

# Starmer premiership threatened as Mandelson/Epstein crisis re-erupts

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17 April 2026

The crisis engulfing Keir Starmer's Labour government poses an immediate threat to his survival in office, with the re-eruption of the Peter Mandelson/Jeffrey Epstein scandal.

Following the revelation Thursday that Mandelson failed a top-level security vetting prior to his appointment as ambassador to Washington, every opposition party has demanded that Starmer step down as prime minister. After stating earlier this year that Mandelson was appointed after a "full due process", Starmer is accused of misleading parliament, a resigning matter under UK government ministerial code.

It is already widely accepted within ruling circles that Starmer will face a leadership challenge following the May local elections, in which Labour is expected to suffer heavy losses. But an anticipated post-election reckoning is being overtaken by events.

An investigation by the *Guardian* revealed, "A formal decision to deny him clearance was made by [UK Security Vetting-UKSV] on 28 January 2025," and "According to sources, UKSV informed the Foreign Office that the risk factors involving Mandelson meant that his clearance should be denied." Outright denial of "developed vetting" is rare, particularly for such a senior post.

Mandelson, the main architect with Tony Blair of the New Labour project, was appointed by Starmer as US ambassador in December 2024, with the prime minister, as everyone was, fully aware of his intimate connections with the billionaire child sex trafficker.

A previous batch of released documents forced Starmer to sack Mandelson last September, less than a year after appointing him. In February this year, Mandelson resigned from the Labour Party and stood down from the House of Lords when a further batch of Epstein files released by the US Department of Justice revealed that Mandelson had passed confidential UK government

information (gained while he was a UK trade envoy) to the convicted paedophile. After being arrested, Mandelson is being investigated by the police with allegations of "misconduct in public office".

At a press briefing on February 5 after the Mandelson scandal re-erupted, Starmer maintained there was "security vetting carried out by the security services, which is an intensive exercise that gave him clearance for the role".

Mandelson was appointed Ambassador to Washington after the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) took the extraordinary step of overriding the recommendation of the UK Security Vetting unit. The *Guardian* revealed that FCDO officials "decided to use a rarely used authority to override the recommendation from security officials."

Starmer now claims that he only became aware of Mandelson's failed vetting on Tuesday of this week, with the *Telegraph* noting that his failure to immediately alert Parliament is another potential breach of the ministerial code.

Speaking Friday from Paris while attending a summit on the Iran war, Starmer told *Sky News*, "That I wasn't told that Peter Mandelson had failed security vetting when he was appointed is staggering.

"That I wasn't told that he had failed security vetting when I was telling parliament that due process had been followed is unforgivable. Not only was I not told, no minister was told, and I'm absolutely furious about that."

However, it is inconceivable that Starmer did not know that Mandelson had failed his vetting for one of the most sensitive diplomatic roles in the British state. The UK Security Vetting unit is part of the Cabinet Office in Downing Street, operating at the heart of the state apparatus.

Just hours before departing for Paris, Starmer was involved in frenzied meetings with Foreign Secretary

Yvette Cooper, resulting in the late night removal of Sir Olly Robbins, permanent secretary at the Foreign Office, and the head of the diplomatic service.

Robbins is the second fall guy for Starmer in the Epstein crisis, after the resignation in February of Morgan McSweeney, Starmer's chief of staff and a protégé of Mandelson. McSweeney played a central role in securing Mandelson's Washington appointment.

Starmer is expected to deliver a statement to the House of Commons on Monday to "correct the record" regarding Mandelson's vetting.

Robbins is set to testify before a parliamentary committee as early as the following day as to his own role.

Various reports suggest that Robbins will publicly fight his scapegoating, with the *Telegraph* noting that he already told the foreign affairs committee in November it was "clear that the prime minister wanted to make this appointment himself".

From the off, the Labour government has attempted a cover-up of the Mandelson/Epstein crisis, but this is all unravelling with the *Guardian* reporting, "According to multiple sources, officials across government have been in dispute over whether to release documents that would reveal those facts [failing his vetting], and other information about Mandelson's security vetting, to the parliamentary intelligence and security committee (ISC)....

"The committee has been entrusted by parliament with the role of assessing the most sensitive papers relating to Mandelson's appointment", but "as of Thursday morning, a decision had not been made about whether the committee should have access to documents about Mandelson's vetting... and the decision by the [FCDO] to override it."

The extraordinary moves to ensure that Mandelson secured the role of UK ambassador to Washington, despite his longstanding connections to a convicted criminal, confirm the assessment of the Socialist Equality Party. In a February 11 statement, "The Mandelson-Epstein crisis and the socialist struggle against the Starmer government", the SEP explained, "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."

The response of Your Party and its leading figure—former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn—is entirely in keeping with their political role in suppressing any independent response by the working class. Following the resignation of McSweeney, Corbyn did not call for a break with Labour or a rotten parliamentary set-up in thrall to the billionaire capitalist oligarchy that produced Mandelson. Instead, he demanded "the fullest possible inquiry," declaring it should only be open "for the most part".

The most right-wing sections of the Labour Party are positioning themselves for Starmer's fall while other forces, including the far-right Reform UK, are being primed to fulfil the mission statement he made in opposition that his government would be one of "iron" fiscal discipline, militarism and war.

Among those being touted as the next Labour leader is Health Secretary Wes Streeting, who oversees the National Health Service's £200 billion plus annual budget. Asked Thursday if he would support Labour peer George Robertson's call to divert funds from welfare to the Armed Forces, Streeting told *LBC*: "Well, yeah. We want to reduce the welfare budget," adding, "We have been putting more money into defence as a government, but we will need more. That is the reality of the challenge of the world that we face."

None of the central issues facing the working class, the escalating cost of living, destruction of essential services and drive to war can be resolved by replacing one right-wing Labourite with another or by appeals for greater transparency within a corrupt political system. The essential task is a political break with Labour and all its apologists, including those who seek to refurbish it through inquiries and cosmetic reforms. What is required is the development of an independent movement of the working class directed against the entire rotten structure of capitalist politics.



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