

Cameron, Hollande meet to discuss military escalation in Syria

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French President François Hollande and British Prime Minister David Cameron met in Paris yesterday at the Élysée Palace, as both seek to respond to the November 13 terrorist attacks in Paris by escalating the bloody war in Syria.

France launched its first bombing missions in Syria against Islamic State (ISIS) yesterday by aircraft launched from its Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier now deployed in the eastern Mediterranean. The carrier is able to launch 26 fighters, triple the number France currently has operating over Syria.

Today Hollande will meet with US President Barack Obama and later in the week, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Cameron's meeting with Hollande was to further his strategy of securing a vote in the UK parliament for British military action in Syria. Speaking alongside Hollande, who said his government would "intensify" its bombing missions in Syria, Cameron said, "I firmly support the action President Hollande has taken to strike Isil [ISIS] in Syria and it is my firm conviction that Britain should do so too."

Britain would allow France to use Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) base on Cyprus to carry out bombing raids in Syria, said Cameron.

Britain and France are both pressing for a massive escalation of military operations abroad and police repression at home.

Immediately following his meeting with Hollande, Cameron flew back to London where he gave a statement on the government's five-year Strategic Defence and Security Review. In Parliament, the Conservative leader outlined a militarist agenda declaring that Britain would "use force where necessary".

To this end, the armed forces would be handed a

further £12 billion to take total spending on the military to £178 billion over the next decade. This includes a 30 percent increase in the budget for "counterterrorism" and an additional £2 billion on special forces troops and operations.

The centrepiece of the review is the formation of two new "strike brigades" of 5,000 troops each. These will be established using existing army personnel for deployment anywhere across the globe. Almost 600 new armoured vehicles will be available to the strike brigades and other military units. All in, the size of deployable forces is being increased from 30,000 to 50,000.

Cameron announced that 42 new F-35 Lightning stealth fighter jets would be bought, including 24 (up from eight) that will be used on two new aircraft carriers set to be operational by 2023. They will also protect Britain's nuclear missile system and the aircraft carriers. At least one of the two new aircraft carriers being built will be deployed all year.

Two additional Typhoon fighter jet squadrons will be created—seven in total—with 12 aircraft each. The squadrons will continue until the F-35 fighters become operational and can operate until 2040. Nine new Boeing P-8 maritime patrol aircraft, capable of carrying out surveillance, anti-submarine and anti-surface ship warfare, will be purchased. At least 13 new frigates will be built, including eight with anti-submarine capability. More than 20 new Protector drones will be bought, doubling the number of Reaper drone aircraft they replace.

Billions of pounds extra in public money is being lavished on defence spending, a bonanza for the private defence manufacturers. But this is just the down payment. The Ministry of Defence's budget will increase by 0.5 percent above inflation each year to

2020-21. Cameron also revealed that the cost of renewing the UK's Trident nuclear defence system is set to increase by £6 billion. This is expected to rise still further, with £10 billion added to the defence budget as a contingency.

Following the Paris attacks, the Hollande government proposed the establishment of 10,000 security posts, including 5,000 police and gendarmes, 1,000 customs agents and 2,500 posts in the justice and penal systems. They are now actively encouraging recruitment into the armed forces and aim to recruit 170,000 new candidates for a place in the army, compared to 120,000 in 2014. The Armed Forces Information and Recruitment Centre said an average of 1,000 people a day had contacted it since the Paris attacks.

Over the last week, the population in France and Brussels has witnessed armed soldiers and riot squads taking over entire urban areas. After a massive police and military operation placed the Paris suburb of St Denis on lockdown, Brussels has been the location of an unprecedented military operation for the last three days.

These scenes are set to become commonplace in the UK. Cameron announced he had authorised a "new contingency plan to deal with major terrorist attacks ... Under this new operation, up to 10,000 military personnel will be available to support the police in dealing with the type of shocking terrorist attack we have seen in Paris."

Every penny available is being seized by the ruling elite to facilitate repression. On top of the money allotted for the MoD, the massive state surveillance dragnet in operation against the UK population by the 12,700-strong staff of the security intelligence networks MI5, MI6 and GCHQ, is to be handed resources for an additional 1,900 spies.

The imperialist powers insist that attacks on the social conditions of the working class and youth are a prerequisite for a massive "investment" in military spending and armament. The £12 billion to be handed over in preparation for Britain's new wars is the exact amount being brutally stripped from the welfare budget by the government.

Cameron, who on becoming prime minister five years ago by proclaiming the "age of austerity", introduced the review with the boast, "By sticking to our long-term economic plan, Britain has become the fastest growing

major advanced economy in the world for the last two years. ... We have now got a stronger economy and we can choose, rightly, to invest more in our national security—more ships, more planes, a bigger navy, a bigger RAF, a better equipped army, better in terms of fighting cyber-attacks and fighting terrorism."

The expansion of the British ruling elite's military capacity came just three days before Cameron is due to make a statement in favour of military action in Syria. In a briefing paper issued alongside Cameron's statement, the Paris attacks were utilised to justify war in Syria: "Combat operations [in Afghanistan] ended in October 2014 for the UK and attention has shifted to operations against ISIL in the Middle East. The attacks in Paris has (sic) prompted renewed debate about whether the UK should extend military offensive operations to Syria."

The push for war in the Middle East and elsewhere is allied to Britain's central role in stepping up aggression by NATO against Russia. The briefing paper draws attention to, among new developments since the 2010 review, "Russia's actions on NATO's eastern flank." It notes, "Russia was barely mentioned in the 2010 SDSR but is likely to merit far more attention this time round. As part of the wider NATO response to Russia's actions in Ukraine, the UK will lead NATO's new Very High Readiness Force in 2017 and has committed a battlegroup of a 1,000 (sic) soldiers to the force every year for the rest of the decade."



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