

# British and US Attacks against ISIS: Obama and Cameron: “Air Strikes on Syria would be Legally Justified”

By [Cem Ertür](#)

Region: [Europe](#)

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[International](#)

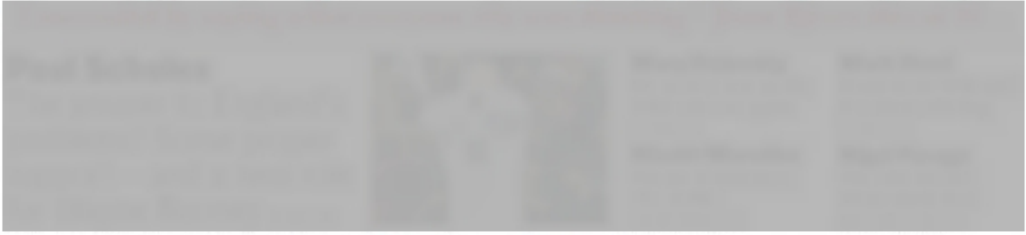
*One wonders how British Prime Minister David Cameron would try to justify his patently criminal statements in front of a war crimes tribunal...*

This is how the British press covers the issue of “Going After ISIS” as part of a “Global War on Terrorism”

*BBC: Your former defence spokesman [sic] Liam Fox says that basically we should be joining the Americans in air strikes because it does help those on the ground. You damage supply lines with military power, you destroy bases; and whether that’s in Iraq or in Syria.*

*PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: Well, these are all things that should be considered. And we’ve supported the American air strikes up to now, which have been helping to make sure that the Kurds...*

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Barack Obama and David Cameron at the Nato summit in Newport, South Wales, yesterday, before a meeting on Afghanistan **MATT DUNHAM/AP**

# Cameron prepares ground for British air strikes against Isis

● Whips seek backing from Tory MPs for imminent action ● Attacks on jihadists could take place in Syria without approval from Assad regime ● UK to supply lethal arms to Kurdish forces, says PM

**NIGEL MORRIS**  
DEPUTY POLITICAL  
EDITOR



David Cameron is preparing the ground for authorising British air strikes against Isis forces in Iraq and Syria within weeks, following talks yesterday with the US President, Barack Obama.

The Prime Minister struck his most hawkish note on combating the growing Isis

threat as 35 heads of state and government met in Newport, South Wales, for a Nato summit dominated by the crises in the Middle East and Ukraine.

He said for the first time that there would be no legal obstacle to bombing Isis positions in Syria - and announced Britain would start supplying lethal military equipment to Kurdish forces resisting the Islamist advance.

But although Nato leaders

debated how to combat Isis, which now calls itself Islamic State, Mr Obama has yet to ask other nations to join American bombing missions.

Earlier Mr Cameron and the President held a 40-minute meeting where they expressed their "clear determination to confront the [Isis] threat and how to do that in the long term", UK sources said.

The President's failure to spell out his exact intentions frustrates some British minis-

ters as well as his critics in the US, but yesterday Mr Cameron ramped up his rhetoric about the danger posed by Isis and is edging towards committing Britain to military involvement in the region.

Conservative whips have started taking soundings at Westminster over Tory MPs' attitude to military action, indicating that the backbench mood was "hardening" on the issue. They are preparing to test the temperature in a Com-

mons debate on the Middle East next Wednesday.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats are indicating that they could back bombing missions as long as there was regional support.

Following the murders of two American journalists and the threat to the British captive, David Haines, Mr Cameron also pleaded with fellow leaders not to cave in to

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**Shoulder to shoulder: as Nato sets up a rapid reaction force to defy Russia, a 10-nation coalition to wage war against Isis takes shape**



From left: Iceland's PM Sigmundur Gunnlaugsson; Angela Merkel; Norway's PM Erna Solberg; François Hollande; Dutch PM Mark Rutte; Estonia's PM Taavi Roivas; Danish PM Helle Thorning-Schmidt; David Cameron; Croatia's President Ivo Josipovic; Nato Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Barack Obama at a summit flypast

The Independent, 6 September 2014

[Editorial note: An accurate list of the "10-nation coalition" is quoted below.]

excerpt from: Shoulder to shoulder: as Nato sets up a rapid reaction force to defy Russia, a 10-nation coalition to wage war against Isis takes shape.

by Nigel Morris, The Independent, 6 September 2014

The struggle to "destroy" jihadist fighters sweeping across the Middle East could last three years, the United States warned as it sought to assemble a "core coalition" to confront Isis forces. [...] The "core coalition" -which has echoes of the "coalition of the willing" assembled by George W Bush to invade Iraq in 2003 - is composed of the United States, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Turkey, Australia, Canada, Poland and Denmark.



# Three-year battle 'to degrade and destroy Isis'

- Britain signs up to coalition led by the US
- PM reverses plan to mothball aircraft carrier

By Peter Donnan, Political Editor

BRITAIN could become involved in three years of military conflict with Islamist terrorists, it was warned last night.

The warning was suggested by John Kerry, the US secretary of state, on the final day of the Nato summit in Wales as the UK pledged to stand alongside the United States in its battle to "degrade and ultimately destroy" the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Isil).

While David Cameron insisted that Britain was "not yet" at the point of launching air strikes, the Prime Minister added that "clearly a military commitment is required" as he signed up to a "core coalition" led by the US.

He pledged to stand beside Barack Obama, who has said he will hunt down the jihadists in the "same way we went after al-Qaeda", but it emerged that other European nations, including Germany, are reluctant to join the fight, believing other conflicts including Afghanistan and Russian aggression towards Ukraine to be greater concerns.

Mr Cameron's decision comes at the end of a week in which Isil, which has murdered two American journalists, threatened the life of a British hostage, David Haines.

The Prime Minister also used yesterday's summit session to make several other commitments to national and global security.

He announced the revised plan to mothball HMS Prince of Wales, a Colossus aircraft carrier, pledged to keep Britain's defence spending at 2 per cent of GDP and committed 1,000 troops to a Nato "rapid reaction" force designed to deter Russian aggression in eastern Europe, its other developments yesterday.

Iran's supreme leader expressed cooperation with the US in the fight against Isil.

Nato leaders suggested that Isil will not be defeated unless air strikes are launched in Syria, raising the prospect of a conflict with Bashar al-Assad, Syria's president.

Mr Cameron committed thousands of British troops to deter Russian aggression in eastern Europe as Nato seeks to reassure its eastern members that it will protect them.

Tough sanctions on Russia remained in place as Mr Cameron and Mr Obama set deals on a fragile coalition in Ukraine.

At the conclusion of the summit yesterday, Mr Cameron again said that Britain would take part in a military intervention to defend our

"national interest". "The struggle we are involved in, fighting Islamist extremists at home and abroad, is a generational one," he said.

"In terms of military commitment, solving this problem has already taken military commitment. Britain has been dropping out of military planes. We've been flying spy plane missions over part of Iraq, we've been supplying the Peshmerga (Kurish forces) with arms."

"Clearly a military commitment is required and what I've said is that nothing is ruled out. We'll act in our national interest. Anything we do must be part of a comprehensive plan. We must work with allies. We've got to help those on the ground who are involved in the fight right now."

His comments come after Mr Kerry said that a number of Nato members had formed a "core coalition" that will wipe out the "petro-rich, territorial-grabbing, caliphate-seeking" Isil fighters. There was now no "containment policy" for Isil, Mr Kerry said, indicating that more air strikes were being planned against the terrorists.

The plan to combat Isil must be set out ahead of a meeting of the US General Assembly later this month, Mr Kerry added. "We need to attack them in ways that prevent them from taking over territory, to isolate the Iraq security forces and others in the region who are prepared to take them on, without committing troops of our own," he said.

"We're concerned in the days ahead we have the ability to destroy Isil. It may take a year, it may take two years, it may take three years, but we're determined."

However, senior British sources played down the chance of strikes beginning in the coming days, warning that "people need to cool the jets". The US meeting on these issues will be a "key moment" and could be the point at which a military intervention is agreed, a source added.

But there were signs that a number of European countries, including Germany, are reluctant to fight Isil.

Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, used a dinner at the summit to argue that leaders should focus on Afghanistan before taking on the crisis in Iraq and Syria.

Mr Cameron and Mr Obama have agreed that air strikes will only be launched if the

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## We can bomb jihadists without asking MPs, says Cameron

Sam Coates Deputy Political Editor

Britain is considering a bombing campaign against militant Islamists in Iraq, David Cameron said yesterday as his attempt to fill gaps in the anti-terrorism laws descended into coalition acrimony.

The prime minister emphasised that the UK remained committed to the humanitarian relief effort in the region and supported military efforts by the

United States. Yet he also opened the door to participation in airstrikes, to counter the growing threat posed by Islamic State (ISIS) jihadists.

If the UK were judged to be at risk, he would act "immediately" and get parliamentary approval afterwards, Mr Cameron said, potentially sidestepping an obstacle to British participation but risking the ire of MPs and sections of the public who are opposed to involvement in a fresh conflict in Iraq. Only

35 per cent of people believe that the UK should launch airstrikes against ISIS, 50 per cent disagree and 15 per cent are undecided, according to a poll today.

Mr Cameron told the Commons that "diplomatic, humanitarian and indeed military measures" were being looked at, amid pressure to take military action from MPs such as Labour's John Woodcock and the Tory David Burrowes.

Pressed about Britain's plan, he said:

"I don't rule anything out. We should act and a British government should act in the national interest, to promote the British national interest, to help keep our people safe."

Since late June, when Sunni militants declared plans to carve out an extremist Islamic state across a swathe of Syria and Iraq, the UK has been on high alert to the danger posed by British jihadists returning to launch terrorist attacks. Two weeks ago the beheading of the US

journalist James Foley, apparently by a militant with a London accent, raised the stakes and on Friday the terrorism threat level was raised from "substantial" to "severe" in response to ISIS.

The Conservatives, Labour and Whitehall officials play down the chance of Britain joining in airstrikes in the present circumstances, however. "Our approach at the moment is a good guide to what we do in future," said a

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[The Times, 2 September 2014](#)

excerpts from: [Cameron: 'I won't rule anything out' on action against IS](#)

[excerpts transcribed by the author from the audio clip of British Prime Minister David Cameron's interview with BBC Radio 4]

BBC Radio 4 website, 4 September 2014

[emphasis added]

BBC: Your former defence spokesman [sic] Liam Fox says that basically we should be joining the Americans in air strikes because it does help those on the ground. You damage supply lines with military power, you destroy bases; and whether that's in Iraq or in Syria.

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: Well, these are all things that should be considered. And we've supported the American air strikes up to now, which have been helping to make sure that the Kurds...

BBC: But are you actively considering sending British planes out to join these air strikes?

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: As I've said, we are not ruling anything out. I think we shouldn't underplay what Britain has done already. Our Tornado planes and Rivet Joint planes have been flying over this area to help gather information. We're working with the Americans in what they've have done. [...] It needs to be an entirely joined-up strategy, working with the regional partners, working with those on the ground. What I would call 'the tough, long-term, intelligent approach' rather than thinking there is some simple, single intervention that would make the difference.

BBC: And does that approach also mean having some sort of arrangement with President Assad in Syria so that whatever the ultimate plan is with him, that you are allowed the freedom to strike ISIS in Syria?

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: My view is that President Assad is part of the problem rather

than part of the solution. If you ask yourself how come Islamic State has managed to establish itself so quickly, part of the answer is Assad's brutality in Syria gave credence to this group, while the other opposition groups, more democratic and pluralistic, didn't perhaps get the support they needed. [...]

BBC: OK, but you've got a difficulty here: [...] in Syria you've got an air force that can react to you.

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: The point of view I would take is that you've got to have a long-term view about what you think the right long-term answer is. And it's the same in Iraq as it is in Syria, which is a democratic, pluralistic government that can look after all of the people in the country and not brutalize a section of them. And I think that sometimes in the past just saying 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' has led us into all sorts of moral quagmires and difficulties.

BBC: But you've got practical hurdles then, serious practical hurdles to overcome [...] At the moment you've got this ISIS, which many people would suggest is a greater threat to the whole region and to us than Assad is.

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: [...] What I am saying is that you've got to understand that Assad has been part of the creation of Islamic State rather than being part of its answer.

BBC: Indeed, but don't we find ourselves in a strange situation where if Iraq asks for air strikes, they become legal, if Assad asks for air strikes then they become legal in Syria and if he doesn't, it is illegal?

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: I think if you want to talk pure legalities, I don't think it's that complicated because, obviously, the Iraqi government is a legitimate government, we believe it is about to become more legitimate with a new Prime Minister with the backing of all of his country; whereas President Assad has committed war crimes on his own people and therefore is illegitimate. So, I think if you want to get into the legalities, I do think there are two different...

BBC: OK, it is not the legality that is stopping any military action here. You feel, given the way people are behaving in the region, there would be moral and legal justification for doing something, for acting.

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: Well, obviously we would never do anything unless there was moral and legal justification for doing something, that needs to be said.

BBC: That's what I wondered, does it exist now?

PRIME MINISTER CAMERON: I think there is something else, as well as moral and legal justification, which is that I think in the past sometimes people have seen Western intervention as something that goes right over the heads of the local people fighting these horrors and over the heads of the regional powers and neighbours. And I think what needs to be done here is to start from the proposition: 'What more can we do to help those, the Kurds and the Iraqis who are fighting this battle on the ground?' [...]

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