

UK Conservatives plan war and domestic repression

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Britain's Conservative government is planning military interventions in Syria and Libya, coupled with domestic repression.

Prime Minister David Cameron utilised a four-day trade mission to South East Asia to declare that the UK must be ready to fight terrorist groups anywhere in the world, while the *Daily Telegraph* revealed government plans to take action in Libya.

To justify his plans, Cameron cited training received in Libya by Saifeddine Rezgui, who shot dead 38 tourists in Tunisia, 30 of whom were from Britain. His government intends to use this as an excuse for sending military advisers and trainers to supposedly aid the fight against Islamic extremism in a state they helped destroy four years ago, through the military campaign to overthrow Colonel Muammar Gaddafi.

Things will not stop there. The use of 100 British military experts in Iraq and participation in bombing raids there is already expected to be extended to bombing missions in Syria.

Accompanying this military aggression are preparations to deploy over 5,000 military personnel on Britain's streets. This was revealed accidentally, after minutes of a closed session of an April 22 National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) meeting were unintentionally uploaded to the organisation's web site Thursday before being removed Friday.

Operation Temperer sets out an agenda for "large-scale military support, with troops providing "protective security" in the event of multiple terror attacks like those in Paris. This would involve heavily armed troops guarding key targets alongside armed police and taking part in manhunts for suspected terrorists.

Posted under the heading "Counter Terrorism post Paris: Large scale military support to the police," the minutes, as reported by the *Mail on Sunday*, reveal that "deputy chief constable Simon Chesterman, the 'national

lead' for armed policing, briefed the other chief officers..."

Up to 5,100 military personnel could be deployed, the *Mail* reports.

"Discussions were ongoing with Government," the minutes state, before adding, "Chiefs recognised that the Army played an important part in national resilience and supported the work going forward."

Action would be triggered by Cobra, the government's top security committee, which is chaired by Cameron. Though discussed at the highest echelons of government, these plans have neither been made public nor brought to the attention of parliament and would still be secret today if not for police incompetence.

The political response to these revelations has been extraordinarily passive. For Labour, Shadow Home Secretary and party leadership contender Yvette Cooper focused on calls to maintain police numbers, urging, "Our national security must not be put at risk. Theresa May has a responsibility to make sure we have enough police for vital counter-terror work."

For its part, the *Observer* wrote of the army being "reluctant to follow the example of the French military, which sent 10,000 troops on to the streets of Paris and elsewhere around the country after the *Charlie Hebdo* attack... the biggest single objection is that once troops are committed to the streets, it is hard to pull them back. It would require the security services to declare that the threat level had dropped sufficiently to allow them to return to barracks.

"France initially deployed 10,000 troops, 7,000 of whom are to become a presence on the streets for the foreseeable future, the president, François Hollande, has announced," it noted. "Italy, too, has deployed 5,000 troops on its streets."

Nothing that emanates by way of criticism from the ranks of the Labour Party or the nominally liberal media

is genuinely aimed at opposing the government. The Tories are instead being given carte blanche to fashion an increasingly aggressive military policy and to undertake measures that represent a grave threat to democratic rights.

It is just over one week since Defence Secretary Michael Fallon was obliged to answer MPs over having lied to them by sanctioning British pilots participating in bombing operations in Syria in defiance of parliamentary votes in 2013 and 2014.

Days earlier, the government finally responded to a freedom of information request by human rights organisation Reprieve admitting that pilots embedded with US, French and Canadian forces had taken part in bombing ISIL positions in Syria.

During the parliamentary debate, Fallon described this as “normal” and stated baldly that it would carry on. This means that it is also considered normal for UK military personnel to take part in similar strikes in Yemen and Pakistan, on the basis that allied forces are involved in hostile actions even though the UK is not.

In an answer to the Scottish National Party, it was confirmed that Cameron and Fallon had authorised the first UK embed with US forces in Syria in autumn last year.

Shadow Defence Secretary Vernon Coaker and Labour’s interim leader, Harriet Harman, had only a matter of days earlier held meetings with Cameron after being invited to a session of Cobra. They made clear that Labour will back military operations in Syria if this is proposed. Thus the only complaint from Coaker in last Tuesday’s debate was that the government had, by its lies, endangered the “confidence and trust of this parliament” and “that of the British people.” (See: UK defence secretary admits flouting parliamentary ban on military involvement in Syrian war)

That same day, Cameron made a speech outlining a five year strategy for opposing “extremism” in which he lent his full support to measures that, when first mooted by Home Secretary Theresa May, were so overtly anti-democratic that seven of his cabinet members opposed them. They allow for non-violent groups to be targeted on the basis that those opposing “British values” act as a “gateway” to terrorism and include measures to ban groups, close down premises, demand that schools, universities and colleges report the expression of deviant ideas and require television programmes as well as Internet publications to be vetted for content before broadcast. (See: UK announces “anti-extremism” plan

sanctioning domestic repression and war)

Responding to Cameron, Cooper declared, “Rising extremism in Britain and across the world is a major challenge for democracy. The Prime Minister is right to set out new action in this area as it is important that the Government strengthens counter extremism work and leads a strong argument against both violent and non-violent extremism... We will engage seriously with the government’s forthcoming strategy when it is published and scrutinise the detail.”

In the parliamentary debate on the update of Labour’s previous anti-extremism “Prevent” strategy outlined by home secretary May, Cooper chose to attack the government for the impact budget cuts would have on implementing her proposed measures and failing to ban one Islamist group, Hizb ut-Tahrir.

It is thanks to this bi-partisan approach that the government is able to extend the already extraordinary dictatorial measures enacted by Labour and to push so hard for war in the Middle East and stepped-up aggression by NATO against Russia.

Earlier this month, speaking at a meeting of the Chatham House think-tank, Fallon revealed that “Our second [Strategic Defence and Security] Review is now underway, with direct American defence involvement...”

In June, the UK became the first country to announce that it will host over 100 US Marines and up to three Osprey aircraft on HMS Ocean. This comes prior to the beginning in October of NATO’s largest war games in a decade, involving more than 36,000 allied troops (see: US and NATO engage in unprecedented military exercises in Europe).

The scenario of an operation to aid the country of “Sorotan”, which is wracked by civil war and facing a military threat from a powerful neighbour, echoes the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. But, citing the threat from ISIL, it will involve operations in Italy, Spain, Portugal and across the Mediterranean. This illustrates how advanced plans are for all-out war for regime change in Syria, spearheaded by the US and now involving Turkey. These plans were thwarted previously, in part by the 2013 UK vote against participation now repudiated by Cameron and Fallon.



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