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The barbaric murder of American journalist James Foley, and his apparent beheading by a masked British man, is being used to move the UK towards direct military participation in Iraq and Syria.

Prime Minister David Cameron responded to Foley's murder by returning from holiday and chairing a meeting of the governmental emergency COBRA committee. A few days earlier Cameron had described the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as an "exceptionally dangerous terrorist movement". Using the humanitarian crisis facing Yazidis trapped by ISIS on a mountain in northern Iraq, he pledged that Britain would use "all the assets we have", including our "military prowess".

The nationality of Foley's suspected killer has highlighted the large number of British Muslims who have travelled to Syria, since the beginning of that country's civil war in 2011, to fight alongside other jihadists against the regime of Bashar Al-Assad.

British MP Khalid Mahmood said that official government estimates that 400 to 500 Britons have gone to fight in Syria were "nonsense". Speaking to *Newsweek*, Mahmoud estimated at least 1,500 Britons were in Syria. "If you look across the whole of the country, and the various communities involved, 500 going over each year would be a conservative estimate." This equates to more than twice as many Muslims than are serving in the British Army, he said.

Since Foley's death, the British media has been filled with the names and photographs of those suspected to be "Jihadi John"--the nickname given to Foley's killer. Didier François, a former French hostage held for a year in the Syrian town of Raqqa, told the *Guardian* that the man who carried out Foley's murder was one of three British born jihadists whose role was to guard hostages. Hostages referred to them as John, Paul and Ringo, after the Beatles.

The *Guardian* noted, "The militant who appeared on the Foley video, who called himself John and is believed to be from London, was said to be the main rebel negotiator during talks earlier this year to release 11 Islamic State hostages—who were eventually handed to Turkish officials after ransom demands were met."

The press also cited the case of Khadijah Dare, originally from Lewisham in south east London. The 22-year-old mother moved to Syria in 2012 with her Swedish husband, Abu Bakr, an ISIS fighter. Posting under an assumed name, she wrote on Twitter after Foley's murder that she wanted to be the first woman to kill someone from the US or UK.

Dare's biographical details were made public alongside those of dozens of Britons declared to be potential suspects in the "race" and "manhunt" to identify Foley's killer.

Yet the media's own coverage suggests strongly that the identity of "Jihadi John" must already be known to the security services—like that of so many others who have gone to fight alongside ISIS. Indeed, within days of Foley's death the *Guardian* reported that a source "with knowledge of the work of the intelligence agencies" said "it was highly likely that they [intelligence bodies] knew about 'John' and the two British guards of hostages in Syria...." The source added, "I am willing to pay money that the services knew one or all of them."

Britain's intelligence agencies, MI5, MI6 and GCHQ, have invested billions of pounds in order to spy on every man, woman and child in the UK and have special units dedicated to all those deemed "extremists". Following each act of terrorism committed by Islamic fundamentalists in the UK, it has soon emerged that the intelligence services knew the

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perpetrators in advance. This was the case in the London bombings of July 2005 and the killing of soldier Lee Rigby in May last year.

The closest relations were developed with the radical Islamist preacher Abu Hamza al-Masri, who was protected for years by the secret services before being tried and sentenced to jail in 2006. The Finsbury Park mosque in London, where Hamza preached, was heavily infiltrated by intelligence agents.

The reality is that many of those Britons who travelled to Syria to fight against Assad were allowed to do so by the British government, which was then preparing for war against Syria in alliance with the United States. The jihadists were used as the key detachment of an "internal opposition" to Assad's regime, to destabilise Syria in preparation for a direct military intervention.

With the turn by ISIS into Iraq and its capture of large swathes of territory, this strategy was thrown into crisis. The death of James Foley is only one tragic expression of this.

As a result, sections of the ruling elite have publicly criticised British imperialism's Middle East strategy. Prominent political and military figures have now even called for an alliance with yesterday's erstwhile opponent, Bashar al-Assad, in order to defeat ISIS and resume Britain's role as the main military ally of the US.

The former chief of the general staff Lord Sir Richard Dannatt said of Assad, "I think whether it's above the counter or below the counter, a conversation has got to be held with him."

Dannatt's comments were followed by those of Sir Malcolm Rifkind, the Conservative chairman of Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee and a former foreign secretary, who said, "Sometimes you actually have to make an arrangement with some nasty people in order to get rid of some even nastier ones".

Writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, Sir Christopher Meyer, a former British ambassador to the United States, said, "As the great Victorian foreign secretary, Lord Palmerston, once said, we have no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests."

Foreign Secretary Phillip Hammond replied that Britain will not work with Assad, but added, "We may very well find that we are fighting, on some occasions, the same people that he is but that doesn't make us his ally."

Collaboration between the US and Germany and the Assad regime is already underway, according to an article in Friday's *Independent*. It reported, "The US has already covertly assisted the Assad government by passing on intelligence about the exact location of jihadi leaders through the BND, the German intelligence service…"

The previous day, General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, said, "Can they [ISIS] be defeated without addressing that part of the organisation that resides in Syria? The answer is no."

Once again, the invocations of humanitarian concerns employed by the government and its allies to legitimise the planned war in Syria have been exposed as lies, as the immediate target for military aggression shifts to Iraq.

The domestic threat from ISIS-related terrorism, for which the ruling elite is entirely responsible, is once again being used to justify further attacks on democratic rights. Home Secretary Theresa May wrote in the *Telegraph*, "We will be engaged in this struggle for many years, probably decades. We must give ourselves all the legal powers we need to prevail. I am looking again at the case for new banning orders for extremist groups that fall short of the legal threshold for terrorist proscription, as well as for new civil powers to target extremists who seek to radicalise others."

Lord Howard, a former leader of the Conservatives, called for Control Orders first introduced by a Labour government in 2005, to be restored—a form of house arrest preventing any form of contact not explicitly authorised by the state.

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