

Official account of London terror attack unravels

Robert Stevens, Chris Marsden
5 June 2017

Within 24 hours of Saturday's terror attack at London Bridge, the official narrative presented by British Prime Minister Theresa May has begun to fall apart.

Speaking at Downing Street Sunday morning, May declared, "In terms of their planning and execution," the attack in London and the May 22 attack in Manchester "are not connected."

However, after police carried out a raid at the home of one of the attackers, a neighbour told the BBC that he had informed the authorities about the man's Islamic extremist views, but nothing was done. "I did my bit," he said. "I know a lot of people did, but the authorities did not do their bit."

The London terror attack is following the same script as the Manchester bombing as well as countless other high-profile terror incidents throughout Europe, in which the attacks were carried out by people who had been known to the police. In many instances, warnings had been made about the perpetrators.

Just two weeks ago, suicide bomber Salman Abedi killed 22 people, including children, who had been attending an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester. As soon emerged, Abedi and his family were well known to MI5 and the government, which had used them, along with many other Islamists, in its regime-change operations in Libya and Syria.

Over the weekend, the *New York Times* reported that Abedi had travelled to Libya to meet with members of the Islamic State unit responsible for the November 2015 terror attack in Paris. Why he was allowed to return to the UK after this remains unexplained.

May has seized on the terror attacks in a desperate effort to reverse the steep fall in her opinion poll ratings ahead of the June 8 general election. With the latest polls showing the Tories with a mere one percent lead,

there is widespread speculation of the Tories returning with a reduced majority, a hung parliament or even a Labour victory. With its social policies reviled by millions, the government is anxious to make the election a verdict on Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's supposed "softness" on terrorism and unreliability when it comes to national security.

May used her Sunday statement to make various pledges of what a Conservative government would do, despite an agreement with Labour to suspend political campaigning. While insisting that preventing terror attacks meant "taking military action to destroy ISIS in Iraq and Syria," she stressed that Islamist terrorism "cannot be defeated by military intervention alone," or by "the maintenance of a permanent defensive counterterrorism operation, however skilful its leaders and practitioners."

The "leaders and practitioners" to which she refers, MI5 and MI6, are deeply involved in the closest of relations with Islamist groups, which they are even now wielding as proxy forces in regime-change operations in Libya and Syria. The British intelligence agencies allow members of these groups the free movement required to conduct terror attacks in the UK.

Britain also has close relations with Middle East despots who have for years backed and funded terrorist groups. Only days ago it emerged that May's government is blocking the publication of an investigation into foreign funding of jihadi groups, authorised 18 months ago by her predecessor David Cameron, because of the "very sensitive" information it contains about Saudi Arabia, which accounts for 83 percent of UK arms exports. In April, May visited Riyadh to secure further deals.

May's speech centred on her insistence that the assault on democratic rights that has accompanied the

“war on terror” must now be stepped up. She outlined plans to deepen surveillance of the online activity of the UK population and censor the Internet, describing it as a “safe space” for terrorists. But, she continued, “We must not forget about the safe spaces that continue to exist in the real world.” What was required was “stamping it out across the public sector and across society.”

This is a threat to deepen the repressive measures associated with the Prevent Strategy, including the monitoring of pupils and students and an instruction that all those in positions of authority act as state informers.

May concluded with the claim that the vast array of repressive powers granted to the state security services and the police are still not enough. A “counterterrorism strategy” would be enacted “to make sure the police and security services have all the powers they need.”

In his response yesterday evening, Corbyn made clear that the working class cannot look to Labour to provide an alternative to May’s agenda of increased state repression and war. He made no attempt to warn the working class as to the dangers posed. Instead, he again accepted May’s official narrative almost in its entirety and focused his criticism on the government not having done enough to successfully wage the war on terror.

As he has done already by abandoning his opposition to NATO and accepting the Trident nuclear weapons programme, Corbyn sought to reassure the state of his loyal support. “You cannot protect the public on the cheap,” he said, insisting that “The police and security services must get the resources they need, not 20,000 police cuts” as had happened under the Conservatives.

Abandoning his previous opposition to the shoot-to-kill policy first revealed after the fatal shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes, in the aftermath of the July 7, 2005 London bombings, Corbyn said the police should be free to take “whatever action is necessary and effective... That includes full authority for the police to use whatever force is necessary to protect and save life as they did last night, as they did in Westminster in March.”



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit: