

Britain descends into chaos as coronavirus crisis mounts

Robert Stevens
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The COVID-19 death toll in Britain continues to rise inexorably, with predictions that National Health Service hospitals will be treating more coronavirus patients on Christmas Day than at any point in the pandemic.

On Tuesday, 691 more people were announced dead from the virus. Yesterday this was topped with 744 deaths reported, the highest total since April 29. The 39,237 new coronavirus cases announced yesterday was the highest yet recorded in Britain.

This carnage takes place under conditions in which the entire country is descending into chaos. Supermarkets such as Tesco are limiting purchases of toilet roll, eggs, rice and other staples, amid warning of fruit and vegetable shortages amid scenes of panic buying.

Yesterday, at the port of Dover and across large parts of the county of Kent, thousands of truck drivers were still unable to return to their home countries on the European continent, despite an agreement with France to let COVID-tested drivers cross to Calais.

As early as December 18, a 20-mile queue began forming on the M20 motorway and on the A20 leading into Dover. Much of the extra traffic was due to retailers seeking to get goods into the UK in time for Christmas amid problems at already full container ports and uncertainty over the outcome of Brexit talks between London and the European Union.

Around 5,000 lorries are queued up in three separate locations in Kent. Many of the hauliers have spent days sleeping in their cabs with no access to basic supplies.

Truck drivers scuffled with police officers at Dover yesterday. Drivers stood in pouring rain and strong winds chanting, "We want to go home." One told the BBC, "We are very tired. We're staying in cars, we don't have a lot of food, no money. Police three days

ago told us that testing will start soon, but they don't know when and that's why people are protesting".

Earlier, truckers clashed with police at the disused Manston airfield 18 miles from Dover. Around 3,800 lorries are parked up like sardines at Manston waiting to return home. They blockaded the A299 motorway in Kent yesterday morning in a mass protest.

The UK must test every truck driver leaving the UK for France, after a highly infectious strain of COVID-19 was acknowledged by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson last week. On Tuesday evening, Johnson and President Emmanuel Macron reached agreement on a deal to reverse the unilateral 48-hour French ban on freight lorries travelling between Dover and Calais, as well as travel through the Channel Tunnel. Until January 6, only lorry drivers and French and EU citizens or residents who have an essential reason to travel and who show a negative test result less than 72 hours old will be allowed into France.

UK Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick warned after the deal was struck that it still may take a "few days" to clear the backlog of lorries demanding to cross the Channel. This is a massive understatement. Until yesterday, when a few mobile testing units arrived, there weren't even any permanent testing areas in Dover. The government is having to draft in military personnel to assist.

Tensions flared after many hauliers refused to leave Dover to be tested at Manston, as this would mean an 18-mile trip and a return to the back of the queue.

The chaos at Dover is only the most visible expression of the mounting disaster throughout the country. Literally nothing is functioning properly despite the government having years to prepare for a pandemic.

The test and trace system, to the extent it was ever

really in operation, has collapsed. Testing never exceeded 430,000 a day and daily testing briefings by ministers were abandoned months ago. Under the government's Dover plan, hauliers are to be given a "lateral flow test" with results available in 20-30 minutes sent by text message. However, such tests are highly unreliable and can give a false reassurance to those testing negative. After directors of public health questioned their accuracy, the government was forced to shelve a plan to open other lateral flow test centres it planned to operate over Christmas. The *Guardian* reported Tuesday, "Government figures from the mass testing programme in Liverpool revealed earlier this month that the tests missed 30% of cases with a high viral load and half of positive cases that were detected by standard coronavirus tests."

The rollout of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in the UK is also beset with problems and is proceeding at a snail's pace. The first patient was given a dose of the vaccination on December 8, but as of yesterday only 500,000 people out of a population of 66 million had received even their first dose of the virus. Two doses, around 21 days apart, must be administered to each person to ensure immunity.

So slow is the rollout that it is being proposed by Professor David Salisbury—who was responsible for immunisation at the Department of Health until 2013—that people just be given an initial dose, in order to vaccinate more people. This was despite's Pfizer's insistence that testing showed that two doses were required "to provide the maximum protection". Salisbury's proposal was backed yesterday by Tony Blair, the multi-millionaire war criminal, who knows as much about science and viruses as he does about his self-proclaimed "humanitarianism."

The crisis at Dover has been seized on by Macron and leaders of other European government to denounce Britain as "plague island", as if they were not themselves responsible for a catastrophic situation within their own borders.

Due to the criminally reckless "herd immunity" policies operated by government of all stripes throughout the EU, the virus is on the increase everywhere. Respected epidemiologist Professor Neil Ferguson told a parliamentary committee yesterday, "It would suggest, almost certainly in my view, that this [mutation of the] virus has been introduced to the great

majority, if not all, of European countries at the current time."

Yesterday Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced that six million more people in the east and south east of England were being placed under the highest Tier four restrictions from December 26. "Across the country, cases have risen 57 percent in the last week. The average daily COVID hospital admissions are 1,909 a day--that's the highest figure since mid-April. There are 18,943 people in hospital right now, that's almost as many as at the peak," he said.

Even these horrific numbers could be dwarfed by an even greater scale of infection in the coming weeks. Hancock announced that, with the assistance of South Africa scientists, two cases of another new variant of coronavirus had been detected in Britain. "Both are contacts of cases who have travelled from South Africa over the past few weeks." Both had been instructed to go into quarantine, with Hancock stating, "This new variant is highly concerning, because it is yet more transmissible and it appeared to have mutated further than the new variant that has been discovered here." The South African strain was being analysed at the UK's Porton Down military laboratory.



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