

Keir Starmer's UK government uses Cyprus to enable Israel's genocide in Gaza

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Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Good day. This is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you from Kalamata, Greece, on September 20th, 2024. Earlier this week, from September 16th to 18th, I was in occupied Cyprus. To be clear, I regard the whole of Cyprus as occupied. As is widely acknowledged, the northern section of Cyprus has been occupied by the Turkish military for about 50 years. The remainder of the island, which is nominally under the control of a locally elected Greek Cypriot government, is, in my opinion, effectively occupied by the British and American militaries. Central to my thesis that that part of the island is occupied by the US and British armies is Akrotiri. As I've reported previously, Akrotiri is a peninsula on the southern coast of Cyprus. A major British military base is situated there. There's another British military base on the southern coast of Cyprus to the east of Akrotiri. Akrotiri is used extensively by the US military. The British military base there is situated in what is known as a British overseas territory. To simplify matters, this means that as a legal matter, this peninsula belongs to Britain. The indigenous population of the island was required, in effect, to cede this land to the British in 1960, along with the land on which the UK's other Cypriot military base is situated, as part of Britain's agreement to grant nominal independence to the indigenous population. According to the website of the British Royal Navy, RAF Akrotiri is, quote, "extremely busy", close quote. The base, quote, "provides joint support to British forces, Cyprus and operations in the region to protect the UK's strategic interests," close quote. Of course, the British don't identify on that website what those supposed strategic interests are. And it goes on to say that the base is, quote, "used as a forward mounting base for overseas operations in the Middle East," close quote. I think it's fair to assume that the British regard it as a strategic interest that it and the United States dominate the oil resources of the Middle East, as well as the incredibly important trade routes through the region and particularly through the Suez Canal. Now, over the past year, Declassified UK has done truly stellar reporting on the activities at Akrotiri. For example, Declassified has confirmed that the British military is transporting huge quantities of military equipment from Akrotiri to Israel, using, among other aircraft, its Atlas military transport planes, which are manufactured by Airbus. The British government has been quite evasive about what is in those military transport planes, and the election of Keir Starmer has not clarified the situation meaningfully.

Moreover, I can confirm from my visit to Cyprus this week that British military transport planes appear to continue to deliver material to Israel under the Starmer government. According to the UK, the military equipment it sends to Israel is non-lethal. But if that's true, why doesn't the UK government specify precisely what it is sending to Israel? Declassified has unearthed other inconvenient facts about RAF Akrotiri as well. It reports, for example, that using aircraft based in Akrotiri, the British Army, has carried out 200 surveillance missions in Palestine since December 2023. The UK claims that these missions are carried out specifically to locate the Israeli prisoners in Gaza. But how these flights can identify persons who are likely to be held deep underground remains quite a mystery. One thing is certain; if in fact, the British military has conducted these hundreds of surveillance missions to locate the Israeli prisoners, it has been spectacularly unsuccessful in finding them. Declassified has also reported that since the beginning of Israel's genocidal rampage in Gaza, the US Air Force has been using unmarked C-295 and CN-235 planes to fly from Akrotiri to Tel Aviv. Declassified's investigations revealed that 18 such aircraft have made trips from Akrotiri to Tel Aviv since October 7th. These planes, importantly, are believed to be used by US Special Forces. Since October of last year, the British have also used Akrotiri to bomb Yemen, a country that has been ravaged by years of Western backed Saudi led warfare in the region. Genocide Free Cyprus, an organisation of pro-Palestinian peace activists, has kindly compiled a brief but informative video of Akrotiri and has authorised me to share it with you in this report. Here's what they had to say about the base.

Now, before arriving at the Akrotiri military base on the morning of September 18th, I stopped in the commercial port of Limassol to see if I could locate any Western warships there. I had been told previously by local activists and had seen reports that various warships from the British, French and American navies had docked there during the course of the past genocidal year. I, in fact, was able to find one such warship. It appeared to be a British naval vessel because the Union Jack, as far as I could tell from where I was situated, was flying from its bow. I was able to shoot about a minute of footage of the vessel, at which point I had to stop because a port worker directed me to do so. And here's what I saw.

DL: This is the morning of September 18th. I am at the Limassol harbor in occupied Cyprus. This appears to be a British warship. I can see pretty clearly the Union Jack waving in the window of the bow of the vessel.

DL: Now, it's important to note that Limassol is not part of the British overseas territory of Akrotiri. It is at least nominally under the jurisdiction of the Greek Cypriot government. What this means is that the Greek Cypriot government is allowing British, American and French warships, amongst others, to dock in Greek Cypriot waters at a time when these countries are enabling Israel's genocide in Gaza. So this part of the Cypriot complicity cannot be excused based upon arguments that the Akrotiri Peninsula is under the sovereign jurisdiction of Britain. Now, the Akrotiri military base is only a few kilometres to the south of Limassol. On the morning of September 18th, after leaving the port of Limassol and driving down the eastern coastline of Akrotiri, I soon arrived at the edge of RAF Akrotiri. And upon arriving there the first thing that I noticed was a military helicopter flying over the waters east

of the military base. It seemed as if it was ferrying supplies from a cargo ship that was docked offshore of the military base. And here's what I saw.

When I first videotaped that military helicopter on the morning of September 18th, I was standing on the beach about 100m from the barbed wire fence that cordons off the military base from the public. In order to get to the point at which I was standing, I had to pass through another fence that was damaged. And so it was easy to crawl through a hole there and get a little bit closer to the military base than I otherwise would not have been able to get. I don't know whether I was in an area that was supposed to be off limits to the public. What I do know is that at some point shortly after I arrived there, the helicopter began to approach the area where I was standing and circle around me at low altitude.

DL: I came here again today and I've been here for about an hour and a half to see if I could obtain further video footage of military transport planes ferrying military equipment to Israel and or British drones that have been used to survey Gaza, and who knows do what else. Also, American warplanes, British warplanes have been taking off from Akrotiri to bomb Yemen. And you may be wondering why I'm in my car. I'm in my car because I just spent an hour or so at the edge of the military base, this British military base, capturing some footage and waiting for something of interest to happen. And suddenly a British Puma military helicopter – that's what I understand it to be, a local told me that's what it is, it certainly is a helicopter associated with the base. It was circling the base. It seemed to be ferrying some equipment from a ship offshore to the base for the first part of my visit here this morning. And then it began circling around me quite a bit, actually. So I've come into the vehicle just so hopefully they'll lose sight of me and take off. But look, I don't know why they're doing this, but they've been circling around for about 20 minutes, getting very close. And at various points, it seemed as though they were going to land nearby. The helicopter stopped about, you know, 20m above ground and hovered for a while.

DL: After about 30 minutes of sitting in the vehicle, the helicopter finally departed and returned to base. Perhaps it did so because it was getting low on fuel. When that happened, I exited the vehicle and began filming the military base again. And very shortly after the helicopter departed the scene, a warplane took off from RAF Akrotiri. Then very quickly after the warplane took off, what appeared to be a fighter jet, another aircraft, this one, a large military transport plane, also took off. Initially, the transport plane headed west, but then veered left in a southerly direction towards Israel.

This was my fifth visit to Akrotiri since the beginning of 2024. On each visit I went to the base during daylight hours and remained at the edge of the base for about 1.5 to 2.5 hours. And on each occasion I saw one military transport plane take off and veer south in the direction of Israel during the time that I was there. Also this week, two days before my visit to Akrotiri, I was in the coastal town of Paphos, which lies about 50km to the west of Akrotiri. And by the way, the reason I was there was to compile a report on the presence of a large Israeli expatriate community in that town. But that's going to be the subject of another report which I'm going to publish in a couple of days. The relevance of my visit to Paphos for purposes of this report is that while I was situated on the sea side of Paphos in the western,

southwestern part of Greek Cypriot Cyprus, I saw a squadron of fighter aircraft take off from what appeared to be the Akrotiri military base. When they came by the area where I was situated, they were ascending. They veered left in a southerly direction towards Israel.

Shortly after those fighter jets screamed by, another aircraft came from what appeared to be Akrotiri. It, too, was ascending and it veered to the left in the direction of Israel.

So based upon my various visits to Cyprus this year, both before and after the Starmer government took office, it appears that during daylight hours, a military transport plane is taking off from Akrotiri in the direction of Israel on average about once every two hours. If you think about how many flights that adds up to during the course of the past eleven months, we're talking, given the volume of equipment that these aircraft can carry, about a truly stunning amount of military equipment being delivered from RAF Akrotiri to Israel. Also, on numerous occasions I've seen fighter jets which appeared to be taking off from Akrotiri or which were clearly taking off from Akrotiri. And on one occasion earlier this year, I saw what appeared to be drones landing in Akrotiri, and I've previously reported on that drone activity. In early September Keir Starmer's Labour government announced it was suspending less than 10% of the licences that the UK government has issued for the export of military equipment to Israel. This cosmetic change in UK government policy does not appear to have diminished Akrotiri support for Israel's genocide in Gaza. Akrotiri and Limassol all continue to lend assistance to Israel's genocidal regime. This is therefore not only a question of British government complicity in genocide, it is also a question of the complicity of the US and Greek Cypriot governments in Israel's genocide. This is Dimitri Lascaris reporting to you from Kalamata, Greece, on September 20th, 2024.

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