

UK report on murder of soldier drives calls for deeper state repression

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Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) has issued a report "on the intelligence relating to the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby".

Rigby, a serving British soldier, was horrifically killed in May, 2013 outside London's Woolwich army barracks. Two men, Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale, first ran him down in a car and then set about him with knives and a cleaver. Both were tried and imprisoned.

The report's publication was used to legitimise the introduction of new draconian antiterror legislation by Conservative Home Secretary Theresa May. The move was so blatant that one of the ISC's members, Liberal Democrat Ming Campbell, said, "It is a remarkable coincidence, some might say, that the home secretary should have chosen to make public her further proposals on the eve of the publication of the ISC report."

The *Daily Telegraph* noted that Prime Minister David Cameron had access to various drafts of the report, as well as the unredacted draft of the final version.

The heavily-redacted report is one of the most self-serving documents ever published by Britain's ruling elite. With only the sparsest criticism of various operational procedures, the ISC concluded that nothing could have been done by the intelligence services to prevent the killing of Rigby. This is despite acknowledging that Adebolajo and Adebowale had been actively and "intrusively" monitored by intelligence operatives for years; a surveillance operation which continued almost until the day they killed Rigby.

Adebolajo was tracked in five separate intelligence investigations, beginning in 2008 and Adebowale in two. MI5 first knew of telephone contact between the two men in April 2012, more than a year before

Rigby's murder. From August to October 2012, "the pair were in contact or attempted contact approximately 30 times," it states. From December, 2012 to April, 2013, they were in contact or attempted contact approximately 200 times. In the weeks leading to the attack, they were in contact a further 39 times.

An April 4 review into MI5's ongoing investigation into Adebowale noted, "Adebowale continues to be in contact with Adebolajo, however, we have seen no significant contact with Other SoIs [Subject of Interest] and no contact with SoIs of particular concern."

The day before the attack there were seven attempted calls between the two men and 16 text messages and "in addition, they exchanged one phone call on the morning of the attack."

With much of their activity being monitored by MI5, it strains belief that nothing was known about the intentions of Adebolajo and Adebowale.

Another fundamental question is posed about the circumstances that led to Rigby's killing. Shortly after the murder it was made public by a close friend of Adebolajo, Abu Nusaybah, that Britain's domestic intelligence agency made repeated approaches to Adebolajo, attempting to recruit him to infiltrate jihadist groups in the UK.

Nusaybah said these attempts came after the Kenyan authorities had deported Adebolajo back to Britain. He had been detained in November, 2010 as part of a group attempting to cross the border into Somalia to join the Al Qaeda-aligned al-Shabaab. According to Nusaybah and Adebolajo himself, he was physically and sexually tortured in Kenya.

The report states, "In relation to the allegations that MI5 had been trying to recruit Adebolajo as an agent, MI5 has argued that it would be damaging to national security to comment on such allegations."

This statement means that MI5 could have either tried to recruit him or that Adebolajo possibly committed the murder while working as an MI5 agent.

The 191-page document report, as is now the norm, never acknowledges that Britain's predatory foreign policy since 2001 has anything to do with the terrible death of Rigby.

The report reveals that in December 2012, just five months before Rigby was slain, Adebowale discussed his plans to murder a British soldier in a "substantial online exchange" on a US social media site. "Adebowale expressed his desire to murder a soldier—in the most graphic and emotive manner—because of UK military action in Iraq and Afghanistan," the report states, before asserting that the exchange "cannot be published on national security grounds."

Much of the last quarter of the report is given over to an extensive criticism of the data-protection policies of the largest, mainly US-based Internet companies. The report concludes with the statement, "[S]everal of the companies attributed the lack of monitoring to the need to protect their users' privacy. However, where there is a possibility that a terrorist atrocity is being planned, that argument should not be allowed to prevail."

On the same theme, ISC chairman, Conservative Malcolm Rifkind, said, "What is clear is that the one party which could have made a difference was the company on whose system the exchange took place. However, this company does not regard themselves as under any obligation to ensure that they identify such threats, or to report them to the authorities. We find this unacceptable: however unintentionally, they are providing a safe haven for terrorists."

Facebook was later identified as the platform on which Adebowale posted his comment. This puts into context the earlier call by Robert Hannigan, the new head of the UK's main spying network Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), for the main Internet companies to work more closely with the intelligence agencies, or be compelled to by legislation. In language very similar to that used by the ISC, Hannigan named Facebook as one of the services that "have become the command-and-control networks of choice for terrorists and criminals..."

The media acted as the echo chamber for the ISC, intelligence agencies and the government, typified by Rupert Murdoch's *The Sun* front page headline

Wednesday, "Facebook accused: Blood on their hands."

Tuesday's debate in parliament was the occasion for an all-party embrace of the report and its conclusions. Former Labour Party government home and foreign secretary, Jack Straw, who played a central role in Britain's illegal invasion of Iraq, stated, "Is there not a cultural problem among the leadership of some of these companies, which have a distorted 'libertarian' ideology and believe that somehow that allows them to be wholly detached from responsibility to Governments and to the peoples whom we democratically represent in this country and abroad?"

Senior Conservative MP Liam Fox asked whether the intelligence services are "big enough to do the job we are asking them to do in this increasingly dangerous era?" He complained that the Britain spent as much annually on the intelligence services as "what we spend on the national health services every six days."

In response, the prime minister said that £2 billion a year is spent on Britain's spying operations, "but the truth is that there is no upper limit on what we could spend if we wanted to do more and more activity."



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