

Former prince Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor arrested in Epstein investigation

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Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor (formerly Prince Andrew, Duke of York) was arrested at the royal residence Sandringham on Thursday morning. He is the first senior member of the British royal family to be arrested since King Charles I in 1647, during the English Civil War.

Police arrested Andrew on suspicion of Misconduct in Public Office, a common law offence. It applies to public officers who wilfully neglect to perform their duty or misconduct themselves to a degree that amounts to an abuse of the public's trust. Since the offence is not defined in any statute, there is technically no limit on the sentence.

The investigation is believed to relate to emails released by the US Department of Justice showing Andrew sharing with convicted child sex offender Jeffrey Epstein reports of his visits as a trade envoy to Hong Kong, Vietnam and Singapore. A 2010 email suggests he sent Epstein a confidential briefing on investment opportunities in reconstructing Helmand province in Afghanistan.

Police have been carrying out searches of Wood Farm at the Sandringham Estate, and Andrew's former Royal Lodge residence in Berkshire.

The event significantly deepens the crisis of the British state—the royal family and the Labour government—severely damaging the legitimacy of both.

Andrew's relations with Epstein have been an ulcer on the side of the ruling class for years, since pictures were published of him with a 17-year-old Virginia Giuffre. A car crash interview between the then prince and Newsnight presenter Emily Maitlis in 2019 made matters worse.

The royal family hoped to pay its way out of trouble, with Andrew agreeing a £12 million settlement with Giuffre in 2022. But this only prompted outrage over

where the money had come from, leaving the stench of guilt hanging over Andrew and questions unanswered over who knew what among the royal family.

There are ongoing demands in the US, bound up with the factional conflict between Democrats and Republicans, for Andrew to testify before Congress.

In a belated attempt to quarantine the scandal, the royal family stripped Andrew of his titles last year, before sending him off to a smaller estate in the West of England, out of the public eye—or so they hoped.

The king, Charles III, quickly announced his “deepest concern” at the news of Andrew's arrest, while pledging “full and wholehearted support and co-operation” to a “full, fair and proper process by which this issue is investigated in the appropriate manner and by the appropriate authorities.” Asserting that “the law must take its course,” he was sure to emphasise his and his family's “duty and service to you all.”

But there is a growing sense that the whole institution is rotten. A recent Savanta poll placed support for the monarch as head of state at 45 percent, a historic low, down from 86 percent in 1983. Every age bracket younger than 44 supports an elected head of state, by 15-point margins among those younger than 34.

For the Labour government, not only is the crisis in the royal family a deeply destabilising influence, but Andrew's arrest heralds more painful questions over arch-Blairite Peter Mandelson.

Starmer appointed Mandelson as Britain's US ambassador in December 2024. He was forced to dismiss him in September 2025 after a cache of documents released in the US proved in detail his, already broadly known, close connections with Epstein.

The latest batch of releases was far more incriminating, including 6,000 named mentions of Mandelson across personal messages of support for

Epstein during his imprisonment, insider information delivered on British and European policy, and promises to intervene on the financier's behalf with government officials.

If Andrew is under investigation for Misconduct in Public Office, then Mandelson—whose leaks to Epstein appear to have been far more extensive—should be expecting his own early-morning knock at the door. Two properties linked to the Labour peer were searched earlier this month by police, who indicated that “enquiries are ongoing.”

Starmer's premiership was already breached below the waterline by these exposures, his government forced to agree to a review of over 100,000 documents related to Mandelson's appointment.

Starmer was able to carry on mainly thanks to concerns in the ruling class that no sufficiently trusted replacement was yet on hand to avoid a damaging interregnum, leaving him in place on borrowed time. A re-eruption of the Mandelson scandal could finish him off.

The Labour leader has been scrambling to put distance between himself and Andrew and Mandelson, while hushing the matter up with talk of respect for the legal procedure.

Asked about Andrew in an interview on Wednesday, prior to his arrest, Starmer replied that this was “a matter for the police. They will conduct their own investigations, but one of the core principles in our system is that everybody is equal under the law and nobody is above the law.”

But the hypocrisy is ringing in everyone's ears. As the Socialist Equality Party wrote of Mandelson's appointment:

His appointment as US ambassador was seen by Starmer and his allies as epitomising the triumph of Labour's Blairite orthodoxy, following the crushing defeat of the Corbynites. His political and business record—especially his intimate connections with Epstein—were also intended to reassure the incoming Trump administration that the Labour government was a trustworthy ally, economically and militarily, wholly embedded in the same criminal oligarchy.

Starmer's deputy, Justice Secretary David Lammy, echoed his boss Thursday, after the arrest, telling reporters, “As justice secretary—and as the prime minister has said—nobody in this country is above the law. And this is now a police investigation and that must happen in the usual way.”

There is nothing “usual” about these events. The Epstein files, as *World Socialist Web Site* Chairman David North wrote recently, “reveal the social physiognomy of a degenerate ruling class and oligarchical society in an advanced state of decomposition. *Their offenses are rank; they smell to heaven.*”

The arrest of a member of the British royal family, which for centuries has projected itself as an untouchable icon of stability, is an indication of the far-reaching social consequences.



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