

SP2AAT

SPEECH ON THE DEBATE

16 APRIL 1986

INTRODUCTION

Mr Speaker, my statement yesterday explained the Government's decision to support the United States military action, taken in self-defence, against terrorist targets in Libya.

Of course, when we took our decision, we were aware of the wider issues and of people's fears.

Terrorism attacks free societies and plays on those fears.

If those tactics succeed, ^{Terrorism} ~~it~~ saps the will of free peoples to resist.

And so we have heard some of those arguments in this country - "don't associate ourselves with the United States" some say - "don't support them in fighting back, we may expose ourselves to more attacks".

Mr Speaker, terrorism has to be defeated, it cannot
be tolerated or side-stepped.

And when other ways and other methods have
failed - and I am the first to wish they
had succeeded, - it is right that the
terrorist should know that firm steps
will be taken to deter him from attacking
either other peoples or his own people who
have taken refuge in countries that are

free.

*and the evidence
we have of
Luby's involvement.*

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Central

Before dealing further with that Lissue, I should

like to report to the House on the ~~latest~~

situation, *so far as we know it*. There have

*been reports of gunfire in Tripoli this morning - but
we ^{on the} have no firm information.*

The United States action was conducted against five

specific targets directly connected with

terrorism.

It will of course be for the United States

Government to publish its assessment of
its results.

But, we now know that there were a number of
civilian casualties, some of them
children.

It is reported that they included members
of Colonel Qadaffi's own family.

The casualties are of course a matter of
great sorrow.

We also remember with ^{Sadness} ~~great sorrow~~ all
those men and women and children who have
lost their lives as a result of terrorist
acts over the years - so many of them
performed at the Libyan government's
behest.

UNITED KINGDOM CITIZENS

We have no reports of British casualties as a result of the American action nor of any subsequent incidents involving British citizens in Libya.

I understand that telephone lines to Libya are open and that people in the United Kingdom have been able to contact their relatives there.

As I told the House yesterday, since May 1984 we have had to advise British

citizens choosing to live and work in
Libya that they do so on their own
responsibility and at their own risk.

But Our Consul in the British Interests
Section of the Italian Embassy has been
and will remain in close touch with
representatives of the British community,
to advise them on the best course of
action.

We are most grateful for the work of the

Italian authorities, as our protecting power, on behalf of the British community in Libya.

THE TERRORIST THREAT TO UNITED KINGDOM INTERESTS

In this country we have to be alert to the possibility of further terrorist attacks. So too do our British communities abroad. Our security precautions have been heightened.

But it is, of course, the technique of the terrorist not just to choose obvious targets.

Members of the public should therefore be ready to report to the police anything suspicious which attracts their attention.

We have also taken steps to defend our interests overseas, seeking from foreign governments / enhanced protection for British Embassies and communities.

WORLD REACTION

The United Nations Security Council met twice yesterday and resumes today.

*Canada
FRG
Reserve /
noted*

With some significant exceptions, first international reactions have been critical, even to this carefully limited use of force in self-defence.

But I believe we can be pretty certain, Mr Speaker, that some of the routine

denunciations conceal a rather different
view in reality.

Concern has been expressed about the effects of this

event on relations between East and West.

The United States informed the Soviet

Union that they had conclusive evidence of

Libyan involvement in terrorist

activities, including the Berlin bomb;

that limited military action was being

taken; and that it was in no way directed against the Soviet Union.

We now hear that Mr Shevardnadze has postponed his meeting with Mr Shultz planned for next month.

That looks to me rather like a ritual gesture.

If the Soviet Union is really interested in arms control, it will resume senior

ministerial contacts before long.

THE EVIDENCE

Mr. Speaker, Right Hon and Hon Members have asked me

about the evidence that the Libyan

government is involved in terrorist

attacks against the United States and

other Western countries.

Much of this derives of course from secret

intelligence.

As I explained to the House yesterday, it is

necessary to be extremely careful about

publishing detailed material of this

kind.

To do so can jeopardise sources on which

we continue to rely for timely and vital

information.

I can, however, assure the House that the Government

is satisfied from the evidence that Libya bears a wide and heavy responsibility for acts of terrorism.

For example, there is evidence showing that on 25 March, a week before the recent Berlin bombing, instructions were sent from Tripoli to the Libyan People's Bureau in East Berlin to conduct a terrorist attack against the Americans.

On 4 April the Libyan People's Bureau alerted Tripoli that the attack would be carried out the following morning.

On 5 April, the Bureau reported to Tripoli that the operation had been carried out successfully.

As the House will recall, the bomb which killed two people and injured 230 had exploded in the early hours of that same morning.

This country too is among the many that have
suffered from Libyan terrorism.

- We shall not forget the tragic murder
of WPC Fletcher by shots fired from the
Libyan People's Bureau in London just
two years ago tomorrow.
- It is also beyond doubt that Libya
provides the Provisional IRA with money
and weapons.

- The major find of arms in Sligo and Roscommon in the Irish Republic on 26 January, the largest ever on the island, included rifles and ammunition from Libya.

There is recent evidence for Libyan support for terrorism in a number of other countries.

For instance:

- Only three weeks ago, intelligence

uncovered a plot to attack with a bomb
civilians queueing for visas at the
American Embassy in Paris.

It was foiled and many lives must have
been saved.

France subsequently expelled two
members of the Libyan People's Bureau
in Paris for their involvement.

- On 6 April an attempt to attack the
United States Embassy in Beirut, which

we know to have been undertaken on
Libyan Government instructions, failed
when the rocket exploded on launch.

It is equally clear that Libya was planning yet more
attacks.

- The Americans have evidence that United States citizens are being followed and American Embassies watched by Libyan intelligence agents in a number of

countries spread across the world.

- In Africa alone, there is intelligence of Libyan preparations for attacks on American facilities in no less than ten countries.

There is other specific evidence of Libyan

involvement in past acts of terrorism, and in plans for future acts of terrorism.

But I cannot give details because that

would endanger lives and make it more
difficult to apprehend the terrorists..

We also have evidence that the Libyans sometimes
chose to operate by using other Middle
East terrorist groups.

We do not rely on intelligence alone.

Colonel Qadaffi openly speaks of his
objectives.

I shall give just one instance.

In a speech given at the Wheelus Base in

Libya in June 1984 he said:

"We are capable of exporting terrorism to
the heart of America.

We are also capable of physical

liquidation and destruction and arson

inside America."

NON-MILITARY MEASURES

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, many hon Members referred to the need to give priority to measures other than military.

But, Mr Speaker, the sad fact is that neither international condemnation nor peaceful pressure over the years has deterred Libya from promoting and carrying out acts of terrorism.

In 1981 the United States closed the Libyan People's Bureau in Washington and took measures to limit trade with Libya.

Later, in January this year, the United States Government announced a series of economic measures against Libya.

They sought the support of other Western countries.

We took the view, together with our

European partners, that economic sanctions work only if every country in the world applies them.

Alas, that was not going to happen with Libya.

In April 1984 we took our own measures.

We closed the Libyan People's Bureau in London and broke diplomatic relations with Libya.

We imposed a strict visa regime on Libyans coming to this country and we banned new contracts for the supply of defence equipment and we severely limited ECGD credit for other trade.

Over the years there have been many international declarations against terrorism, for example:

- by the Economic Summit under British

chairmanship in London in June 1984;

- by the European Council in Dublin in

December 1984;

- and finally by the United Nations

General Assembly in December 1985.

All those meetings adopted resolutions

condemning terrorism and calling for

greater international cooperation against

it.

Indeed the resolution of the United

Nations General Assembly unequivocally condemns, as criminal, all acts, methods and practices of terrorism.

It calls upon all States in accordance with international law to refrain from organising, instigating, assisting or participating in terrorist acts in other States.

After the Achille Lauro incident, the Security Council issued a statement

condemning terrorism in all its forms
everywhere.

But while resolutions and condemnation issued from
those cities, in others more terrible
events - bombings, hijackings and
kidnappings - were ^{happening} ~~occurring~~ or were being
planned.

They are still being planned.

*Terrorist activities
Assumed neutral response*

That was the background to the case for military action under the inherent right of self-defence to deter planned Libyan terrorist attacks against American targets.

EXCHANGES WITH THE UNITED STATES

President Reagan informed me last week that the United States intended to take such

action.

He sought our support.

Under the consultation arrangements which have continued under successive governments for over 30 years, he also sought our agreement to the use of United States aircraft based in this country.

In the exchanges which followed I raised a number of questions and concerns.

I concentrated on the principle of self-defence, recognised in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, and the consequent need to limit the action and to relate the selection of targets clearly to terrorism.

There were of course risks in what was proposed.

Many of them have been raised in the House and elsewhere since the action took

place.

I pondered them deeply with the Ministers most closely concerned.

For decisions like this are never easy.

We also considered the wider implications, including our relations with other countries.

And we had to weigh the importance for this country's security of our Alliance with the United States and the American

role in the defence of Europe.

As I told the House yesterday, I replied to the President that we would support action directed against specific Libyan targets demonstrably involved in the conduct and support of terrorist activities.

Further, that if the President concluded that it was necessary, we would agree to the deployment of United States aircraft

from bases in the United Kingdom for that specific purpose.

The President responded that the operation would be limited to clearly defined targets related to terrorism, and that every effort would be made to minimise collateral damage.

He made it clear that, for the reasons I indicated yesterday, he regarded the use of F-111 aircraft from bases in the United

Kingdom as essential.

There are, I understand, no other F-111s stationed in Europe.

Had we refused permission for the use of those aircraft the United States operation would still have taken place; but more lives would probably have been lost, both on the ground and in the air.

It has been suggested that, as a result of further

Libyan terrorism, the United States might feel constrained to act again.

I earnestly hope that such a contingency will not arise.

But in my exchanges with the President

I reserved the position of the United Kingdom on any question of further action which might be more general or less clearly directed against terrorism.

Moreover, it is clearly understood between President Reagan and myself that, if there were any question of using United States aircraft based in this country in a further action, that would be the subject of a new approach to the United Kingdom under the joint consultation arrangements.

CONSEQUENCES OF US ACTION

Many hon Members have questioned whether the US

action will be effective in stopping

terrorism or will instead have the effect

of quickening the cycle of violence in the

Middle East.

Let us remember, Mr. Speaker, that the violence

began long ago.

It has already taken a great many lives.

It has not been so much a cycle of

violence but a one-sided campaign of

killing and maiming by ruthless

terrorists, many with close connections

with Libya.

The response of the countries whose

citizens have been attacked - has not so

far stopped that campaign.

Indeed one has to ask whether it has not

been the failure to act in self-defence
which has encouraged state-sponsored
terrorism.

Firm and decisive action may make those
who continue to practise terrorism as a
policy think again.

It has also been suggested that the United States
action will only build up Colonel
Qadaffi's prestige and support in the Arab

world.

In the very short term, one must expect statements of support for Libya from other Arab countries - though one is entitled to ask how profound or durable that support will be.

But moderate Arab governments, indeed moderate governments everywhere, have nothing to gain from seeing Colonel Qadaffi build up power and influence by

persisting in policies of violence and
terror.

Their interest, like ours, lies in seeing
the problems of the Middle East solved by
peaceful negotiation, a negotiation whose
chances of success will be much enhanced
if terrorism can be defeated.

And let me emphasise one very important point.

A peaceful settlement of the Arab/Israel

question remains our policy and we shall continue to seek ways forward with moderate Arab governments.

Indeed, I shall be seeing King Hussein later this week to discuss this very matter.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, The United States is our greatest ally, the foundation of the Alliance which has

preserved our security and peace for more than a generation.

In defence of liberty, our liberty as well as her own, she maintains in Western Europe 330,000 servicemen.

That is more than the whole of Britain's regular forces.

She gave us unstinting help when we needed it in the South Atlantic four years ago.

The growing threat of international terrorism is not directed solely at the United States.

We in the United Kingdom have also long been in the front line.

To overcome the threat is in the vital interests of all countries founded upon freedom and the rule of law.

Terrorism exploits the natural reluctance of a free society to defend itself, in the last

resort, with arms.

Terrorism thrives on appeasement.

Of course we shall continue to make every effort to
defeat it by political means.

But in this case that was not enough.

The time had come for action.

The United States took it.

Their decision was justified.

*As friends and allies, we supported
them.*

As friends and allies, we supported them.