

# Trump warns Starmer: Fall into line over Iran, or else

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US President Donald Trump has delivered the most extraordinary public rebuke of a British prime minister in the post-war period, insisting that he and NATO allies fall fully into line behind the US-led war on Iran.

Speaking from the Oval Office Tuesday, Trump denounced Keir Starmer for initially refusing to permit US forces to use two British bases, including Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, for strikes on Iran.

Trump declared Starmer's stance "shocking", complaining he had been "very, very uncooperative with that stupid island that they have". Because of this, he claimed, "It's taken three or four days to work out where we can land. It would have been much more convenient landing there as opposed to flying many extra hours. We are very surprised."

Referencing Britain's World War Two leader, he stated, "This is not Winston Churchill that we're dealing with."

Starmer reversed course on Sunday evening, allowing US access to the bases, for what Downing Street described as a "specific and limited defensive purpose" targeting Iranian missile silos. But as far as the fascist in the White House was concerned, this was too little, too late.

The *Times* reported Wednesday Trump administration figures saying the partial reversal of policy didn't wash with the White House or the Pentagon.

Trump launched his Oval Office attack while seated beside German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, whom he praised for backing the US position. In the same appearance, he denounced Spain for refusing access to its military bases and for failing to meet the 3.5 percent of GDP defence spending target he is demanding through NATO.

"Some of the European nations have been helpful, and some haven't... Spain has been terrible," Trump said. "We're going to cut off all trade with Spain. We don't want anything to do with Spain."

The threat to Britain was unmistakable.

This was Trump's third public denunciation of Starmer in as many days in what can only be understood as the initial stages of a far-right regime change operation against the Labour prime minister.

In an interview with the *Telegraph* published Monday evening, Trump said he was "very, very disappointed" by the delay in granting landing rights at Diego Garcia. "That's probably never happened between our countries before," he said, adding, "It sounds like he [Starmer] was worried about the legality."

As Trump planned for the onslaught on Iran, he effectively withdrew what was only ever backing through gritted teeth for Starmer's Chagos Islands deal to hand over ownership of Diego Garcia to Mauritius while leasing back the military base. He told the *Telegraph*, "All of a sudden [Mauritius] was claiming ownership. He [Starmer] should have fought it out and owned it."

On Tuesday, in an interview with Rupert Murdoch's the *Sun*, Trump contrasted Britain unfavourably with France, portraying Starmer as presiding over a declining and unrecognisable country.

Asked about staple far-right claims that Starmer was pandering to Muslim voters, Trump replied, "It could be." He added: "It's also not such a recognisable country... you look at what happened over the last period of time and it's very different." He attacked London and its Labour mayor, Sadiq Khan, calling him "a terrible Mayor" and denouncing "terrible people" in the capital.

This line was echoed by US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth in a Pentagon briefing on Monday morning. Hegseth praised "capable partners," while attacking traditional allies who "wring their hands and clutch their pearls, hemming and hawing about the use of force."

Hegseth declared that the US was prosecuting the war "regardless of what so-called international institutions say", describing it as "the most lethal and precise air

power campaign in history.” The operation would be conducted “all on our terms with maximum authorities. No stupid rules of engagement, no nation-building quagmire, no democracy building exercise, no politically correct wars. We fight to win, and we don’t waste time or lives.”

The attack on “international institutions” and “stupid rules of engagement” was widely understood as directed at the UK prime minister. From the outset of the US–Israeli bombardment, Starmer condemned Tehran as the aggressor but insisted Britain would act “in line with international law.”

A former human rights lawyer who 23 years ago marched against the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Starmer maintained as late as 2015 that the war was “not lawful under international law because there was no UN resolution expressly authorising it”.

He spoke as someone who knew the incalculable damage done to Tony Blair’s Labour government for backing that illegal war. Blair was gone four years later and Labour never fully recovered, voted out of office in 2010 with Blair remembered by millions only as an unindicted war criminal. The political backlash saw Jeremy Corbyn elected party leader in 2015 and an inner-party civil war that only restored the control of the Blairites and Starmer’s ascent to party leadership in 2020 thanks to Corbyn’s betrayal of all those who backed him.

Elected to office in 2024 on an historically low vote, tasked with waging wars in Ukraine and elsewhere, Starmer only wanted to preserve a fig leaf of legality regarding Iran. But even this was too much to ask.

Britain’s right-wing press, alongside the Conservatives and Nigel Farage’s far-right Reform UK, seized on Washington’s rebuke to press for Starmer’s downfall and a far more aggressive militarist turn by British imperialism.

A *Sun* editorial declared that in a world “dominated by hard political power,” the prime minister had proved himself “a complete and utter lawyer.” It denounced Starmer’s “slavish adherence” to international law. The *Telegraph* decried his “lawyerly approach” as a “dead-hand on decision-making.”

As the political attacks mounted, Downing Street attempted appeasement. Number 10 briefed on Monday that it was considering dispatching a Royal Navy destroyer to Cyprus to defend RAF Akrotiri from missile attacks.

But that afternoon, Starmer reiterated to the House of Commons that he would not commit UK troops to

military action that was “unlawful” or lacked a “thought-through objective”, and that the government did “not believe in regime change from the skies.” He stated that his position was based on legal advice published that day by Attorney General Lord Hermer KC.

The response was another avalanche of hostile headlines. Stefan Boscia, a *Times* political commentator, wrote, “Britain has now effectively accused the US of pursuing an unlawful war with no clear plan to finish it. An unimaginable statement at any time since 1945.”

This anticipated Trump’s Oval Office salvo Tuesday.

That day, Downing Street confirmed that HMS Dragon, a missile-defence-capable destroyer, and helicopters would be sent to Akrotiri, though the vessel would take several days to arrive and was not due to sail immediately. The delay prompted further attacks from right-wing commentators.

Appearing on GB News with Farage, former Royal Marine and CEO of Outpost Studios James Glancy described the prime minister’s stance as “a scandal” that “should bring down Keir Starmer.”

Whatever Starmer’s protestations, Britain—connected to the US war machine by a million threads, including hosting US nuclear weapons—is already embroiled in this illegal war.

Shaken by this offensive against Starmer, the *Guardian*, a trusted pro-war political conduit of the Labour government, reported Wednesday that according to “western officials... Britain has not ruled out participating in future strikes against Iranian ballistic missile launch sites”.

The moves against Starmer are in line with the declared policy of the Trump administration’s National Security Strategy, which pledges to “cultivate resistance to Europe’s current trajectory within European nations” and hails “the growing influence of patriotic European parties” as their desired replacement. This refers to far-right formations such as The National Rally in France, Alternative for Germany, Vox in Spain, Brothers of Italy, and in Britain, to Reform UK and its periphery.



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