

# UK issues D-Notices to suppress reports of SAS special forces operations in Gaza

Robert Stevens  
30 October 2023

Britain's Conservative government has issued notices to the media to suppress reports of the operations of the Special Air Service (SAS) in Gaza.

On Saturday, the *Socialist Worker*, newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party, revealed it had been sent a "D Notice" Saturday morning from the Defence and Security Media Advisory (DSMA) Committee requesting it not publish information relating to the operations of the SAS.

D Notices are used by the British state to veto the publication of news damaging to its interests. The slavish collusion of the mainstream media ensures that such notices function as gag orders. A high level branch of the state, the DSMA's chair is Paul Wyatt, Director General Security Policy at the Ministry of Defence. Other committee members include the Deputy National Security Adviser, Cabinet Office; Director National Security at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; Director National Security at the Home Office; and the Director National Security at the Ministry of Defence.

An article by *Socialist Worker* editor Charlie Kimber notes, "Specifically this 'D notice' concerned British special forces operating in the Middle East." The e-mail to the media was from the DSMA secretary, Brigadier Geoffrey Dodds, he added.

Dodds states, "Reports have started to appear in some publications claiming that UK Special Forces have deployed to sensitive areas of the Middle East and then linking that deployment to hostage rescue/evacuation operations.

"May I take this opportunity to remind editors that publication of such information contravenes the DSMA notice code. I therefore advise that claims of such deployments should not be published nor broadcast without first seeking Defence and Security Media

advice".

He added, "This Notice aims to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of classified information about Special Forces and other MOD units engaged in security, intelligence and counter-terrorist operations, including their methods, techniques and activities."

Dodds warned, "Such disclosure could reveal details of operations or operating methods and techniques before, during and after their execution which would bestow an advantage on an adversary which could endanger national security and increase the risk to UK lives."

The SWP notes, "The *Daily Mail* newspaper, which has the right sort of contacts for such a story [referred to by Dodds], had reported, 'UK's elite SAS on 'standby in Cyprus' to rescue British hostages held captive in Gaza by Hamas'."

The *Mail's* story, published October 28, was largely culled from a piece printed in the *Sun* October 27. Published as an exclusive, this was headlined, "SAS troops on standby in Cyprus to rescue hostages and Brits stranded in Gaza".

The article reports that "Some 200 Brits are stranded in Gaza after Israel and Egypt sealed the strip's borders and five are held there by Hamas terrorists." So the "elite soldiers are also braced to free UK citizens trapped by the bloodbath."

The *Sun* notes, "Britain's military bases in Cyprus offer a strategic presence in the eastern Med." It adds, "And the SAS sabre squadron has been joined on the island by a 100-strong crisis command team."

Just how the SAS are supposed to rescue around 200 hostages and a further 200 British citizens in Gaza in the middle of carpet bombing and a ground invasion by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) is not explained by the *Sun*, though the *Mail* notes that a former SAS soldier

has warned that such an attempt could “end in disaster... It will be a complete and utter nightmare.”

Moreover, it is highly likely that there are no hostages left alive, such is the intensity of Israeli bombing of the tunnels in Gaza City, where it is understood they were being held.

According to a statement by the Gaza Strip media office issued on October 24, Israel had by that point already dropped more than 12,000 tons of explosives on the Gaza Strip since October 7, “The explosive force of these explosives is equivalent to the nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima in Japan”, it stated, adding, “An average of 33 tons of explosives were dropped per square kilometer on the Palestinian enclave since Israel started its aggression”.

The bombing has only intensified since.

The SAS is not on standby in Cyprus on some mercy mission to rescue hostages. What the story points to is the preparation by the SAS to work alongside the IDF in Gaza as part of the Netanyahu government’s declared aim to “wipe Hamas off the face of the earth”—in the words of retired army general and minister without portfolio Benny Gantz.

Benjamin Netanyahu himself is no stranger to special forces operations having himself once been a team leader in Sayeret Matkal, Israel’s equivalent of the SAS, who even have the same “Who Dares Wins” motto. Both of Netanyahu’s brothers also served in the unit.

Dodds is a senior military figure, notably a specialist in military planning. His biography on the DSMA website states that he took up the post of secretary in November 2016. “Prior to that he spent 36 years in the British Army as a Sapper Officer serving operationally in command appointments in the Falkland Islands, Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. He has also served in United Nations Headquarters as a military planner, in various NATO posts and in military diplomatic appointments worldwide.”

Britain’s deepening involvement in two NATO-led wars, Ukraine and now Gaza, demands a clampdown on democratic rights, including media freedoms, and censorship of the crimes involved. Yet such is the self-censorship practised by the national media that in most cases the Defence and Security Media Advisory functions only in the capacity of sending out politely worded requests to its Committee members, including

the Scottish Newspaper Society, the Press Association, the BBC, ITN, ITV, Sky TV and the Society of Editors.

In the minutes of a meeting of the DSMA held at the Ministry of Defence, it is recorded that a report delivered by Dodds noted with satisfaction that from October 27, 2022 to April 10, 2023, “no supplementary notices had been issued in the period” and that this was “positive, since the issue of these notices inevitably meant that sensitive information had not been contained at an earlier stage.”

No-one would ever hear of any D Notices being ordered were it not for independent media sources revealing them. The *Socialist Worker*’s article on the latest D Notice links to an earlier report, from April 1, 2022, that the newspaper was subject to another request that it not report on Ukrainian troops being trained by UK troops, a fact that the *Times* newspaper had already made public.

Two months earlier, *Declassified UK* revealed it had been asked by the DSMA to “remove part of our story revealing British support for an African dictatorship” [Cameroon], which it refused to do.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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