

UK puts military on standby after Charlie Hebdo attack

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Britain's military is on standby in the wake of the terror assault on the offices of the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine and a Jewish supermarket. Seventeen people were killed in the attacks and subsequent sieges by three Islamic extremists.

The decision was made in talks between Prime Minister David Cameron and the security and intelligence agencies Monday.

According to the *Telegraph*, "British police and military will re-enact the Paris attack in a series of counter-terrorism drills."

A Downing Street spokesperson said the objective was to build on the "example" of Paris, where the Socialist Party government of François Hollande has mobilised 10,000 troops in scenes redolent of a police state.

The "imminent deployment of troops [in the UK] was not discussed" at the meeting, the *Telegraph* reported, alongside assurances that counter-terrorist police would continue to play the lead role in "combating terrorism." But the *Daily Mail*, citing a defence source, reported that the elite Special Air Service were on standby to deal with what Cameron described as the "fanatical death cult of Islamist extremist violence."

The attacks in Paris are being utilised to push through authoritarian measures long in gestation. The UK government has been in the forefront of calls for a European-wide travel database, along with restrictions on freedom of movement within Europe. Its demands had been blocked but, in the wake of the Paris assaults, a meeting of the European Union's (EU) Interior Ministers announced that measures are being finalised to "step up the detection and screening of travel movements by European nationals crossing the EU's external borders."

This is despite the fact that the attacks in Paris were committed by "homegrown" assailants. Said and Cherif Kouachi and Amedy Coulibaly were French citizens. That the Kouachi brothers were subject to a US and UK travel ban did not prevent them carrying out an attack on their "own" soil.

Cameron is also calling for greater repressive powers for the intelligence agencies. MI5 head Andrew Parker raised the demand immediately following the attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* offices, while Cameron pledged a future Conservative government would strengthen state powers to intercept e-communications. "We must not allow terrorists safe space to communicate," he argued.

Such powers would have done nothing to prevent the French attacks. France's intelligence services had all the information they required on the Kouachi's and Coulibaly, whom they had monitored for several years. This surveillance was inexplicably stopped just six months before they launched their murderous assaults.

Likewise, Mohammed Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer, the suicide bombers who attacked the London underground in July 2005, were well known to Britain's intelligence services, as were Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale, who murdered Fusilier Lee Rigby on a London street in 2013.

The British government, in league with the United States, already has an extensive, illegal spying apparatus, as exposed by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden. But it hopes to exploit the terrible events of last week to accrue even greater powers, with Cameron threatening to block messaging services such as WhatsApp and Snapchat and, in particular, to ban encrypted communications.

Nothing is to stand in the way of the state's authoritarian reach. Under the banner of defending free speech, European governments and their apologists are

demanding the dismantling of the very protections they supposedly hold so dear.

This is accompanied by efforts to whip up anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment as justification. Speaking in the European Parliament, Nigel Farage, leader of the anti-immigrant United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), called for the defence of “Judeo-Christian culture” against Islamic terrorism.

“[M]ass immigration” had led to “a fifth column that is living within our own countries, that is utterly opposed to our values,” he said.

Writing in the *Telegraph*, Boris Johnson, Conservative Mayor of London and potential challenger to Cameron, decried the fact that “There is hardly a paper in Britain that has followed the lead of *Charlie Hebdo*, and printed the offending cartoons of Mohammed.”

He spoke as UK distributors prepared to circulate the first edition of the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine since the killings, with a cover showing the Prophet Mohammed.

The *Independent*, *Guardian* and the BBC all published or showed the front-page of the magazine, which has been heavily financed by the French state. UK distributors are taking delivery of between 700 to 1,000 copies of the magazine, which usually only sells about 30 copies a week in the UK.

In his op-ed, Johnson described as his “hero” the Muslim Mayor of Rotterdam, Ahmed Aboutaleb, a member of the Dutch Labour Party who—supposedly addressing potential jihadists—said, “If you don’t like freedom, then f--- off.”

“That is the voice of the Enlightenment, of Voltaire,” Johnson trilled.

Such spurious claims are in marked contrast to the response to the mass murder carried out in Norway by the fascist Anders Behring Breivik on July 22, 2011. The largest terror attack to date in Europe carried out by an individual, Breivik murdered 77 mainly young people, members of the social democratic youth movement.

Johnson wrote at the time that Breivik’s crime “wasn’t really about ideology or religion. It was all about him. ... He killed in the name of Christianity—and yet of course we don’t blame Christians or ‘Christendom’. Nor, by the same token, should we blame ‘Islam’ for all acts of terror committed by young Muslim males.”

His comment was at one with efforts to conceal Breivik’s links with numerous right-wing groups across Europe. Just prior to his slaughter, Breivik had e-mailed his lengthy manifesto, in which he described himself as a political soldier leading a crusade against “Islamisation” to more than 1,000 like-minded individuals in Europe.

At his trial, he defended his actions by arguing that “[France’s Nicolas] Sarkozy, [Germany’s Angela] Merkel and [Britain’s David] Cameron have all noted that multi-culturalism doesn’t work.”

Among those defending the killer was Francesco Enrico Speroni, the Italian Member of the European Parliament for the separatist Northern League. If Breivik’s ideas “are that we are going towards Eurabia and those sorts of things, that Western Christian civilisation needs to be defended, yes, I’m in agreement”, Speroni said.

The Italian MEP is co-president alongside Farage of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy group, which sits in the European Parliament and comprises far-right and openly neo-Nazi parties.



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