

Britain's ruling elite stokes war fever against Russia, demanding conscription and the jailing of opponents

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Speaking to the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday, Labour Prime Minister Andy Burnham committed Britain to an open-ended escalation of the war against Russia, while unveiling an Orwellian National Centre for Information Defence to suppress political dissent at home.

His speech followed weeks in which senior politicians, retired generals, serving defence force chiefs, and the mass media have campaigned for a war on welfare to pay for rearmament and the reintroduction of military conscription.

"We will keep investing in our defence," Burnham told the UN, "meeting our NATO commitments and strengthening European capabilities. We will be relentless in building up our hard power and deterrence."

Blaming Russia for "escalatory rhetoric," Burnham declared the UK would be "unflinching in defending our people and our allies. True resilience depends on this military strength." Amid his own bellicose and inflammatory rhetoric, Burnham declared that Russia should "come to the negotiating table". He proclaimed, "we will stand with Ukraine—stronger than ever, for as long as it takes."

Just days earlier, Defence Secretary Wes Streeting committed in parliament to providing Ukraine with 120,000 more drones during this year, on top of £25 billion in military and financial aid already allocated. This has financed, said Streeting "nearly 20 million rounds of small arms ammunition, more than 1 million artillery shells, more than 100,000 drones and thousands of air defence missiles and armoured vehicles."

Burnham hailed US President Donald Trump's Graham Bill that authorises tariffs of up to 100 percent on countries buying Russian oil, chiefly China and India. It sanctions Putin, Russian banks and oligarchs, and targets Russia's "shadow fleet" for evading restrictions on the export of Russian oil.

Following his speech, Burnham—in his first face-to-face meeting with the White House's fascist—fawned over him, pledging to further embroil Britain in US-backed wars in the Middle East, from Iran to Saudi Arabia. "We're with you," Burnham declared. He cited the MoD's announcement that Britain would send an RAF Voyager to refuel Saudi jets amid "renewed Houthi attacks and escalating violence in the region."

Burnham's tete-a-tete with the American president came just hours after Trump declared his choices were "wiping Iran out," letting it "rot economically" or making a deal, asking: "If and when do I blow the entire nation up?"

The most chilling section of Burnham's speech was his announcement of a "National Centre for Information Defence—to detect, attribute and disrupt ... hostile state information attacks." Every anti-Russian trope was rolled out to justify this authoritarian instrument of wartime censorship.

He claimed that "bots and fake websites" deployed by Moscow were part of an "insidious campaign that reaches into people's homes and twists what they feel about their own country—creating a narrative of decline, stoking division and sowing despair."

As if decades of economic decay, deindustrialisation and social inequality in Britain are the result of Russian propaganda!

The new intelligence gathering and surveillance body is being established by a government that has clamped down relentlessly on dissent: over 62,000 people have been arrested in the UK over the last five years for social media posts—with 12,292 convicted.

Challenged on GB News the following day over fears the unit could be "weaponised to target British citizens who simply disagree with your government," Streeting replied, "Yes, I can [promise that]. We're not interested in policing domestic political dissent." These reassurances are worthless. Following Labour's draconian proscription of Palestine Action in July last year, more than 3,500 people have been arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000 for the "crime" of holding cardboard signs that read, "I oppose genocide, I support Palestine Action".

Civil liberties group Big Brother Watch has documented that an existing counter-disinformation unit, the National Security Online Information Team, has already "strayed into policing lawful, domestic speech."

Streeting has made the direction of travel clear. Speaking in parliament on September 10, he responded to unverified reports that British veterans had trained Russian military personnel, warning that the National Security Act 2023 "extends beyond

the period in which personnel are employed by the UK armed forces.” He added: “Let that be a warning to anyone who has supported, or considers supporting, the Russians as they wage war in Ukraine.”

Amid rising protests against UK-backed wars and the spending cuts to pay for them, the new measures against “disinformation” are aimed—whatever the denials—at suppressing anti-government and anti-war opposition by the working class.

Burnham spent the weeks before his UN speech trying to burnish his pro-war credentials amid intense pressure from ruling circles to ensure his government delivers. During Prime Minister’s Questions on September 9, Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch challenged Burnham to commit to spending 3 percent of GDP on defence by 2030, and to explain how this would be funded. She offered to support him in raising an immediate £7 billion in welfare cuts if he would agree.

Burnham would only reaffirm a commitment to meet the 3.5 per cent demanded by NATO by 2035. He declared, “We do everything to support our national security, but it can’t come at the expense of social security.”

The reaction was ferocious. Writing in the *Sun*, Badenoch declared his words “weren’t just heard in Westminster or Manchester [where Burnham was formerly Mayor]; they were also heard in Moscow.” Far-right Reform UK MP Danny Kruger denounced the “extraordinary statement”. The *Telegraph* ran three editorials, one warning Burnham’s “absurd position” could become his “political epitaph.”

Streeter’s first statement in parliament as Defence Secretary the next day set different priorities: “Schools, hospitals and homes are important things, but they are valueless if reduced to rubble.”

The military hierarchy is demanding the government commit immediately to ramped-up military spending targets.

On September 16, First Sea Lord General Sir Gwyn Jenkins used a speech marking the Battle of the Atlantic to name Russia “the greatest threat to our security today.”

On September 20, two former service chiefs sitting in the House of Lords intervened publicly against Burnham. Former head of the Army Lord Dannatt accused Burnham and his Chancellor John Healey of “playing fast and loose with the nation’s security.” Admiral Lord West, former First Sea Lord and a Labour security minister under Gordon Brown, said the armed forces were in “quite a parlous state” in a situation where, “In many ways, one could argue we are already at war.”

Boris Johnson, whose Tory government from 2019 to 2022 played a central role in fomenting the war and preventing an early ceasefire, intervened on September 14, hours after a Russian drone struck a Ukrainian railway station he had passed through shortly before. In the *Daily Mail*, Johnson demanded the NATO powers do “much more to help the Ukrainians.”

On September 21, senior Jacob Rees-Mogg posted an eight-minute video declaring, “It’s possible that in the next few years

we may face a war, and if we face a war, we will need people who will join the armed services and who will go out and do their duty.”

The former Tory MP, Eton graduate and financier, worth an estimated £150 million, declared a new generation had to accept that they “even face circumstances where people have to die to save their country, as they did in the First and Second World Wars and in many other wars before and since.”

Social media responses were overwhelmingly hostile.

That evening, on his own GB News show, Rees-Mogg hosted a discussion, “Is Britain prepared for a Russian attack?” Paul Richards, former national chair of the Labour Party-affiliated Fabian Society (now its treasurer), who was an adviser to Tony Blair, told Rees-Mogg: “We would have to lock a few people up, by the way. Some of the pro-Russian voices, people who say there isn’t a threat, ‘don’t fight for your country, don’t go to war for Burnham’—we’ll have to lock them up.”

Rees-Mogg replied, “Well, we suspended Habeas Corpus during the Napoleonic Wars...” Richards responded, “Well, and under the Defence of the Realm Act... we would have to go to those measures, and we would have to look at things like conscription as well...”

This agenda for wartime repression is backed by every party in Parliament.

At its September 19 party conference, the opposition Liberal Democrats adopted a platform centred on raising £20 billion in “defence bonds,” and setting up a Civil Defence Office and a Civil Volunteer Reserve. Their defence spokesperson said an emergency register of volunteers was “urgently” needed, noting Finland “already” has one.

Streeter declared that Britain is “not as prepared as we ought to be,” saying that resilience was “everyone’s responsibility and duty as a citizen.” Labour backbenchers responded in the September 10 debate by calling on fire, police and health services to be readied to face Russian “threats”.



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