

Iran warns UK government it is “participating in aggression”

Robert Stevens
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Iran has warned Keir Starmer’s Labour government that it views Britain as “participating in aggression” for allowing the United States to use UK bases in its military operations.

In a phone call to UK Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned that London’s actions “will definitely be considered as participation in aggression and will be recorded in the history of relations between the two countries”. He told Cooper, “we reserve our inherent right to defend the country’s sovereignty and independence.

Araghchi published a statement on his Telegram channel Friday, condemning the “negative and biased approach of the United Kingdom and some European countries toward this blatant aggression [by the US], which violated international law,” adding that Iran was acting under its right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

Allowing US heavy bombers to fly from its Royal Air Force (RAF) base in Fairford, England, and from Diego Garcia—a UK base in the Indian Ocean—has been critical to the devastating US-Israeli bombing operation against Iran. Fairford is the only United States Air Force airfield in Europe which has the runway capacity and specially designed facilities to accommodate all three types of US heavy bomber warplanes.

By March 12, according to *Air & Space Forces Magazine*, “About a dozen B-1 bombers” were ready “to launch strikes on Iran... which could represent more than half of the US Air Force’s mission-capable Lancer fleet.

“The buildup at the air base in Gloucestershire, England, started March 6 when the UK Ministry of Defense started allowing the US to use its bases for attacks on Iran and has continued apace in recent days, open-source data shows. All told, as many as 15 bombers are at the base, with three B-52 Stratofortresses in addition to the B-1s.”

A single B-52 alone can deploy a payload of around 70,000lbs (31 tonnes) of nuclear or conventional ordnance and up to 20 air-launched, self-guided AGM-86B cruise missiles—with a range of 1,500 miles.

Journalists have taken photos and footage of US bombers taking off and arriving back from bombing missions since the government authorised Trump to use the base. On Thursday, *Declassified UK* published a film following a visit by their reporters to the base on Tuesday, in which US bombers can be seen being loaded with ordnance. The reporters were able to film “pallets of 2,000lb bombs being loaded onto American B-1 war planes bound for Iran”, as well as a B-1 taking off.

Information from flight tracking sites reveals the important role Britain is playing in facilitating offensive operations. Leaving from Fairford, US bombers are having to take a longer route through Gibraltar and the Mediterranean to reach Iran as they are not permitted to pass over the airspace of several European countries. Airlive reported, “The unusual flight path is a direct result of hardening stances in Madrid and Paris. While the UK and the US remain closely aligned on the necessity of the strikes, France and Spain have officially denied overflight permissions for missions categorized as ‘offensive.’”

In Parliament March 1, Starmer—after being denounced by the Trump administration—defended the decision not to join the bombing campaign, insisting that his refusal was “deliberate ... and I stand by it” while declaring backing for a US regime operation in Iran.

Following Iran’s warning Friday, Starmer’s official spokesman repeated, “We didn’t participate in the initial strikes, and we’re not getting drawn into the wider war.” The line was again rehearsed: “We have authorised the US to use our bases for a specific defensive and limited purpose in response to Iran’s continued and outrageous aggression, and we’ve always said that this is the best way to eliminate the urgent threat and restore a path to

diplomacy.”

This fiction is being extended to the Fairford operation. In allowing the strikes from its bases in an illegal war, Downing Street cites legal advice it received, with a summary published by the government, stating, “The UK and its allies are permitted under international law to use or support force in such circumstances where acting in self-defence is the only feasible means to deal with an ongoing armed attack and where the force used is necessary and proportionate.”

On this basis, “the UK has responded to a US request which will facilitate specific and limited defensive action against missile facilities in Iran which were involved in launching strikes at regional allies... It does not signal the UK having any wider involvement in the broader ongoing conflict between the US, Israel and Iran.”

Everyone knows that the bombing operations against Iran are an offensive operation, in which at least 1,444 have been killed and over 18,000 injured, and has nothing to do with “self-defence” by the US and its Israeli client state which has just spent almost two and a half years destroying Gaza in a genocide.

The lies about limited UK involvement were further shredded with the admission five days ago by government minister Ed Miliband, a former Labour leader, that Britain was considering, in the event of a ceasefire, sending ships and mine-hunting drones to assist the US in reopening the Strait of Hormuz after Iran closed it. About a fifth of seaborne crude oil traffic normally passes through the strait.

The Labour government is an active participant in these plans, which have escalated to the point that could see the imminent invasion of Iranian territory by US troops. Following talks between Starmer and Trump, several media sources reported this week that Britain could deploy mine-hunting drones from the Royal Navy’s Mine and Threat Exploitation Group, which is currently in the Middle East.

The *Sunday Times* revealed, “In a briefing, defence officials disclosed that a small team of UK military planners has been sent to US Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base, in Tampa, Florida. US Central Command is responsible for American military operations in the Middle East.” They were “there to help plan and develop options for how to enable shipping to transit through the chokepoint, which is feared to contain mines”, it reported.

While it “is unlikely to send Royal Navy ships to escort vessels while the conflict is raging because of the dangers

such a mission would present... British military chiefs, including General Sir Gwyn Jenkins, the first sea lord, have presented a number of options to ministers.”

The difficulty facing Britain and other European powers is that reopening the strait by force would require a massive deployment of military forces. In a media briefing this week Al Carns, a UK junior defence minister, pointed out that the last time this was undertaken, in 1987 during the last phase of the Iran-Iraq war, it required 30 warships led by the US: “So it’s a major undertaking.” Therefore “this must be a multinational solution,” said Carns.

The deeply unpopular Starmer government is embroiled in military action against Iran that is opposed by most Britons. An Ipsos poll this week found that 56 percent of respondents disapprove of US military strikes against Iran, with only around a fifth (21 percent) approving. Majorities oppose “Britain sending jet airplanes to help defend US military bases in the Middle East against Iranian attacks”; “Giving permission for the US to use British military bases as a base to launch attacks on Iran or Iranian missile bases”; “Britain sending weapons to help the US and Israel fight Iran”; and “Sending British troops to the Middle East to support the US and Israel in military action against Iran”.

A massive shock to living standards, which will fuel opposition to war, is already underway with predictions of a £330 rise in energy bills as soon as July (taking average household annual bills to almost £2,000), a surge in general inflation, and the likelihood that the Bank of England will be forced to raise interest rates.



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