

UK government outlines plans for expanding militarism and repression after Paris attacks

Julie Hyland

18 November 2015

Prime Minister David Cameron has announced a massive increase in Britain's military/intelligence apparatus following last week's terror attacks in Paris.

Cameron's proposals were outlined in a speech to the annual Lord Mayor's banquet Monday evening. In it he spelt out that the carnage in the French capital—which ultimately has its roots in imperialist wars and violence in the Middle East—is to be used by the bourgeoisie to strengthen repression, overseas and at home.

Cameron prefaced his remarks on the “terrorist threat” by insisting that his government would continue with its austerity measures that have slashed wages and increased levels of poverty and homelessness. It was only because of the draconian cuts government had made that the UK was able to “maintain the second best funded armed forces in all of NATO,” he boasted, and to continue spending 2 percent of GDP on defence, under conditions “where resources are tight.”

By seeing “through our Long-Term Economic Plan” and taking the “difficult decisions to deal with our deficit,” he continued, there would be “more money every year” to “invest in hard military power.”

Immediately, Cameron announced a further £2 billion for the current military budget. This is to fund a doubling in the UK fleet of drones to 20, and to provide for new weapons and equipment, including fighter aircraft. This was necessary in order to “increase the capabilities of our brilliant special forces,” Cameron said.

In addition to expanding the capabilities of the Special Air Service (SAS) and other covert military units, the new funds will pay for an extra 1,900 new security and military intelligence personnel.

Spending on aviation security is also to be doubled, the prime minister said, along with a pledge to “maintain our continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent”—a

reference to the UK's Trident nuclear system which is due for renewal at the cost of £80 billion.

These are to feature in the five-year defence and security review to be published next week. Central to this review are plans for a “new generation of cyber defences to block and disrupt attacks before they can harm our United Kingdom,” Cameron said.

This was the objective of the draft bill just published by his government, he continued, to “ensure that GCHQ [Government Communications Headquarters], MI5 and our counterterrorism police continue to have the powers to follow terrorist movements by tracking their online communications to intercept those communications under a warrant and to obtain data from computers used by terrorists and paedophiles.”

His reference to the draft bill underscores just how cynical the bourgeoisie in Britain and across Europe are in exploiting the Paris tragedy for their own nefarious and long-planned ends.

On November 4, Home Secretary Theresa May placed before parliament the government's proposed Investigatory Powers Bill. This set out plans to legalise the massive illegal spying network exposed by whistleblower Edward Snowden, by compelling Internet service providers to store the browsing history of every UK citizen for 12 months and to empower the state to legally hack any person's electronic communications devices.

The measures had originally been brought forward under a different bill, dubbed the “Snoopers Charter”, from which the government was forced to retreat due to its implications for civil liberties. The new bill, however, is even more draconian. The intention was to enact the new measures by the end of 2016, but Cameron suggested he would now try to bring this timetable forward.

On Tuesday morning, Chancellor George Osborne used the backdrop of GCHQ to announce the establishment of a new National Cyber Centre at the spying facility. Osborne said that Islamic State “are already using the Internet for hideous propaganda purposes; for radicalisation, for operational planning too,” he said.

While as yet ISIS had not been able to use “cyber warfare to kill people by attacking infrastructure,” they are “doing their best to build it,” he went on—announcing that funding against “cybercrime” is to be doubled to almost £2 billion a year by 2020.

All this is intended to portray ISIS as an existential threat to the British nation, akin to that of Nazi Germany. Cameron compared his government’s “resolve” to defeat Islamic extremism with Winston Churchill’s insistence that the “British nation would never enter into negotiations with Hitler.”

The aim was to protect British “values”, he went on, evoking the Magna Carta that enshrined “in this land the principles of liberty, justice and the rule of law.” His puerile and facile demagoguery is aimed at legitimising the overthrow of the very principles he claims to be upholding.

Cameron defended the targeted assassination of British citizens Junaid Hussain, Reyaad Khan and, on Thursday, Mohammed Emwazi (aka Jihadi John). Rubbishing the minimal protestation by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn that Emwazi should have been “held to account in a court of law,” he asserted, “You do not protect people by sitting around and wishing for another world.”

“We have to be realistic and hard-headed about the threats we face,” he went on.

The assassination of Emwazi and others was the outcome of the fact that there is “no government we can work with in Syria,” no “rigorous police investigations or independent courts” in the country, and no UK military “on the ground to detain those preparing plots.”

Naturally, Cameron’s “realism” did not address how the state of affairs he described had arisen in Syria, out of the machinations of the imperialist powers to overthrow Bashar al-Assad utilising Islamist “resistance fighters” as their proxies.

Instead, he was reduced to a tautology. The growth of Islamic extremism was not the consequence of

“wronged Muslims getting revenge on their Western wrongdoers,” he said, or “because of the Iraq war.” It was the result of the “poisonous ideology of extremism itself”!

This ideology had to be confronted “with our own liberal values,” he went on. But if anyone—without even the presentation of charges—can be murdered on the prime minister’s say so, what remains of “liberal values”, much less “justice, and the rule of law?” Who else can be placed on the hit list as a threat to “national security”?

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained previously, there is no wall separating the actions of the bourgeoisie overseas and what they will do at home. That is why Cameron dismissed anyone who criticised his plans to extend the already considerable surveillance powers of the state apparatus. This was not an “infringement of civil rights,” he said, but was “about protecting those liberties from terrorists who want to take them away”!

The fact that plans for domestic repression comprised such a significant part of Cameron’s Guildhall speech must serve as a warning. Next week Osborne will set out a spending review that will enforce a cumulative cut in day-to-day government spending by an average of 24 percent in the next three years—almost half, and more, in some departments since 2010.

The massive expansion of the police/military apparatus is directly bound up with the deliberate and on-going gutting of health, education and essential social provision. The bourgeoisie knows that its agenda of never-ending austerity at home and perpetual war abroad cannot be enforced peacefully, but only through dictatorial means.



To contact the WSWP and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wswp.org/contact