

This paper is for Government departments and statutory organisations dealing with counter-terrorism. It is intended to inform you about CT issues that have been covered in the media and to help you to respond to any concerns generated as a result. It is not intended to provide detailed briefing about Government policies, and explaining these issues to the media is the role of relevant departmental press offices.

Libyan No Fly Zone

Coalition action in Libya has led to a degree of scepticism and concern in some UK British Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) media. Some commentators are citing coalition action in the country as hypocrisy due to a lack of action in other countries in the region. Other commentators have asked whether the end goal of the coalition is to un-seat Qadhafi, rather than to protect ordinary Libyan citizens.

What is the no fly zone and why has it been implemented?

The provision for a no fly zone is included in the UN Security Council Resolution 1973. In Libya this means: demanding an immediate ceasefire; authorising all necessary measures to protect civilians (excluding a foreign occupation force in Libya); imposing a no fly zone, and stepping up a range of sanctions on Qadhafi's regime. More information can be found at <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res/1973/scres73.htm>.

There is clear evidence that Qadhafi breached the ceasefire demanded by the UN on Thursday March 17th. On Saturday March 19th, the British Chief of Defence Staff's Strategic Communications Officer, Major General John Lorimer said British Armed Forces, as authorised by the UN Security Council Resolution, had participated in a co-ordinated strike against Libyan Air Defence systems.

On Saturday March 19th, the Prime Minister David Cameron said: "We have all seen the appalling brutality that Colonel Qadhafi has meted out against his own people. And far from introducing the ceasefire he spoke about, he has actually stepped up the attacks and the brutality that we can all see. So what we are doing is necessary, it is legal, and it is right. It is necessary because, with others, we should be trying to prevent him using his military against his own people".

On March 22, Arab League Secretary General Amr Musa said: "Both the Arab League's and my stances are completely clear. We want to protect the Libyan civilians, and to leave them free to express their opinions, without being aggressed. For this reason, the Arab League has adopted a clear stance from the beginning until now. This stance is represented by, first, suspending the Libyan participation in the operations of the Arab League; second, calling for the establishment of a no-fly zone; third, calling on the UN Security Council to adopt the necessary resolution; and fourth, accepting the UN Security Council resolution, and monitoring the following up of its implementation. What I said (the day before) yesterday, and I reiterate now is that we basically aim to protect the civilians. We are in favour of any measure that leads to the protection of civilians. As for any measure that can threaten the civilians, we do not accept it."

The decision to implement a no fly zone was taken by an international coalition: the entire British Cabinet, in consultation with the US, France, Arab states and other countries, and with the clear backing of the UN.

Aren't you just trying to un-seat Qadhafi?

No. The international coalition objective remains to protect civilians and to save lives, so forces will continue to act in line with the UN mandate that has been approved for that purpose.

The British Government has been clear that they want to see a transition to a Government that embraces the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people. Qadhafi's actions have shown that he has no role to play in

this. The British Government have called for him to step down immediately so that the Libyan people can choose their government.

Isn't this hypocritical given the lack of action in other countries in the region?

As the Defence Secretary, Liam Fox, said to the House on March 14th, "the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is looking not only at what is happening in Libya but also at other countries in the region where there has been instability in recent times". In addition, the Prime Minister said that: "just as in Egypt we supported the people who wanted democracy, so in Libya we should be against this brutal repression."

Progress in Afghanistan

On Tuesday March 22nd, President Karzai marked the Afghan New Year with an announcement on the transition process, which was widely covered in the media. Some commentators have welcomed the announcement saying it demonstrates good progress while others have questioned whether Afghanistan is strong enough yet to take on this additional responsibility.

What was the announcement on transition?

President Karzai announced the first Afghan districts and provinces that will be involved in the transition process. The Government of Afghanistan has determined that security, governance and development conditions in selected areas are sufficient for the initiation of the transition process. This will mean that Afghan soldiers and police will be fully responsible for security in these areas. Transition will begin this summer in seven areas and will be complete at the end of 2014. This announcement was welcomed by NATO and the British Government.

So does this mean that we have been defeated in Afghanistan?

No. The transition process represents the next stage of Afghanistan's journey to self reliance and reflects the progress already made by Afghan and International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) to deliver security in Afghanistan. This decision follows many months of joint consultation and planning, and is based on careful assessments.

Why are we in Afghanistan in the first place?

International forces from 48 nations are in Afghanistan to prevent Al Qa'ida (AQ) from using Afghan territory to, once again, plot and launch terror attacks. The British Government does not seek a perfect Afghanistan but one that is able to maintain its own security, prevent the return of AQ and support the work that International Security Assistance Force is doing.

Other News

Please also see the following interesting news items from the past week, commenting more generally on the nature of terrorism and terrorist organisations, which you may want to circulate more widely:

Home Office launches anti-terrorist reporting website

iEngage comments on the news that the Home Office has launched a website where members of the public can report material on the Internet which could be used to incite terrorism.

Muslim cricket star's anti-terror video message

Pakistani cricketer Mushtaq Ahmed is backing a campaign to promote British values. Ahmed is seen as being able to reach people in both Britain and his home country who may be at risk of being radicalised. He says in a new YouTube video for the Foreign Office: "Nobody is disrespecting each other's culture or religion here. The most important thing in Britain is people let you do what you want to do." The video is one of a series produced to highlight the UK's tolerant multi-faith society.