

Trump says US-UK relationship 'not like it used to be'

British politicians have been haunted by the 2003 Iraq war

● **Starmer said "does not believe in regime change from the skies"**

● **UK was considering sending a warship to the Middle East**

● **Trump said Starmer had "not been helpful"**

AFP | London, United Kingdom

President Donald Trump said the historical relationship between the United States and Britain is "not like it used to be", amid a diplomatic bust-up over US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer -- who told parliament on Monday his government "does not believe in regime change from the skies" -- has drawn Trump's wrath by initially refusing to have any role in Wash-



ington's war with Iran.

Starmer later agreed to a US request to use two British military bases for a "specific and limited defensive purpose".

But the episode angered Trump, who told British daily news-

paper The Sun:

"This was the most solid relationship of all. And now we have very strong relation-

ships with other countries in Europe", singling out France and Germany.

Starmer has cultivated a warm relationship with the unpredictable Trump, who was given an unprecedented second state visit to Britain last year.

The so-called special relationship between the World War II allies is largely built on long-standing defence cooperation and intelligence sharing.

Any potential military action in the Middle East, however, is politically sensitive in the UK following former prime minister Tony Blair's disastrous support for the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Trump's comments came as UK media reported that the government was considering sending a warship to the Middle East.

HMS Duncan could reportedly be the Type 45 destroyer sent to the region, having recently completed a training exercise on taking down drones.

'Legal basis' Trump said Starmer had "not been helpful", adding: "I never thought I'd see that. I

never thought I'd see that from the UK. We love the UK."

"It's just a much different kind of relationship... It's very sad to see that the relationship is obviously not what it was," he said in a telephone interview.

Government minister Darren Jones defended Starmer's decision to only get involved in military action where there was a "legal basis" and a "clear plan" that was in the UK's own national interest.

"That's why we were not involved in the initial strikes in Iran," he said.

"But it is also why we've consented to American air forces using our air bases and for British jets to be in the sky in order to defend British citizens who are currently in the region," he added.

He said two UK bases -- one in Gloucestershire in western England and the UK - U S base



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The base was "not being used by US bombers", Starmer said.

on Diego Garcia island in the Indian Ocean -- had now been cleared for use by the Americans.

"We all remember the mistakes of Iraq, and we have learnt those lessons," Starmer said in parliament on Monday.

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'Not-so special relationship'

British politicians have been haunted by the 2003 Iraq war, in which a reported 179 UK soldiers died.

An official UK inquiry into the conflict later found that Blair acted on flawed intelligence when deciding to join the war.

Evie Aspinall, director of the British Foreign Policy Group think tank, told AFP Starmer faced a "very tight diplomatic tightrope" with the US which "remains critical in the context of Ukraine and Greenland".

Richard Whitman, an expert on international relations at the University of Kent, added that Trump's remarks might herald a "new, not-so-special relationship".

The worry for London was any "spillover" on Ukraine and the possibility of Trump getting a "bee in his bonnet" about the UK.

"That would be clearly disastrous for the UK," he said.

The situation might be salvaged with a "bold announcement on defence spending uplifts", said Sophia Gaston, a foreign policy research fellow at King's College London.

UN urges all sides in Middle East war to 'come to their senses'

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

The United Nations on Tuesday urged all parties to "come to their senses" and end the war in the Middle East, with fear and panic spreading across the region and beyond.

UN human rights chief Volker Turk said he was "deeply shocked" by how the conflict was affecting civilians.

"The fear, the panic, the anxiety experienced by millions of people in the Middle East and beyond is palpable -- and was entirely avoidable," his spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told a press conference in Geneva.

"The situation is worsening and widening by the hour, playing out our worst fears."

Turk "is deeply shocked by the impacts of the widespread hostilities on civilians and civilian infrastructure since the conflict erupted on Saturday with Israel and the United States of America's attacks on Iran, Iran's response against states across the region, as well as Hezbollah's subsequent entry into the con-

- **Israeli attacks on Lebanon displace more than 58,000: authorities**
- **Trump says he 'might have forced Israel's hand' on Iran**
- **Trump says Iran was 'going to attack first'**
- **Russian top diplomat urges de-escalation in call with Iran's FM: ministry**
- **Trump says 'everything has been knocked out' in Iran**
- **EU, Gulf states to hold talks on Middle East war Thursday: officials**
- **Trump says most new Iran leaders eyed by US 'are dead'**
- **Trump says 'worst case' in Iran is new leader 'as bad' as Khamenei**
- **President Emmanuel Macron will on Tuesday speak to the nation about the war in Iran and its consequences, the Elysee said, after France vowed to protect its nationals...**

flict," she said.

Turk called on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, prevent further escalation, and take all feasible measures to protect civilians and critical infrastructure.

"Returning to the negotiating table is the one and only way to bring an end to the killing, destruction and despair," Shamdasani said.

Turk "implores all parties to come to their senses, and to end

this violence", she added.

Shamdasani said the laws of war were clear: civilians and civilian objects are protected, and all states and armed groups must abide by the law.

Iraq reduces production at key oil field after Strait of Hormuz disruption

AFP | Baghdad, Iraq

Iraq reduced production at a major oil field on Tuesday after the Strait of Hormuz was effectively closed, according to an official document and oil ministry sources.

The document, which was confirmed by two ministry sources, indicated that the operation manager at Iraq's Rumaila oil field ordered a reduction of "production and pumping... by 100 percent from" the south part of the field starting early Tuesday afternoon.

The document stated that the closure of the Strait of Hormuz caused a "shortage of tankers" in Iraq's southern ports, which led to stockpiling "reaching critical levels".

The ministry sources told AFP that Iraq will use its oil production for its own refin-

eries. BP works in partnership with the state-owned Basra Oil Company in Rumaila. The oil field there produces almost a third of Iraq's output.

Nearly a quarter of the world's seaborne oil supplies pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Oil production has also been disrupted in Iraq's northern Kurdistan region due to the ongoing Middle East war.

A source at an oil company in Kurdistan told AFP that most foreign oil companies have "temporarily" halted production as a precautionary measure.

The Kurdistan region hosts US-led coalition troops, and its capital Erbil is home to a major US consulate complex.

Oil fields in Kurdistan have been hit several times in recent years in attacks blamed on Iran-backed groups.

Iran says 'no radioactive leak' detected at Natanz nuclear site after US-Israeli strikes