

UK Starmer government endorses and participates in the US/Israel attack on Iran

Robert Stevens
1 March 2026

On Sunday evening Britain's Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer authorised the United States to attack Iran from all UK military bases, including Diego Garcia—a joint military base in the Indian Ocean—and Royal Air Force (RAF) Fairford in England.

This followed significant criticism, aired in the *Daily Mail*, demanding Starmer reverse the government's decision not to allow Diego Garcia and Fairford to be used in Saturday's initial bombing of Iran by the US and Israel. The newspaper asked pointedly whether the UK had in fact allowed the use of Diego Garcia by the US in its first strikes.

Speaking from Downing Street Starmer said, "Yesterday, Iran hit a military base in Bahrain, narrowly missing British personnel."

Starmer reiterated Sunday, "We have British jets in the air as part of coordinated defensive operations which have already successfully intercepted Iranian strikes," adding "But the only way to stop the threat is to destroy the missiles at source – in their storage depots or the launchers which used to fire the missiles." As the "United States has requested permission to use British bases for that specific and limited defensive [!] purpose," this was now agreed.

About an hour after Starmer's speech, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) confirmed that RAF Akrotiri, its base on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, had been hit by a "suspected drone strike". The MoD said the incident caused only limited damage and there were no casualties.

Starmer has from the outset provided political cover for nakedly illegal act of aggression and a regime-change operation and pledged UK participation. Following the initial waves of US and Israeli attacks on Iran, he claimed that "the United Kingdom played no role in these strikes." But he added, "Our forces are active and British planes are in the sky today [Saturday] as part of coordinated regional defensive operations to protect our people, our interests, and our allies."

UK warplanes taking direct part in the illegal war launched by Trump and Netanyahu include RAF Typhoons operating from Qatar and Cyprus. F-35 fighter jets and air defence

systems had already been mobilised to RAF Akrotiri.

On Sunday, Defence Secretary John Healey confirmed on Sky News that UK forces were "taking down the [Iranian] drones [fired in retaliation] that are menacing either our bases, our people or our allies. We've stepped up alongside the Americans. We've stepped up our defensive forces in the Middle East. We're flying those sorties."

Starmer's speech was coordinated with a joint statement issued by the E3 countries—Britain, France and Germany—established in 2003 to handle negotiations regarding Iran's nuclear programme. The E3 underscored their alignment with the bombardment, stating that the three European powers "did not participate in these strikes," but were "in close contact with our international partners, including the United States, Israel, and partners in the region."

Not a single word opposed the US-Israeli assault on Iran. Instead, the E3 portrayed Tehran as the aggressor: "We condemn Iranian attacks on countries in the region in the strongest terms. Iran must refrain from indiscriminate military strikes."

While formally disavowing participation in the initial bombing, Starmer gave a full endorsement of the propaganda rationalising it. "The regime in Iran is utterly abhorrent," he declared, accusing Tehran of destabilising the region. He claimed that "even in the United Kingdom, the Iranian regime poses a direct threat to dissidents and the Jewish community," asserting that over the past year Iran had "backed more than 20 potentially lethal attacks on UK soil."

Not a shred of evidence was presented for these claims framing the US-Israeli assault as an act of self-defence against a "terrorist" entity threatening Britain itself. The narrative echoes the propaganda used to justify earlier imperialist wars in the Middle East, from Iraq's non-existent "weapons of mass destruction" to the invocations of humanitarianism in overthrowing governments in Libya and Syria.

Starmer parroted Washington's central pretext for war:

“Iran must never be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon. That remains the primary aim of the United Kingdom and our allies—including the US.”

He demanded that Tehran “refrain from further strikes, give up its weapons programmes, and cease the appalling violence and repression against the Iranian people—who deserve the right to determine their own future.”

As always when voiced from Washington and Downing Street, the phrase “determine their own future” signifies only plans for regime change.

The principal demand from opposition party leaders was that Starmer abandon even the pretence of restraint. Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch posted on X, “I stand with our allies in the US and Israel as they take on the threat of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its vile regime,” urging explicit government backing for the bombardment.

Reform UK leader Nigel Farage demanded, “The Prime Minister needs to change his mind on the use of our military bases and back the Americans in this vital fight against Iran.”

Farage’s remarks referenced previous tensions between Washington and London over Diego Garcia and Fairford. Last year, the Labour government signed an agreement transferring sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius while retaining full operational control of Diego Garcia under a 99-year lease. This was nevertheless heavily criticised in recent days by Trump as the US finalised its assault on Iran.

Britain continued permitting the US to deploy a flood of aircraft and materiel across all other UK-run facilities.

Military figures have pressed throughout for open UK participation in the war without reservations. Cited in the *Mail*, former Royal Navy Commander Tom Sharpe stated: “We absolutely should let the US use UK bases in launching targeted strikes against Iran. It would be madness not to. The Americans can use Diego Garcia anyway, as it is a joint base, but we should be actively supporting.”

The Starmer government was in fact already readied for full participation in the bloody onslaught on Iran as Washington’s junior partner.

When asked six times by the BBC’s Laura Kuenssberg whether the UK backed the strikes or thought they were legal, Healey replied, “It is for the US to set out the legal basis of the action that it took.” This is equivalent to letting Jack the Ripper determine the legality of stabbing women to death.

Despite years of cuts, the UK retains substantial military assets in the Middle East, including a permanent or semi-permanent military presence in Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Any Iranian strike causing British casualties could be seized upon as a pretext for direct UK

bombing operations. It was already reported Sunday by Iranian sources that three US and UK oil tankers have been hit by Iranian fire.

Labour’s trajectory was entirely predictable. It was brought to power by the ruling class only because of its stated commitment to war and militarism, and tasked with imposing the austerity measures required to fund it.

As early as October 2, 2024, the *World Socialist Web Site* warned that the Labour government, just three months in office, was integrating Britain ever more closely into US war planning. At that time, RAF warplanes were already operating alongside US forces to shoot down Iranian missiles, with Starmer proclaiming that Britain “stand[s] with Israel and we recognize her right to self-defence.”

The WSWS described his “fairytale of Iran terrorising the region” as a cover for Britain’s role as Washington’s main military and security partner.

On June 17, 2025, the Socialist Equality Party (UK) warned in its statement, “Oppose Starmer’s plans for war against Iran!” that “advanced preparations” were underway for British intervention in an “unprovoked, illegal imperialist war,” dismissing as a “contemptible fraud” the claims that Starmer sought “restraint, calm and a return to diplomacy.”

Starmer’s government has for more than 18 months been a participant in Israel’s genocide in Gaza, supplying arms and surveillance support while defending Tel Aviv. As the conflict widens, Britain is again embedded militarily, politically and diplomatically in a US-led offensive aimed at recolonising the Middle East, which threatens a wider global conflagration.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact