

Serving UK general threatens mutiny against a future Corbyn government

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A senior serving British general has threatened “direct action” by the armed forces against a future Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government.

Speaking to the *Sunday Times*, the unnamed officer said that if Corbyn came to power, “There would be mass resignations at all levels and you would face the very real prospect of an event which would effectively be a mutiny...”

“You would see a major break in convention with senior generals directly and publicly challenging Corbyn over vital important policy decisions such as Trident, pulling out of Nato and any plans to emasculate and shrink the size of the armed forces. The Army just wouldn’t stand for it. The general staff would not allow a prime minister to jeopardise the security of this country and I think people would use whatever means possible, fair or foul to prevent that.”

The *Sunday Times* said that the general “served in Northern Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s.”

These are extraordinary statements. Moreover, they were accompanied by an assertion by the *Sunday Times* that “intelligence chiefs” had revealed, “The intelligence services will refuse to let Corbyn see information on live operations because of his sympathy towards some terrorists.”

The *Sunday Times* cites a senior intelligence source stating, “None of the intelligence community—whether we’re talking about the security services or the counter-terrorism police bosses—would give Corbyn, or any of his cabinet, information that they don’t want to give. And any information that they do decide to give will be restricted and tailored to general stuff and provided against the clear backdrop of Corbyn’s detestation of Britain’s security services.”

These remarks are part of an ongoing political campaign of destabilisation, mounted jointly by the Conservative government, the media and large sections of the Labour

Party leadership. The *Sunday Times*, published by Rupert Murdoch, reported the anonymous general’s statements in an article stating that half of Corbyn’s shadow cabinet are prepared to vote with Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron for air strikes on Syria next month in defiance of their new party leader. “Senior members of the shadow cabinet have already spoken to Tory ministers, pledging to support bombing of Isis targets in Syria,” the newspaper states.

The *Sunday Times* cites four of the party’s five-strong foreign affairs team, including Hilary Benn, the shadow foreign secretary; at least two of the defence spokesmen; Deputy Labour leader, Tom Watson; four other shadow cabinet members and three whips as ready to back action in Syria.

Little wonder then that the official response of the Labour Party is so muted. A senior Labour source merely told *The Independent*, “It does seem like quite an extraordinary statement.” Benn responded by seeking to ingratiate himself with the military. He told BBC One’s *Andrew Marr Show* Sunday, in reference to scrapping Trident and leaving NATO, “I don’t think that is going to happen.”

NATO is the “cornerstone of our security,” he added.

A Ministry of Defence source said that it was unacceptable for a serving officer to make political comments about a potential “future government,” but added that it would not be launching an investigation to discover the identity of the guilty party, as there were too many generals to investigate. In fact, there are only around one hundred generals currently serving in the British Army, and clearly not all of them served in Northern Ireland during the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, given the extent of state surveillance uncovered by Edward Snowden, no one can seriously doubt that the identity of the general is known to the security services.

Ewen MacAskill of *The Guardian* responded by

dismissing the “idea of a military revolt” against Corbyn as “far fetched,” before noting, “When the chief of defence staff, Sir Nicholas Houghton, in a speech at the London think-tank Chatham House last week, spoke about the ‘worrying constraints’ of parliamentary consent, he was not challenging democracy. He was expressing concern over reluctance of MPs to back military intervention post-Iraq: his fear is this might undermine the deterrent value of the military in the eyes of the UK’s potential enemies.”

MacAskill’s citing of Houghton is significant. Houghton had in fact complained to Chatham House that the most “worrying constraints on the use of force lay in the areas of societal support, parliamentary consent and ever greater legal challenge... My point here is that if a nation’s assumed willingness to commit to the use of force is only in the face of national survival, then we encourage rather than deter revisionist states and their own ambitions.”

Houghton was a Company Commander in and Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion in the Mechanised and Air Mobile Roles and in Northern Ireland. After Regimental duty he commanded the 39th Infantry Brigade in Belfast during the period leading up to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

What is more politically revealing still is Corbyn’s supine response to the threat made against him. His spokesman said that he would not comment on remarks made anonymously.

This statement was made the day after Corbyn resigned as chair of the Stop the War Coalition, sending in a letter to the group stating that, “It is now my job to lead the Labour Party, including in the struggle for peace and international justice, and that is demanding my undivided attention.”

He has, in addition, stated that whereas he does not personally want Britain to “renew nuclear weapons...we’re not going to divide and ruin ourselves as a party over this.”

There could not be a starker example of the contrast between Corbyn’s meek proposals for reforms—through the Labour Party and parliament—and the methods that the ruling class is prepared to utilize to ensure that the trajectory of its foreign and domestic policy is maintained. Corbyn has been in office as Labour leader for less than two weeks and has repeatedly reassured all concerned that he will do nothing that is not acceptable to the right-wing, pro-business cabal that still runs the Labour Party—including stacking his cabinet with individuals who

are now openly colluding with Cameron against him. Yet talk is already of mutiny within the armed forces and of coups.

If Corbyn were serious about opposing war, he would immediately demand that the general who made these comments be identified, sacked and brought before the courts on charges of inciting treasonous conduct.

He would, in addition, call on workers to reject with contempt all claims that these comments have no real significance.

Corbyn was involved in politics throughout the 1970s. During this period, against the background of rising industrial militancy that culminated in the bringing down of the Conservative government of Edward Heath in 1974, the civil service, the police and the Ministry of Defence were secretly placed on alert and military manoeuvres were carried out at Heathrow airport and other strategic locations. He is of a generation for whom the 1973 CIA-backed coup against the government of Salvador Allende was a formative experience.

Moreover, the situation today is pregnant with yet greater dangers. Cameron has boasted in parliament of assassinating British citizens with drones, just like his US counterpart Barack Obama has done, and there is barely a murmur of protest other than Corbyn belatedly suggesting that it was “legally questionable.” Anti-terror techniques of deep mass infiltration and provocation are now routinely utilised against peaceful domestic opposition groups by forces including the Metropolitan Police, who have the blood of Jean Charles De Menezes on their hands.

Resolving the social problems confronting millions of working people involves seizing the trillions of pounds presently monopolised by the financial oligarchy, taking control of the economy and reorganising production to meet essential social needs. What is required is the independent political mobilisation of the working class against the major corporations and banks and the state apparatus that defends them.



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