

UK to launch enhanced “anti-terror measures” and domestic use of troops

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20 January 2015

The former head of Britain’s intelligence agency MI5, Lord Evans, has added his voice to demands for a clampdown on the Internet and e-communications in the wake of the terror assaults on the *Charlie Hebdo* office in Paris and a Jewish supermarket, in which 17 people were killed.

His remarks underscore that the British government is leading efforts in Europe and internationally to exploit the events of January 7 in France to significantly strengthen the repressive powers of the state. Under the banner “Je suis Charlie” (I am Charlie) and the supposed defence of free speech, police state measures are being imposed.

Writing in the *Sunday Telegraph*, Evans claimed that the UK’s existing anti-terror legislation was “no longer fit for purpose” and that new laws were “vital” to enable the state to monitor services such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Snapchat, as well as encrypted communications.

His op-ed appeared just two days after Prime Minister David Cameron, speaking in Washington alongside President Barack Obama, called for “pressure” to be exerted on Internet companies such as Facebook and Twitter to work more closely with UK intelligence agencies. Cameron has pledged that if the Conservatives return to power after the May General Election, they will press ahead with plans for a “snoopers’ charter” Communications Bill giving the British intelligence agencies MI5, MI6 and the Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ) the power to access encrypted communications.

Simultaneously, it was announced that Britain’s Intelligence and Security Committee, consisting of nine senior Members of Parliament and peers, would announce plans for sweeping new state powers in the next weeks.

Conservative Sir Malcolm Rifkind, ISC chairman, backed Cameron’s call for new powers. He told the *Sunday Telegraph* that the ISC would announce in the next weeks “very radical” reforms of existing anti-terror provisions so as to grant the intelligence agencies new powers to intercept e-communications.

“If as we all accept, the problem is international jihadi terrorism, how do international terrorists communicate with each other?” he asked rhetorically. “They communicate by the Internet, by email, by social messaging. That’s the world we live in.”

Evans and Rifkind both denounced former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden for his exposure of the US and UK’s massive and illegal surveillance operations.

Snowden’s revelations had led to significant public opposition to the government’s original Communications Data Bill, first brought forward in 2012. Evans complained that this had “led to a position where the terrorists and criminals now know enough about interception capabilities to avoid scrutiny, while Internet and communications providers are reluctant to help the authorities as much as they used to in case they suffer commercial disadvantage or media criticism.”

Rifkind complained that Snowden “stole—and I use the word explicitly—he stole a million highly classified documents, top secret documents” and handed them over to “the *Guardian* or other newspapers.”

That was not “whistleblowing,” but a “political” and “criminal act,” Rifkind said.

Blanket surveillance is not the only draconian state power being brought forward on the backs of the confusion and disorientation created by the Paris killings. According to the *Sunday Mirror*, “Army chiefs have drawn up plans to deploy 1,900 troops in support of police” anti-terror operations.

The moves came as the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre increased the security threat facing the UK to severe. Steve White, chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales, said, “The level of extreme terrorism we are facing on an international scale cannot be underestimated and the police service and its security partners are doing all they can.”

Home Office officials have claimed the police do not have enough resources to tackle the threat, the *Mirror* reported. Consequently, officers “at the military’s Joint Headquarters drafted the plans in Civil Contingency Operations and have asked Army Headquarters in Andover, Hants, to identify available troops.”

The newspaper cited a senior military officer stating, “The delicate decision for politicians is when and how to use the Army without causing panic. I expect we will see a small number deployed first and if the situation warrants it more will be called out.”

The *Mirror* continued, “Sources at Army Headquarters in Andover said two battalions could be called out at short notice.”

The moves come after hundreds of police were deployed in Belgium in the wake of raids on a suspected terror cell in the capital, Brussels. In France, 10,000 troops have been deployed around the country.

Since 9/11, successive UK governments have introduced a plethora of “anti-terror” legislation, each more draconian than its predecessor. This has included the adoption of a secretive “shoot to kill” policy that claimed the life of innocent Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes, who was murdered in broad daylight on July 22, 2005.

Such measures have nothing to do with protecting the public. Rather, fear and panic over Islamic extremism—which British and western foreign policy is largely responsible for creating—is being used, once again, to clamp down on democratic rights and legitimise further imperialist interventions.

It should be noted that it was on Evans’ watch that, in 2010, the UK Court of Appeal found that British intelligence services were complicit in the extraordinary rendition and torture of UK resident Binyam Mohamed in Morocco and Guantanamo Bay between 2004 and 2009. Mohamed, who was eventually released from Guantanamo without charge, was awarded £1 million compensation for his ill treatment.

On Thursday, London is to host an international summit on combating Islamic terrorism. Co-hosted by US Secretary of State John Kerry, a “military coalition” of more than 20 countries is to meet to discuss “the next phase in the armed conflict with the jihadists,” it was announced.

In preparation, the Cameron government has announced it is stepping up operations against Isis forces in Iraq, including the use of extra drones and the despatch of “British experts” to the country. While a planned return of British troops to the country has been delayed—reportedly until after the general election—RAF aircraft continue to carry out bombing raids.

British forces are also to officially begin training Syrian “opposition groups.” The US, UK and others deliberately fomented the civil war in Syria as part of their plans for regime-change. In August 2013, Parliament vetoed plans for British military intervention in the country, but Cameron agreed in his talks with Obama that the UK troops will begin training “by the end of March.”

The UK has also agreed to enhanced cooperation with Yemen “in military fields and combating terrorism,” and the Ministry of Defence is reportedly drawing up plans to increase the number of military personnel for deployment to Nigeria.

Cameron used his Washington appearance to announce the despatch of an extra 1,000 British troops to Eastern Europe, as part of the provocative NATO-led military build-up on Russia’s borders.



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