

UK elite Parachute Regiment use Corbyn poster for target practice

The Socialist Equality Party (UK)
4 April 2019

Footage of soldiers in the elite Parachute Regiment firing rounds into a poster of Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn is a grave warning of the climate of political violence being fomented by Britain's ruling elite.

The video was posted on Snapchat, before being leaked yesterday onto Twitter. Four paratroopers are seen repeatedly firing at the Corbyn poster with handguns. The words "happy with that" are captioned on the video, before the camera pans to the poster of Corbyn, zooming in to show his head peppered with bullet holes. Some of the soldiers can be heard laughing.

The video was reportedly shot in recent days and its authenticity has been confirmed by the Army. Around 80 members of the 3rd Battalion Parachute Regiment (3 PARA) have been stationed in Kabul in Afghanistan since 2018 as part of the Resolute Support Mission. The footage was apparently shot in the loft of what Sky News reported is the "New Kabul Compound."

Immediate efforts were made to downplay the seriousness of the event.

Ex-Colour Sergeant Trevor Coult told the *Daily Mail*, "It should never have gone online. But it was tomfoolery, nothing serious. There should not be an investigation." Coult had shared the video with the comment, "Not looking good for a Labour leader" and a laughing emoji. Conservative MP and former soldier Johnny Mercer joined the defence effort, tweeting, "every organisation has good people who make serious misjudgements."

The Ministry of Defence said an investigation would be undertaken, but Brigadier Nick Perry, commander of 16 Air Assault Brigade, also downplayed the incident as "a serious error of judgment."

All attempts to portray this event as bad behaviour by

a few individuals must be rejected. The Parachute Regiment is one of the most elite infantry regiments in the world. It strains credulity that no senior officers were aware of what was happening.

The use of Corbyn's image for target practice takes place against a background in which the Labour leader has been repeatedly subjected to death threats by far-right forces. Only last month, as the politically toxic atmosphere over Brexit intensified, he was violently assaulted by a right-wing thug at Finsbury Park Mosque, who had threatened online that he would like to kill opponents of Brexit.

Moreover, this latest attack on Corbyn comes from a unit specialising in counterinsurgency operations. In recent decades 3 PARA was stationed in Northern Ireland where it brutalised the Catholic population and fought in the Falklands/Malvinas War.

Decades of unrestrained militarism have forged a professional military caste, increasingly hostile to any form of civilian control or restraint. In response to the army video, former soldiers and their supporters have taken to social media issuing online threats to assassinate Corbyn. One, identifying as "Army Veteran Royal Signals," tweeted, "I am an Ex soldier. I would shoot Corbyn for real for free."

Such threats are made all the more significant as they come just one day after the fascist Jack Renshaw was found guilty of planning to kill Labour MP Rosie Cooper.

More fundamentally, the target practice against Corbyn by 3 PARA soldiers in Kabul gives expression to views widely held by the leadership of the Armed Forces.

For the last three years, senior military figures have repeatedly warned that a Corbyn government would be unacceptable because of Corbyn's previous opposition

to war, NATO and the use of nuclear weapons.

Within one week of his election as Labour leader in September 2015, the *Sunday Times* cited an anonymous “senior serving general” that in the event of Corbyn becoming prime minister “direct action” would be taken.

“There would be mass resignations at all levels and you would face the very real prospect of an event that would effectively be a mutiny... 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.”

Months later, in breach of the constitutional principle of the political neutrality of the Armed Forces, Chief of the Defence Staff Sir Nicholas Houghton told the BBC’s Andrew Marr that Corbyn’s statement that he would never authorise the use of nuclear weapons “would worry me if that thought was translated into power.”

The Tory government, the Labour Party’s Blairite faction and a frothing right-wing media have united to attack Corbyn as a threat to “national security,” a friend of terrorists, a stooge of Russia’s Putin government and an anti-Semite.

In 2016, a *Daily Mail* article by Blairite Dan Hodges was published under the headline, “Labour must kill vampire Jezza,” accompanied by a photo of Corbyn in a coffin. The article was published just 10 days after the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox by a fascist. “Jezza’s jihadi comrades,” “Corbyn ‘the collaborator’,” “Corbyn and the commie spy” and “Blood on his hands” are among the countless headlines to have dominated the British press for the past three years.

After the video’s existence was widely reported yesterday, Tory MP David Jones asked Prime Minister Theresa May in parliament, “is it still the position of the prime minister that the leader of the opposition [Jeremy Corbyn] is not fit to govern the UK.” May replied, “When we suffered a chemical weapons attack on the streets of Salisbury... [Corbyn] said he preferred to believe Vladimir Putin than our own security agencies. That is not the place of somebody who should be prime minister.”

This was the cue for pro-Brexit Tories to denounce May for entering talks with Corbyn over Brexit. Caroline Johnson said May risked “ushering in a Marxist, anti-Semite led government.” Former

international development minister Priti Patel tweeted, “A man who sides with terrorists and socialist dictators, would surrender our nuclear deterrent, has let anti-Semitism run rife in his Party and would bankrupt Britain has now been given the keys to Brexit.”

This follows apocalyptic newspaper headlines that a failure by the Tories to resolve the Brexit crisis risks allowing a Corbyn-led government, in the words of the *Sun*, to “force their Marxist agenda down our throats.”

Responding to the military video yesterday, Corbyn said, “I hope the Ministry of Defence will conduct an inquiry into it and find out what was going on and who did that.”

Referring to Labour MP Rosie Cooper having narrowly evaded an assassination plot, Corbyn added, “Yes people have disagreements and yes people have divisions.” But he implored, “Conduct those divisions and disagreements in a respectful way. Don’t descend into something ugly and violent.”

Corbyn’s response is politically criminal. Rather than alert the working class to the threat it faces from the armed forces, he expresses confidence in its investigatory process and urges pacifism and appeasement towards the class enemy.

His decision to engage in private talks with May on Brexit is of a piece with this perspective. He opposes any move against his own party’s right wing and refuses to call for a mobilisation of the working class to bring down the Tory government. While he preaches defence of the national interest through negotiated collaboration, the government has laid down plans to mobilise thousands of troops onto the streets of Britain.

Referring to Operation Yellowhammer being enacted in the event of a no-deal Brexit, Health Secretary Matt Hancock said ministers were not “specifically” planning for martial law, “but did not rule it out as an option.” In such a situation the target practice using pictures of Corbyn would be revealed as preparation for gunning down demonstrators and striking workers.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)