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TWO AIR CANADA PILOTS KILLED IN RUNWAY CRASH AT NEW YORK AIRPORT

Too old to be hired, too young to retire? 11 ways to stay relevant in the midlife reinvention years



Four Jewish community ambulances were set ablaze early yesterday in Golders Green, north London

Trump halts bombs but Iran says talks claim is 'fake news'

President pauses strikes after 'productive conversations' – sending shares up and oil prices down – but Tehran dismisses any dialogue and accuses Washington of buying time for fresh military attacks

MAIRA BUTT AND DAVID MADDUX

Donald Trump's war on Iran was thrown into confusion after he paused his bombing campaign, saying there had been negotiations, only for

Tehran to reject the claim as "fake news". The US president said both sides had "very good and productive conversations regarding a complete and total resolution of our hostilities" as he postponed strikes for five days – an announcement that

boosted financial markets and saw oil prices tumble. But the Islamic Republic's foreign ministry said no talks had taken place and accused Mr Trump of trying to manipulate energy prices and buy more time for new military action.



Editorials

Vulnerable people must be helped during energy crisis

Despite a sudden and quite inexplicable easing of tensions between Washington and Tehran, it would be premature to declare any end in sight for the war in the Middle East. Things are far from “over”.

The prime minister has far more direct experience of Donald Trump than most, and he is therefore right to be extremely cautious about the prospect hinted at by the US president for a return to whatever passes for normality. Sir Keir Starmer, therefore, told senior MPs on the Commons Liaison Committee that the UK must not fall into the “false comfort” of thinking that there will be a quick and early end to this.

Quite so. The outcome could in fact be much worse for British households and businesses if the International Energy Agency is right about this being the worst energy crisis ever – like the ones in 1973 and 2022 combined.

At least there are signs that government planning for supporting the economy is underway, like ministers convening with the governor of the Bank of England, Andrew Bailey, to come up with some contingencies.

However, there should be some realism about what can be achieved, given the costs already incurred in successive crises in recent times.

The problem, even more than in previous episodes – and indeed because of those episodes – is money. Substantial increases in the UK national debt have already occurred from rescuing the banks during the global financial crisis in 2008, from the depressing effects of Brexit since 2016, from the Covid pandemic and now from the energy crisis when the second Ukraine war broke out. They have pushed public debt towards 100 per cent of GDP.

The bill for servicing that debt has risen once again for the UK, to above a wince-inducing 5 per cent on the benchmark gilt yield. Given that the world seems such an unstable place now, and the rate of economic growth so measly, any prudent chancellor would wish to retain some additional headroom for future contingencies, or “unknown unknowns”, so to speak.

The affordability of rising energy bills at the domestic level is mirrored in the public finances, where, despite some

encouraging signs before the Iran war, there is little room for manoeuvre. According to the Office for Budget Responsibility, the total cost of energy support policies in 2022 and 2023 amounted to some £51bn. That is 2 per cent of GDP, almost the equivalent of the defence budget, or about two years' worth of growth in the whole economy. It is difficult to see how the measures introduced during those years, by chancellor-turned-prime minister Rishi Sunak, could be easily afforded again.

If the crisis drags on and, say, propels the price of crude to \$200 a barrel, every Western government outside the US will run out of options.

Nevertheless, the broad pattern of support that Mr Sunak oversaw is worth replicating if needs be. In his time, he established a flat-rate non-repayable rebate or subsidy for households, amounting to £400, with larger additional payments for those on means-tested benefits and, of course, for pensioner households (a bumper winter fuel payment would feel somewhat ironic for Rachel Reeves).

The principle that the most vulnerable should have the greatest help is a sound one – and the social costs to the NHS from people suffering from maladies in cold and mouldy homes must be taken into account.

This time around Ms Reeves does seem to be more aware of the urgent need for assistance for those who rely on fuel oil or liquefied petroleum gas for heating, notably in rural areas and in Northern Ireland. She will also have to make some attempt to help businesses, which have, as she well knows, been affected by increases in taxes, employers' national insurance contributions and minimum wage levels, especially since Labour came to power.

There may be an additional reason to postpone, again, the scheduled increase in fuel duty, since it would increase industrial costs at such a difficult moment.

In the short term, the prime minister is clear that there should be no need for most people to panic over their gas and electricity bills. He is clear that bills will still be cut “because of measures we took in the Budget, and then held until the end of June” – and that pledge holds even if the war in the Middle East goes on.

After that, and peering towards next winter, there's no doubt that it will be a tough one for many households in the “squeezed middle” – too prosperous to qualify for subsidies, but not rich enough to be able to absorb the higher bills. Bitter as they may be, they should look to Washington, not Westminster, for someone to blame.



Trump is trying to escape ‘quagmire’ of war, says Iran



Donald Trump claimed he was dealing with ‘very reasonable, very solid’ people in Iran (Reuters)

MAIRA BUTT
DAVID MADDOX

Donald Trump’s war on Iran was thrown into confusion yesterday after he paused the US bombing campaign saying there had been constructive talks, only for Tehran to reject the claims as “fake news”.

The president said in a post on Truth Social that the US and Iran had engaged in “very good and productive conversations regarding a complete and total resolution of our hostilities” over the past two days.

Conversations would continue throughout the week, he claimed, with military strikes on Iranian power plants and energy infrastructure postponed for five days – an announcement that boosted financial markets and saw oil prices tumble.

Later yesterday, the president said: “We were planning tomorrow on shooting down some of their power plants, we’re gonna hold that up, hopefully we won’t have to do it. At the end of this [five-day] period it could very well end up being a very good deal for everybody. As good as if we went all the way and just literally annihilated the place, which if we don’t have to do that, that would be a good thing not a bad thing.”

But the Islamic Republic’s foreign ministry said no talks had taken place between Tehran and Washington and accused Mr Trump of trying to manipulate energy prices and buy more time for further military action. It did confirm that “initiatives” were in place to try to reduce tensions.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, speaker of Iran’s parliament, added: “No negotiations have been held with the US, and fake news is used to manipulate the financial and oil markets and escape the quagmire in which the US and Israel are trapped.”

Asked about Iran’s denial, the president said before boarding Air Force One: “Well, they’re going to have to get themselves better public relations people. We’ve had very strong talks. [Steve] Witkoff and [Jared] Kushner had them. They went perfectly.”



Bombing has continued across the Middle East with oil markets in mayhem (AFP/Getty)

The Middle East has faced upheaval and chaos after US-Israeli strikes killed Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on 28 February.

Since then the US, Israel and Iran have been embroiled in near constant tit-for-tat strikes, with thousands of targets hit, several fuel facilities damaged or destroyed and oil prices surging after the Islamic Republic laid siege to the Strait of Hormuz.

While a spokesperson for Sir Keir Starmer initially welcomed the talks, the prime minister later provided a more sobering take on the conflict, saying the UK will be preparing for hostilities to continue for much longer.

Asked by MPs at the powerful Commons Liaison Committee how long he expected the conflict to continue, he said: "It's hard to answer that question, if I'm honest about it. All of our focus and energy has to be on the swift de-escalation, but we've got to plan on the basis that it could go on for some time, and that's the way in which we'll plan this afternoon."

His appearance before the Liaison Committee – made up of the chairs of parliamentary select committees – came just hours after President Trump said he would "postpone" threatened strikes on Iran.

Sir Keir told MPs the UK had been “aware” of the talks and suggested it had come up in his conversation with the US president on Sunday evening.



The Strait of Hormuz remains mostly closed (Getty)

But the prime minister reiterated his calls for “rapid de-escalation” of the conflict ahead of chairing an emergency Cobra committee of senior government ministers and officials to discuss a plan to deal with the impact on the cost of living if the conflict becomes protracted.

This follows fears over petrol rationing and food shortages if the Strait of Hormuz is closed down long term. Israel said yesterday that the new goal of the war was for energy shipments to pass through the waterway, which is the passage for one-fifth of the world’s oil and natural gas.

Israel and the US have previously demanded regime change and the destruction of Iran’s nuclear facilities, goals that Israel now say seem out of reach.

The switch to a more diplomatic tone followed a 48-hour ultimatum issued to Iran on Saturday in which Mr Trump warned “there will be the total destruction of Iran” if the Strait of Hormuz was not opened.

Iran had responded by warning it would lay mines across the waterway and target energy infrastructure across the region,

raising fears that desalination plants would be hit.

Mr Trump suggested yesterday that the US could share “joint leadership” of the Strait of Hormuz with an unnamed Iranian leader. He said recent talks indicated there would be a “very serious form of regime change” in Iran and that the shipping lane could be “jointly controlled”.

Asked by whom, the president said, “Maybe me. Me and the ayatollah, whoever the ayatollah is, whoever the next ayatollah is.

“There’s automatically a regime change, but we’re dealing with some people that I find to be very reasonable, very solid,” he said. “The people within know who they are. They’re very respected, and maybe one of them will be exactly what we’re looking for.”

The US does not recognise the leadership of Mojtaba Khamenei, the second-oldest child of the slain ayatollah, who has not been seen in weeks, and officials have been communicating with “a top person” instead, the president added.

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Iran has finally exposed the real limits of Trump's power



Donald Trump claims the 'pause' on his plans to destroy Iran's electricity system came about through 'very good and productive talks' (AFP/Getty)

SAM KILEY

WORLD AFFAIRS EDITOR

By postponing his threat to “obliterate” Iran’s energy system if Tehran doesn’t open the Strait of Hormuz, Donald Trump has revealed the limits of American power, which are understood by its enemies, but not by its president.

Trump claims the five-day “pause” on his plans to destroy Iran’s electricity system came about through “very good and productive talks” with Tehran – talks Iran says never happened.

But the US president did have to account for Tehran’s calibrated reaction to his threat. Do that, said Iran, in its first response, and we’ll blow up all the desalination plants that keep your Gulf allies alive in the desert, we’ll shut down the Strait of Hormuz until you fix all our stuff that you bombed, and we’ll go after Israel even harder.

Later, Tehran seemed to roll these threats back in an uncharacteristic attempt to hold some moral high ground, after the UN observed that destroying water systems could be a war crime.

Iran said it would focus on taking out electricity-generating plants in the Gulf – which coincidentally supply power to turn sea water into fresh.

“The lying... US president has claimed that the Revolutionary Guards intends to attack the water desalination plants and cause hardship to the people of the countries in the region,” the Iranian government said on state media. “We are determined to respond to any threat at the same level as it creates in terms of deterrence... If you hit electricity, we hit electricity.”



Brent crude oil prices skyrocketed from the start of March (Trading Economics)

A “pause” allows Gulf nations to try to replenish fast dwindling air defences. It buys Iran’s now highly decentralised military system respite from a possible onslaught. And it gives Trump the chance to reflect, if he is capable of reflection, on how to get out of a quagmire that Tehran has prepared for him.

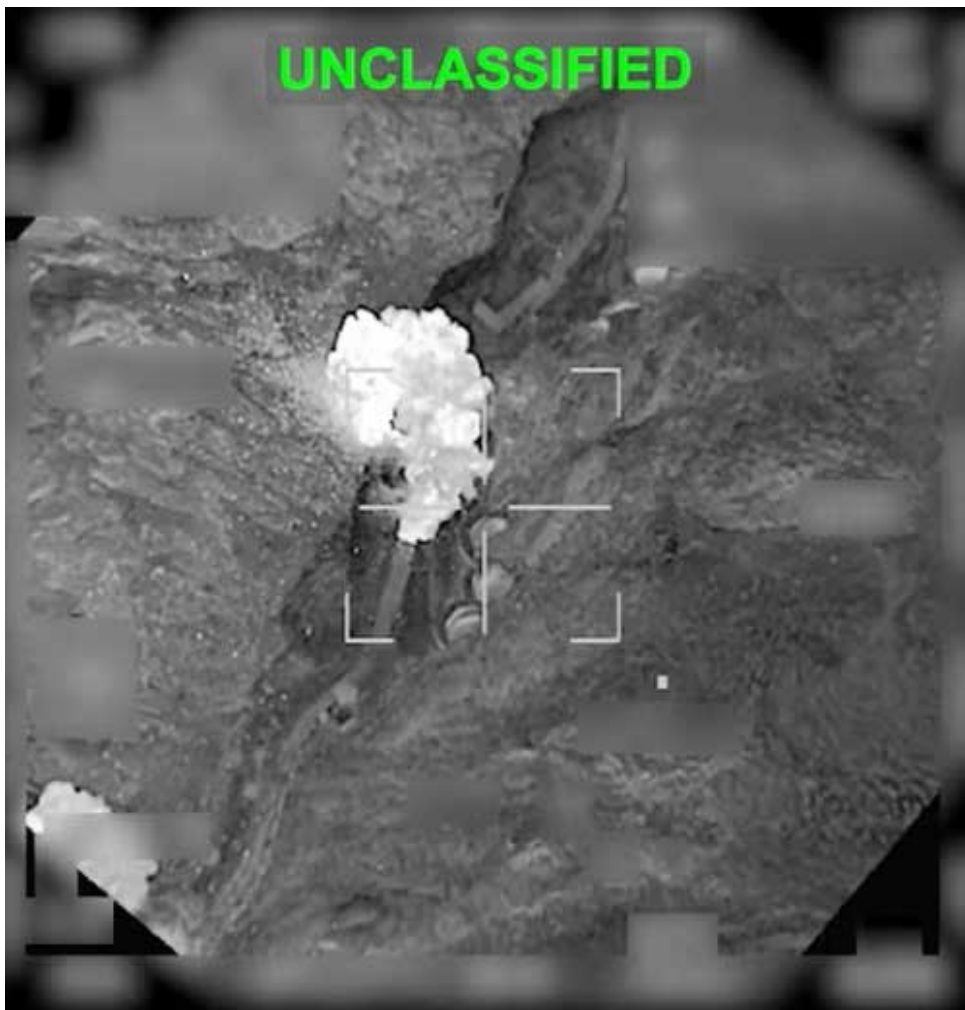
The Israel-US attacks on Iran, now going into their fourth week, have caused a surge in oil and natural gas prices and threaten to trigger global recession. Facing mid-term elections in November, Trump can ill-afford skyrocketing prices at American petrol stations.

The cycle of threats to energy was started by Israel, which, aping Russian tactics in Ukraine, bombed Iran’s South Pars gas field. Qatar draws its wealth from the same underground reservoirs and while liquefied natural gas prices spun yet higher, Trump demanded that Israel stop such attacks against Iran. These attacks are also probably war crimes.

But this is moot. The US and Israel believed they could bomb Iran into regime change. They forgot the lessons of recent history – that a threat from a superpower is far more effective than the exercise of that power.

The limits of American-led military operations when it comes to achieving political ends were bitterly exposed with the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Incompetent leaders of the US-led occupying forces set the conditions for a bloody insurgency that led to the establishment of the so-called Islamic State.

It also allowed Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its proxies in Iraq, Damascus (the Assad regime), and Lebanon (Hezbollah) to flourish for two decades.



An explosion following a strike on a missile facility in Haji Abad, Iran (US Central Command)

The IRGC fought in Iraq and watched US-led forces in Afghanistan flounder and bleed and learned that a global superpower can be defeated in the long term.

Among the lessons they observed was the “threat” from the then president Barack Obama to use force against the then ruler of Damascus, Bashar al-Assad, if his forces used chemical weapons. Assad used the globally banned weapons – and America did nothing.

It may have been deemed expedient to leave Assad in power and to abandon the democratic and revolutionary forces trying to drive him out for fear of creating more space for al-Qaeda and Isis.

A failure to act may have been the right thing to do – but Assad and his puppet masters in Tehran did not know that. They

gambled, and won – and America didn't have the nerve or the muscle to move against them.

Responding to Trump's threat at the weekend to "obliterate" Iran's oil fields, Tehran said: "Any attempt to attack Iran's coasts or islands will cause all access routes in the Gulf... to be mined with various types of sea mines, including floating mines that can be released from the coast. In this case, the entire Gulf will practically be in a situation similar to the Strait of Hormuz for a long time..."

This is an insurgent tactic that the US and Israel, both of which have had years of experience fighting militant insurgencies, failed to take account of. It may also be a lie. The Iranians may no longer have the capacity to cripple the global economy in this way.



Destruction and fire at the Iranian government's electronics industries building in Tehran (UGC)

Tehran's threat was also a dare. Would America ever truly gamble on whether Iran can shut down the route for 20 per cent of the world's oil, most of Europe's gas, and on whether the IRGC can, really, shut down the Gulf plants which make at least 80 per cent of the region's water?

Trump has his own insurgent approach to communications. It keeps his friends off balance and serves his enemies.

Signalling alternatively that he is winding down the US war in Iran, then threatening an escalation. He asks for help from allies

to open the Strait of Hormuz, then dismisses them, including Britain, as cowards that are no longer needed.

Gulf countries have seen this behaviour and been dragged into the war with Iran by hosting US bases. Their glistening cities are only habitable because they are powered by gas and oil. Their thirst only quenched by taking the salt out of seawater.

Iran's foreign policy under successive ayatollahs is driven by a fundamentalist interpretation of Twelver Shi'ism. They believe that Iran must remain a conservative theocracy to create the conditions for the Mahdi to reveal himself.



A Liberian-flagged tanker carrying crude oil from Saudi Arabia, seemingly let through the Strait of Hormuz (AP)

This has driven an obsessive hatred of America and Israel. Iran placed itself at the centre of the Axis of Resistance which included the Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Assad regime, and militias in Iraq.

Now Tehran is not only at the centre of this axis, it is the focal point of “resistance”. And it is America's president who seems to be backing down (probably under pressure from Gulf allies).

Iran appears to have allowed some Indian and Pakistani oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran may be reeling from air attacks that killed supreme leader Ali Khamenei and may have injured his son, and

successor, Mojtaba, but it is exploiting opportunities to isolate Trump.

There are no signs that Iran's regime is falling or that its long-oppressed and violently abused population is rising against it.

It is trying to extract a price for a war brought to the world by Trump and Netanyahu that none of their friends want to pay. That is how to beat a superpower.



**Americans must be
sick of President Flip-
flop's U-turns**

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‘We are at war’: MPs call for action from prime minister



Keir Starmer facing a hostile select committee in parliament yesterday (House of Commons/PA)

DAVID MADDUX
MILLIE COOKE

Sir Keir Starmer has been accused of “complacency” by senior MPs as he faced a grilling over the UK’s lack of preparedness for the war in the Middle East.

The prime minister clashed with both Labour and Tory MPs as he appeared before the Commons Liaison Committee – made

up of the chairs of parliamentary select committees – where he was challenged with claims that the UK “is at war”.

The appearance came ahead of the prime minister’s chairing of an emergency Cobra meeting yesterday afternoon to prepare for the war’s impact on the cost of living, and he admitted to MPs he was unable to give a timetable for the end of the conflict despite Donald Trump’s declaration of a ceasefire.

But the concerns expressed forcefully by MPs on the committee are reflected in polling by Ipsos, released yesterday just ahead of Sir Keir’s appearance, revealing that public concern about defence issues has more than doubled since last month.

Ipsos found that those worried about the UK’s defence increased from 16 per cent to 31 per cent, putting it up three places to third behind immigration and the economy in priority.

During a difficult committee hearing, a flustered-looking Sir Keir was asked how long he expected the conflict to continue. He said: “It’s hard to answer that question, if I’m honest about it.

“I think all our focus and energy has to be in the swift de-escalation, but we’ve got to plan on the basis that it could go on for some time, and that’s the way in which we’ll plan this afternoon.”

At one point, he got visibly angry as he was reminded that Winston Churchill had not needed a defence review to carry out Britain’s defence in the Second World War.



Bernard Jenkin told the PM his government had a 'lack of war-fighting mentality' (House of Commons/PA)

The subject is a sensitive one for the prime minister, who was described as “no Winston Churchill” by Donald Trump.

When then asked about “quite rude” comments made by Mr Trump, Sir Keir said: “A lot of what is said or done is undoubtedly said and done to put pressure on me, I have no doubt about that. For Free Papers Check Sanet.st I understand what is going on. But I am not going to waver on this. I am the British prime minister and my job is to be absolutely focused on what is in the British national interest.”

He was also challenged over the lack of Royal Navy ships in the Mediterranean when President Trump launched his war on Iran, amid questions about why the UK was so ill-prepared to protect its crucial bases in Cyprus.

In a particularly tetchy exchange, veteran Tory MP Sir Bernard Jenkin suggested the government had a “lack of war-fighting mentality” and claimed defence decision-making “smacks of enormous complacency”.

He argued that the UK “is at war” and asked why “the government is not just getting on with it”.

Sir Keir responded: “Because the strategic review commits us to a war footing, and we now need to put the funding in place to

increase defence spending to 2.5 per cent, something that didn't happen under the last government, and where at the election a credible proposition wasn't put forward by your party."

Sir Bernard, however, argued that every government has to pick up problems from its predecessors.

The prime minister responded: "Well, this smacks of the fact that for years there was under-investment by the last government and the 'hollowing out of our armed forces', copyright Ben Wallace."

The former Conservative defence secretary Sir Ben once claimed, while he was in government, that the armed forces had been "hollowed out and underfunded".

Earlier, the current chair of the defence select committee, Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, was also scathing about the lack of preparedness of the government for the Middle East crisis.



Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi was critical of No 10's lack of preparedness for the conflict (Parliament TV)

He said: "We were seeing reports of the US significantly ramping up its forces around Iran in preparation for attack, but when they started the war it was embarrassing that we couldn't even muster one single naval asset around the region."

The questions have been mounting since Iran launched drone attacks on Cyprus, with one hitting the UK base RAF Akrotiri at the start of the conflict.

While the destroyer HMS *Dragon* was deployed, it has only just arrived in the Mediterranean and needed six days' hurried preparations before it could set sail. There were no other ships in the region.

The issue has been embarrassing for the UK after the Greek and French governments were able to deploy naval assets to defend Cyprus before the UK.

Mr Dhesi also raised questions about in-year savings to the defence budget and wanted assurances that the UK is on schedule to meet its commitment of 5 per cent of GDP spent on defence and security by 2034.

He joined Sir Bernard in pressing for when the crucial Defence Investment Strategy is set to be published, with the prime minister appearing to admit that there is a stand-off between the MoD and Treasury, adding: "It is my job to resolve this."

Regarding the defence of the Cyprus bases, Sir Keir said: "We constantly assess this, and we do have very effective ways of defending ourselves.

"I don't want to raise levels of public anxiety. They are anxious about what they're already seeing on their television screens. They're anxious about the impact it will have on them, particularly economically, in their households. And I don't want to raise their levels of anxiety.

"I can tell you our military personnel, our security and intelligence services, are working literally 24/7 to keep us safe and doing a very good job in that regard."

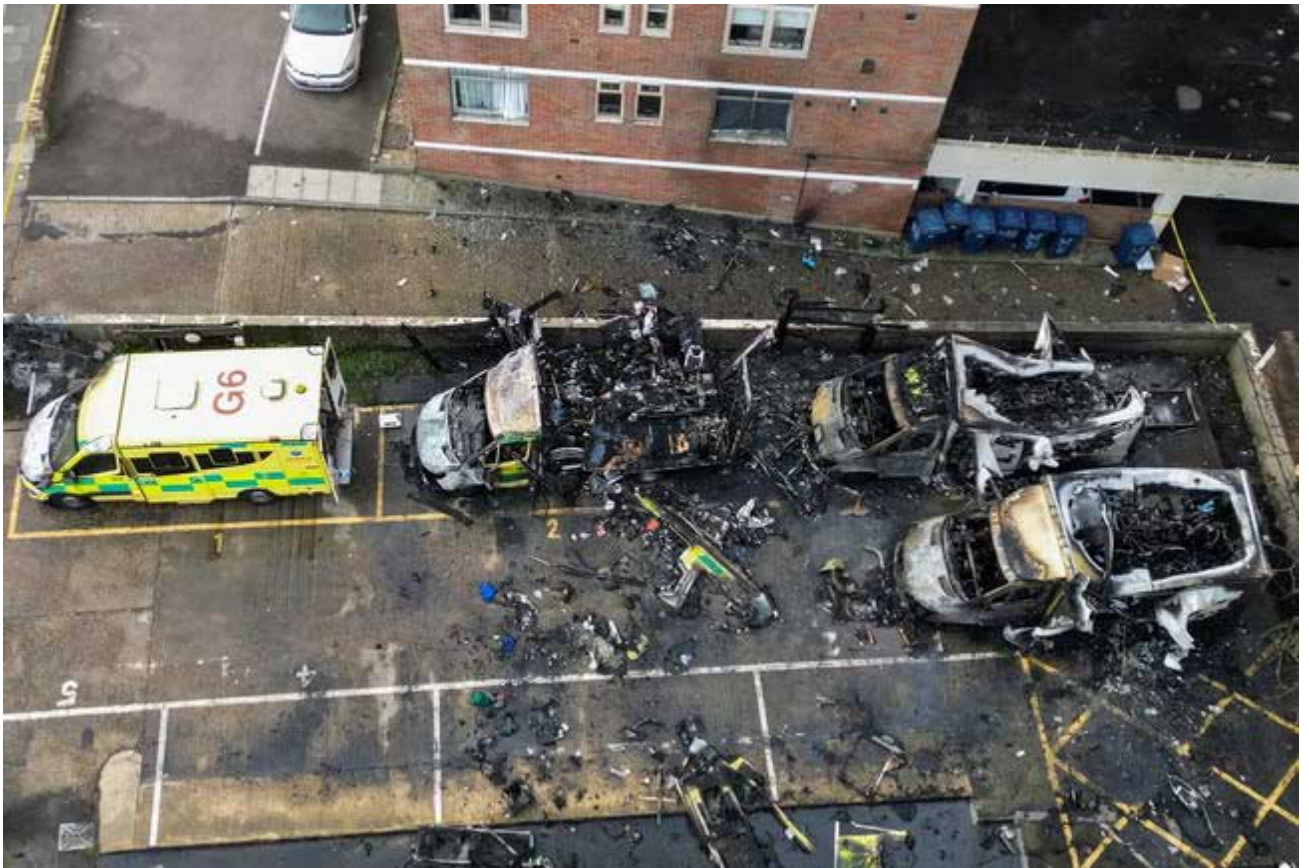
Sir Keir also told the committee that Britain had "embedded the UK airspace battle management specialists into military commands" in the Middle East to defend against Iranian missile attacks, adding: "We are working with industry to distribute air defence missiles to Gulf partners. We're deploying short-range air defence systems to Bahrain at speed. This was an issue that came up as a matter of some urgency over the course of this weekend, and we are doing the same with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia."

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Arson attack fuels fear in startled Jewish community

‘I would pack up and go tomorrow’, one resident of Golders Green tells **Dan Haygarth**, as police search for three suspects



Four ambulances belonging to a charity in the north London suburb were damaged or destroyed (AFP/Getty)

Standing at the end of Highfield Road in Golders Green, Dov Forman surveys the torched aftermath of an arson attack which has shattered the close-knit Jewish community in northwest London.

The spot is directly opposite where his late great-grandmother and Holocaust survivor Lily Ebert lived after moving to London to rebuild her life after the Second World War.

“I’m actually glad that she’s no longer alive to have seen this,” the 22-year-old author and campaigner tells *The Independent*.

“She would have been completely devastated because it would have completely shattered the thought that the UK was a safe place for her and her family to live.”

The attack took place after four ambulances were set alight in the car park of Machzikei Hadath synagogue early yesterday morning. Police are investigating the incident as an antisemitic hate crime.

It happened at 1.45am after three masked men walked up to the vehicles, which belonged to the Jewish volunteer service Hatzola, and torched them.

There were no reported injuries. But it triggered a series of explosions, caused by oxygen canisters onboard the ambulances, which echoed through the residential area, blowing out windows and shaking homes.



Dov Forman’s late great-grandmother, an Auschwitz survivor, lived directly opposite the site of the attack (*The Independent*)

The location of the attack struck the community at its heart. The charity was established in 1979 and, since then, has provided free medical transportation and emergency response to those living in the area.

Jewish community leaders have condemned the attack, with the chief rabbi Ephraim Mirvis saying the targeting of the volunteer service was “particularly sickening”.

London mayor Sir Sadiq Khan said it was a “cowardly attack on the Jewish community” while Sir Keir Starmer the incident “horrific”.

At the scene yesterday, Jewish people described how they were now living in fear following the incident with many saying they were thinking about leaving the country for their own safety.

Mr Forman said many of his friends have already concluded that modern Britain is no longer safe for his community.

“Many will feel they can't be visibly Jewish in certain pockets of London and across the country,” he said. “That is a conversation that we need to have... we can't shy away from that.”

“I think we're seeing the levels of antisemitism that many would have experienced decades ago, that many in this country thought would never be possible [again],” he said.

Caroline Levey, 62, lives opposite where the incident occurred. She was awoken by the first blast and went out to see what went on, believing it to be an accident on the busy Golders Green Road.

“I went right up to the cordon. I don't know why I went. And then oh God [she saw and heard the next bang]. And that was, that was it. I legged it home,” she said.

Golders Green has been Ms Levey's home for 61 years and she feels encouraged to be part of a tightly-knit Jewish community in the area. However, she would now leave the UK if she had the money, due to a rise in antisemitic incidents.

She says: “This is the first time in over 60 years that I have experienced such a terrible, almost life-endangering incident.



Damon Hoff described the incident as an 'attack on anything decent' (The Independent)

"I haven't slept since, I haven't slept since 1:45 this morning and I've tried to. I just can't get it out of my head."

"If I could afford to pack up and go, I would go tomorrow."

Damon Hoff, president of the Machzike Hadath Synagogue, was among those who woke up the sound of explosions. He describes the incident as an "attack on anything decent", telling *The Independent*: "This is the deepest heart of the Jewish community, and it's an unbelievable vulnerability because it's your way of life and it's an attack on everything that you stand for."

Historical stained glass windows at the synagogue had been damaged by the fire, as well as smoke damage to the roof of the building, he says.

Mr Hoff no longer feels safe wearing his kippah (skull cap) when walking in the West End.

Peter Zinkin, a Conservative councillor for Golders Green, describes the feeling in his community as "distress, anger and upset".

“What I feel about it is deep upset”, he said. “With all of the attacks on the community over the last few years, it isn’t in one sense a surprise that this has happened.



Police forensic officers at the scene in Highfield Road (PA)

“It’s just a deep sadness, and deep sadness leads to upset. But the important question is why did it happen?

Fellow councillor Dean Cohen said: “It is a despicable act, not only to attack the Jewish community, but to attack ambulances, ambulances that are there to save lives day in, day out, 24/7, is a new low.”

Rather than leaving, Mr Forman believes the Jewish community in north London must now rally together and take a united stand against such incidents.

“We’ve got through this in every generation, and we will stay together, strong, and ultimately we are stronger together, and we know that”, he says.

“No one else is going to fight this fight for us against antisemitism. We will do it ourselves.”

The Metropolitan Police’s detective chief superintendent Luke Williams said there have been no arrests and the investigation is being led by counterterrorism officers.

Additional reporting by Holly Evans



**British Jews like me
feel extra alone and
intimidated**

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Group with suspected links to Iran claims arson attack



Little is known about Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia but it has voiced anti-Israel sentiments (Getty)

BRYONY GOOCH

The attack in Golders Green is being treated as an antisemitic hate crime by the Metropolitan Police, but not as terrorism at this stage, although counterterrorism police are investigating an online claim by a suspected terror group that has taken responsibility for the attack.

A Telegram post from Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia (HAYI) has circulated online which claims to be the group behind the arson.

An unverified video, posted after 6am yesterday on the group's Telegram channel, showed street view Google Maps, images of the ambulances and footage of explosions.

Who are they?

Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia is a new group with suspected links to pro-Iranian networks, according to Israel's Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism. Their name translates to the "Islamic Movement of the Companions of the Right[eous]".

The group's Telegram channel, which appeared to have been created on Saturday, includes numerous videos from alleged incidents. This includes unverified footage of the explosions in Golders Green, and of an attack in Amsterdam targeting a US bank.

Earlier this month, the Israeli diaspora ministry released a report which said the attacks appear to be part of intimidation and psychological warfare against Jewish communities in Europe.



Israel's minister in charge of combating antisemitism, Amichai Chikli, said the latest attack formed part of a disturbing pattern (Getty)

Diaspora affairs and combating antisemitism minister Amichai Chikli told *The Times of Israel*: “The recent events in Europe are not isolated incidents but part of a disturbing pattern of action: Terrorist networks affiliated with the Iranian axis are trying to expand their arena of operation into the cities and Jewish communities of Europe.”

The report also said that the group operates through local cells or individuals who are directed from abroad.

It highlighted that the organisation’s name is similar to one used by the Iraqi militia, Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya, which was described as a terrorist organisation by the US State Department.

The group’s logo also closely resembles the symbols used by Iranian-aligned militant groups, according to *The Times of Israel*.

What has the group claimed?

The terror group issued a statement at the start of an unverified video on its Telegram channel which claimed its primary target was the Machzike Hadath Synagogue due to its links to Israel.

The post also cited Conservative former prime minister Rishi Sunak’s visit to the synagogue during the election campaign in June 2024 to express “his country’s unwavering support for Israel”.



Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia has claimed responsibility for an attack at a synagogue in Liege, Belgium (AFP/Getty)

What other incidents are they linked to?

The group previously claimed responsibility for several attacks on Jewish sites in Belgium and the Netherlands between 9 and 14 March, according to the Israeli ministry.

They included an explosive attack at a synagogue in Liege, Belgium, an arson attack on a Rotterdam synagogue and an explosive device set off at a Jewish school in Amsterdam.

HAYI was also suspected to be linked to an attack at a Jewish site in Greece, according to the Israeli diaspora ministry.

Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted on X (formerly Twitter) on 15 March that HAYI was "a jihadi group tied to an Iranian proxy", responsible for attacks at a Jewish site in Greece.

It said "the IRGC continues to sponsor and export terror across the globe".

The police response

The Met's Detective Chief Superintendent Luke Williams said: "We are aware of an online claim from a group taking responsibility for this attack.

"Establishing the authenticity and accuracy of this claim will be a priority for the investigation team, but it is not something we can confirm at this point."

Police are currently looking for three people in hoods, seen on CCTV pouring accelerant on the vehicles, which belong to Jewish community ambulance service Hatzola, before setting them on fire and running away.

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By Numbers The pleasure seekers

Share of respondents who consider 'having a good time' one of the three most important aspects in life



12,000 - 60,000 respondents (18 - 64 y/o) per country surveyed Jan to Dec 2025

Source: Statista Consumer Insights





Pictures of the Day



Sky-high prophets

Hot air balloons launching at a festival celebrating Eid al-Fitr, the end of the Islamic holy fasting month of Ramadan, in Wonosobo, Java. *AFP/Getty*



Forking out

Lightning streaks across the sky during a thunderstorm over Doha in Qatar. *AFP/Getty*



Beastly business

Deer frolic in a forest of the Taunus region near Frankfurt, Germany. *AP*



Flower power

Cherry trees blossom in front of the Capitol building in Washington DC. *AP*



Cross purposes

Bakers sort hot cross buns on a conveyor belt at Gunstones Bakery, in Dronfield, Derbyshire, ahead of the Easter period. *Reuters*

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Home news in brief



Natalie McNally was murdered by her partner Stephen McCullagh, a jury found yesterday (Family handout)

YouTuber convicted of murdering pregnant partner

YouTuber Stephen McCullagh was found guilty yesterday of the murder of his pregnant partner Natalie McNally.

McNally, 32, was 15 weeks pregnant with the couple's son when she was beaten and stabbed by McCullagh, 36, at her home in Lurgan, Northern Ireland on 18 December 2022.

During the trial at Belfast Crown Court, the jury heard that McCullagh had broadcast a YouTube video of himself playing

Grand Theft Auto on the night that his partner was murdered, giving the impression it was a live broadcast.

But the prosecution said he had prepared the six-hour gaming broadcast four days in advance. He then disguised himself, took a bus to Lurgan, and walked to McNally's house where he killed her. He later got a taxi home before returning to McNally's house on the night of 19 December, when he made a 999 call.

McCullagh, of Woodland Gardens, Lisburn, had denied the charge. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, with a minimum tariff to be set at a later date.

Man died after ambulance crew went to wrong address

A man who dialled 999 complaining of breathing problems died after an ambulance was sent to the wrong address, an inquest in Bedfordshire has heard.

Darryl Johnson, from Sandy, called the emergency services at 6.17am on 24 February 2025. They arrived just under an hour later but went to 27a Market Square and not 27b Market Square, despite Mr Johnson giving the correct address. The 52-year-old was found dead at his home by colleagues that night. He died from a clot blocking a blood vessel in a lung.

Coroner Emma Witting said in a prevention of future deaths report: "Had the crew been sent to the right address, the deceased may have been found alive, although it remained unclear whether his death would have been avoided."

An East of England Ambulance Service spokesperson said: "We would like to express our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Darryl Johnson. Following this incident, we carried out a full investigation and reviewed our practices to strengthen the processes we use when an address cannot be located on the Ordnance Survey Map Database, ensuring the correct address and relevant information are added to our systems."

Emergency traffic system to be used for Channel traffic

An emergency traffic management scheme is set to be deployed on the M20 in Kent over the Easter period as authorities anticipate a surge in holidaymakers heading to Europe.

The Kent and Medway Resilience Forum (KMRF) confirmed that, under a scheme known as Operation Brock, barriers will be in place on the motorway from 2 April to 8 April.

Designed to maintain traffic flow during potential delays at Channel ports, it directs lorries bound for the Port of Dover or Eurotunnel into a dedicated lane between junctions eight and nine. This allows other vehicles to continue moving in both directions, albeit through narrow lanes at a reduced 50mph limit.

KMRF strategic lead for border disruption, Simon Jones, said: “The whole KMRF team understand the decision to put the Brock barrier in place at busy times is not always popular and we do not take the decision lightly. The predicted number of crossings during this week fully support its deployment.”

Failed Reform candidate defends using AI for his book

The Reform UK candidate who lost a crunch by-election last month has defended using AI to help write his latest book.

Matt Goodwin came in second place, behind the Green Party’s Hannah Spencer, in the Gorton and Denton vote. Now the ex-university academic, who came under fire during the campaign for calling for women and young girls to be given a “biological reality” check, has had to defend his use of ChatGPT on his latest book, *Suicide of a Nation: Immigration, Islam, Identity*.

The book has been described as a “story of how Britain, one of the most remarkable countries on earth, is not just in decline but is committing national suicide”.

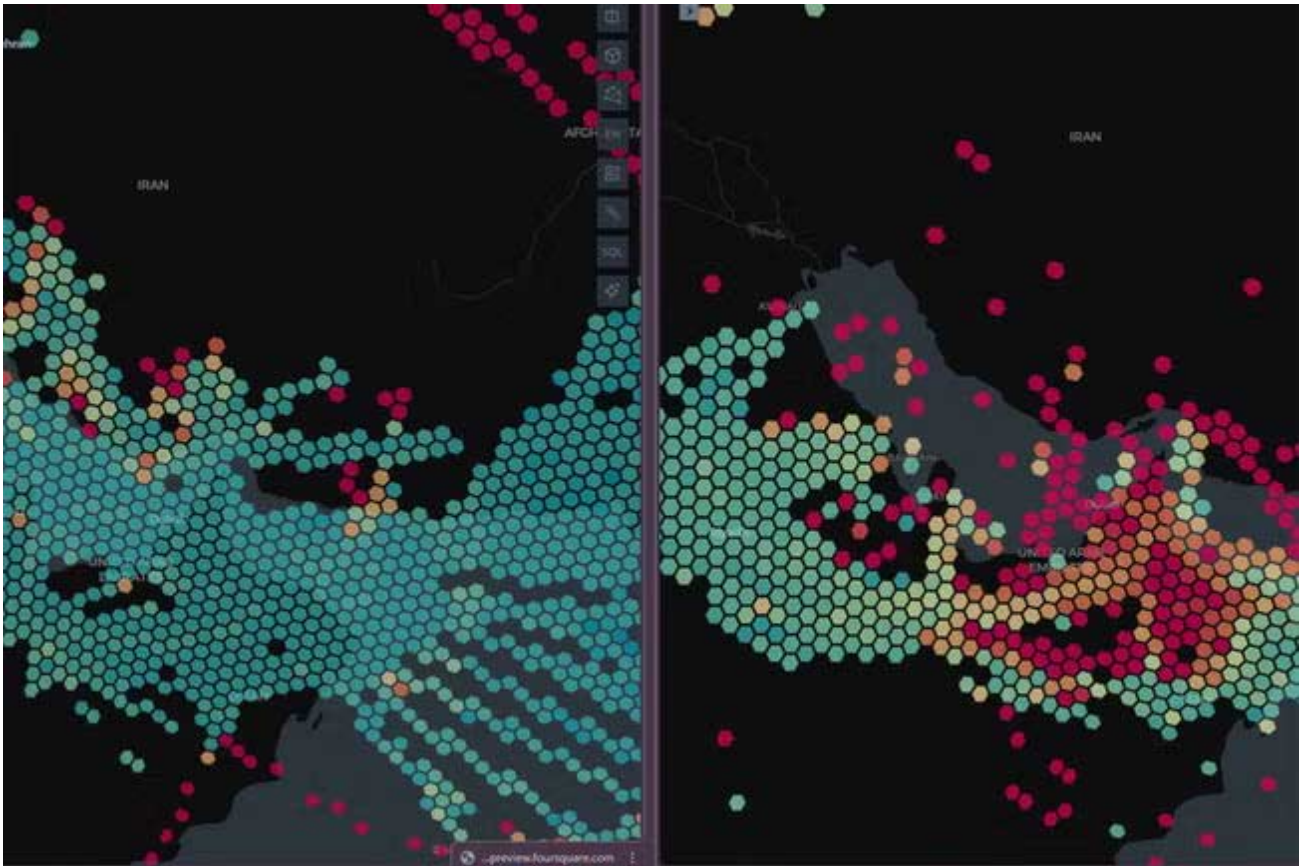
After its publication, critics took to X to point out that ChatGPT was mentioned in the URL in some of Mr Goodwin’s references in the book. In response, he has defended his use of AI, saying: “I see no issue obtaining datasets via AI so long as they are cross-checked with the original source.”

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GPS ‘spoofing’ is causing chaos in the Middle East

Combatants interfering with navigation systems to outwit their enemies are also endangering civilian ships and planes



Comparative mapping from 15 January (left) and 12 March shows rising incidence of jamming indicated by red and orange areas (Wingbits)

JAMES C. REYNOLDS

Iran's control of the Strait of Hormuz has created chaos in the global economy and has become the most urgent problem facing

Donald Trump and Israel as they prosecute their war against Tehran.

Iranian attacks in the vital channel have reduced commercial traffic by as much as 95 per cent in just three weeks, forcing energy prices up and piling on the pressure to find a resolution.

But, underlying the dramatic clashes across the region, forces are quietly fighting an invisible war by land, air and sea, distorting tracking information to sow chaos or hide in plain sight.

GPS interference across the Middle East has spiked since the US and Israel struck Iran on 28 February, plunging both sides into an “electronic warfare arms race” to contain the impact and get an advantage, analysts told *The Independent*.

While the targets are primarily military, disruption is also hurting commercial shipping off the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Iran, fortifying Tehran’s chokehold on the Strait and adding another dimension to the spiralling conflict.

How does GPS manipulation work?

Jamming and spoofing are among the most common forms of interference, and can affect anything using a satellite to determine its location, from a mobile phone to an aircraft carrier.



The Pentagon announced last week that the A-10 Warthog is back in action (US Centcom)

GPS works by calculating how long it takes signals from a satellite to reach a receiver on the ground. Because those signals are quite weak by the time they reach Earth, they are fairly easy to disrupt.

An attacker can jam a signal by overwhelming the real messages from global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) with electromagnetic noise, affecting how they reach the receiver. On a phone, you might see your map freezing or jumping around.

Spoofing is a more sophisticated manipulation of signals. It works by transmitting fake satellite signals designed to mimic the real ones. The receiver then accepts these signals and provides a false location.

This can have devastating effects for civilian and military operators. Last May, the container ship MSC *Antonia* began showing positions far from its true location while transiting the Red Sea. On board, the crew would have seen that they had moved hundreds of miles south. The crew became disoriented, and the ship eventually ran aground.

The grounding caused millions of dollars in damage and required a salvage operation that lasted over five weeks.

How do militaries use jamming and spoofing?

Philip Ingram, a former British Army colonel and intelligence expert, told *The Independent* that jamming has been an essential feature of modern warfare since the Second World War.



Oil tankers and cargo ships line up in the Strait of Hormuz, seen from Khor Fakkan in the United Arab Emirates (AP)

“It’s an integral part of your planning. You plan it the same way as you plan the ammunition you’re going to put in your rifle,” he said.

Iran – “prolific” in spoofing – will be using interference in the Gulf to “add confusion and disrupt any of the allied intelligence gathering”, he said.

Other kinds of jamming can stop aircraft communicating and cut electronic signals to projectiles flying in their direction.

Alex Lungu, co-founder of Stockholm-based aviation intelligence company Wingbits, said that GPS interference is “an efficient tool for confusing your adversaries and then also protecting yourself”. He told *The Independent* that all parties involved in the conflict could stand to gain from using the technology. “They all have an interest in taking the ability to navigate from the other,” he said.

Mr Ingram agreed, saying Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar would all be using spoofing for defensive purposes, too. “What they’re trying to do is confuse the Shahed drones that are coming in. That’s really what they’ll be focused on,” he said.



The US continues to target Iranian vessels in the Strait of Hormuz (US Centcom)

“But the reality is, as we’ve seen, [with] the Shahed 136 drone that hit the UK Sovereign base area in Cyprus, the guidance mechanism that’s in there has come from Russia and the guidance mechanism has got anti-jamming capability built into it.

“So it’s sophisticated technology that’s been passed from Russia back to Iran for Iran to incorporate into their Shahed drone,” he said, framing it as a “big electronic warfare arms race”.

Intelligence experts believe Iran has strengthened its offensive capabilities since the 12 Day War last June, which also saw widespread jamming and spoofing across the region.

Former French foreign intelligence director Alain Juillet told France’s *Tocsin* podcast that the regime in Tehran has likely procured China’s BeiDou satellite navigation system, as its targeting has become much more accurate since last summer.

Military analyst Patricia Marins told bne Intellinews that the sophisticated Chinese tech is “essentially unjammable”, using a “complex frequency hopping and navigation message authentication (NMA), which prevents spoofing”.

How are commercial flights and ships being affected?

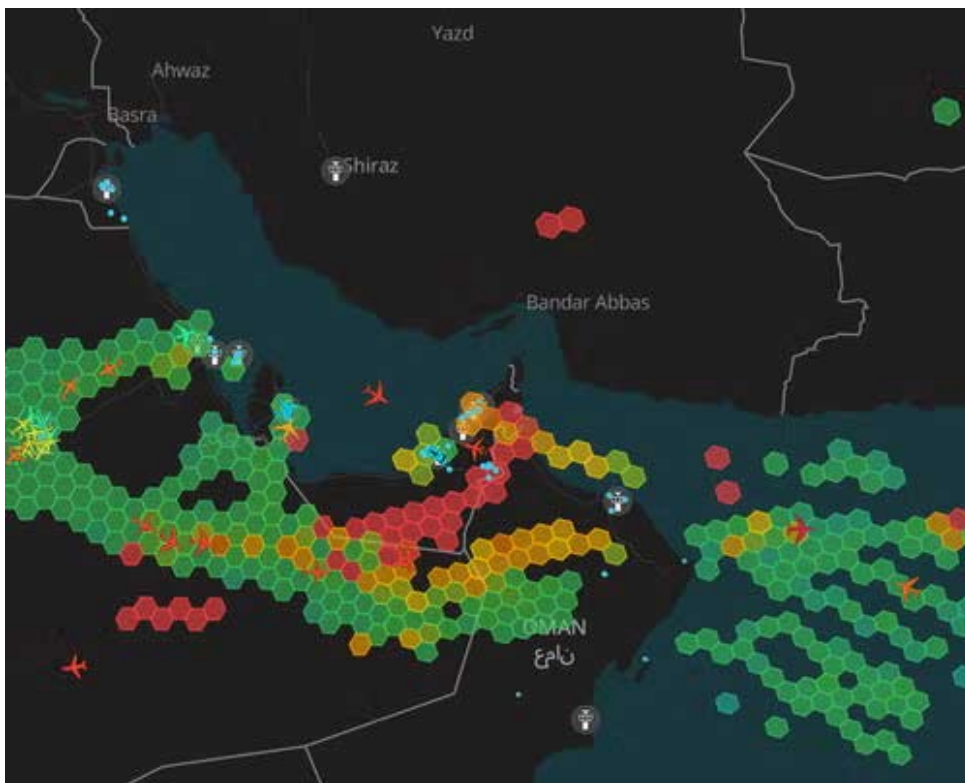
Most countries in the Middle East have closed their airspace since war erupted. Commercial airlines have cited safety risks in

their decision to postpone flights, costing the travel industry around £450m per day.

In the first days of the war, the UK government organised flights back from Oman for Britons stuck in the region. Some flights are still leaving Muscat.

Mr Lungu said that all flights through Omani airspace could have been affected by the growing pattern of “indiscriminate” interference.

“GPS jamming is inherently difficult to contain within precise geographic boundaries. While the range and directionality can be influenced by the source, spillover into neighbouring airspace and countries is common.”



GPS accuracy around the Gulf, with red and orange indicating degraded accuracy and green indicating normal navigation performance (Wingbits)

Charlie Brown, senior advisor to United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI) and a former US Navy officer, said the enhanced risks to ships caused by interference would figure into risk assessments for the owners of commercial ships, operators and insurers.

“The result to shipping, which depends on [GPS] for routine operations, causes extra confusion and hampers safe navigation.

It's not impossible for shipping to navigate without GPS... The men and women on the ship can still navigate. It's just harder and they need to be more aware of what they're doing," he told *The Independent*.

Mr Brown explained that there have been efforts in recent years to ensure that mariners are not overly reliant on their GPS navigation systems and are still using multiple sources and cross-checking data for when automatic systems fail.

"It is serious. It adds complexity. It adds risk. And it adds inconvenience both to the people on the ships, but also the people ashore trying to understand what's going on at sea."

"Both sides are doing it for offensive reasons, and both sides are doing it for defensive reasons," he added.



The US Navy is trying to undermine Iranian efforts to obstruct traffic around the Persian Gulf (US Centcom)

At the time of writing, at least 22 civilian ships, including tankers, container ships and other bulk carriers, have been attacked, according to data from the Institute for the Study of War and AEI Critical Threats Project.

The risk from drones and missiles is compounded by unreliable GPS data in narrow channels like the Strait of Hormuz, where even small navigation errors can lead to groundings or collisions.

When will it end?

GPS interference has played a vital role in intelligence for decades. The war in Iran is just the latest conflict to force innovation as adversaries try to outmanoeuvre each other.

“Looking at the data from what happened in the conflict with Israel and Gaza, and what’s happening in Russia, my guess is that it will keep going on while the conflict is in progress,” assessed Mr Lungu.

Mr Ingram pointed to Ukraine as an example of how electronic warfare, through drones, has shaped and reshaped the conflict as new technologies cancel each other out.

“It hasn’t quite got to that level in the Middle East yet, but the arms race is on.”

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Air Canada aircraft landing in New York hits fire engine



Both pilots were killed and more than 40 people injured at LaGuardia airport (Reuters)

SHWETA SHARMA
PAUL FARRELL
JASMINE FERNÁNDEZ

Two pilots were killed and dozens of passengers were injured when an Air Canada Express flight landing on Sunday night at New York's LaGuardia airport collided with a fire truck on an active runway.

The crash occurred seconds after an air traffic controller realised a disaster was imminent. “Stop, stop, stop! Truck one, stop!” the controller can be heard shouting in an audio recording.

It came too late to prevent the CRJ-900 jet from slamming into the emergency vehicle on Runway 4 at around 2340 local time [0440 GMT]. The ground vehicle, identified as “truck one,” had been cleared to cross while responding to a separate emergency involving a United Airlines flight. A voice on the air traffic recording can be heard admitting they “messed up”.

Video footage also showed the collision when the speeding jet crashed into the fire truck, which tried to avoid the plane at the last second.

Experts are calling the collision an avoidable failure of airport safety. According to FlightRadar24 data, the aircraft, operated by Air Canada’s regional partner Jazz Aviation, was carrying 76 people from Montreal and was traveling at roughly 130 mph at the time. Family identified one of the pilots as Antoine Forest.

Passengers on the Air Canada flight described the “chaos” as their aircraft veered out of control on the runway. “It was a regular flight like always,” passenger Jack Cabot told *Fox News*. “As we were arriving, we came down really hard. We stopped really quickly, two seconds later, we had an absolute slam.”



Antoine Forest was identified by family as one of the pilots (Antoine Forest / Facebook)

Mr Cabot recalled the moments following the impact, which obliterated the front of the jet. “Everybody was flying everywhere,” he said. “The plane veering off left and right. It was chaos. It didn’t feel like there was anybody controlling it.”

Survivors are suggesting the pilots who died may have saved countless other lives by putting the aircraft into reverse thrust at the last second.

“We had just touched down, and maybe about 30 seconds later we all felt a jolt forward, then a loud bang, and what felt like sliding sideways down the runway,” passenger Brady Sego wrote on Reddit. “Someone did say the pilot tried to reverse thrust at the last second. Honestly, they likely saved our lives. I wish I could tell their families how thankful I am. They are heroes.”

Another passenger, Rebecca Liquori, told *News12 Long Island* that, after the plane touched down, she felt it brake hard and heard a loud boom.

"Everybody just jolted out of their seats," Ms Liquori told *News 12*, a station where she formerly worked. "People hit their heads. People were bleeding."



The wreckage of Air Canada Express CRJ-900 (AP)

Ms Liquori had visited Montreal to attend a cousin's baby shower. She said she had helped open the emergency exit door during the flight, recalling passengers helping each other slide down a wing to get out.

"I'm just happy to be alive," she said. "I would have never pictured a one-hour flight that I've done countless times ending like this."

Footage from the Citizen App showed significant damage to the aircraft's nose, which remained tilted upward as emergency crews worked on the scene in the heavy rain. At least 40 people, including two Port Authority officers, were rushed to hospitals. While the cockpit was devastated, reports indicate a female flight attendant survived after being ejected through the front of the plane.

The flight attendant, identified by family Monday as Solange Tremblay, was strapped into her seat behind the pilots at the time of the crash. The force of the collision with the fire truck

was so severe that it ejected her from the aircraft, throwing her more than 320 feet onto the tarmac, *People* reported.

The incident is now the subject of a federal investigation.

During a press conference yesterday morning, President Donald Trump said: "Terrible. They made a mistake. It's a dangerous business. That's terrible."

In Canada, prime minister Mark Carney stated via social media that the collision was "deeply saddening," adding that "Canadian officials are working closely with their US counterparts on the ground as the investigation continues."

LaGuardia officially reopened at 1400 yesterday, though officials cautioned that only one of its two runways is currently operational. The closure forced the cancellation of more than 500 flights yesterday.

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Cosby found guilty of sexual assault and told to pay \$19m



Former TV star Bill Cosby found guilty of an incident that took place in 1972 (AP)

ANDREW DALTON

A civil jury in California found yesterday that Bill Cosby was liable for drugging and sexually assaulting a woman in 1972 and awarded her \$19.25m (£14.34m).

After a nearly two-week trial in Santa Monica, jurors found the 88-year-old Cosby liable for the sexual battery and assault of Donna Motsinger.

Cosby's attorney, Jennifer Bonjean, said in an email that they are disappointed and fully intend to appeal the verdict.

The decision came nearly five years after Cosby was freed from prison in Pennsylvania when the state Supreme Court threw out a criminal conviction based on similar allegations.

Motsinger had been a server at a restaurant in Sausalito near San Francisco who said in her lawsuit, filed in 2023, that Cosby had invited her to his stand-up comedy show at a theatre in nearby San Carlos. Both were in their 30s at the time. She said Cosby gave her wine and two pills that she believed were aspirin, and that she was going in and out of consciousness as two men put her in a limousine.

"She woke up in her house with all her clothes off, except her underwear on – no top, no bra, and no pants," the lawsuit said. "She knew she had been drugged and raped by Bill Cosby."

In court filings, Cosby's lawyers argued that the allegations rested almost entirely on speculation and assumption, saying Motsinger "freely admits that she has no idea what happened".

Jurors awarded Motsinger \$17.5m in past damages and \$1.75m for future damages, including "mental suffering, loss of enjoyment of life, inconvenience, grief, anxiety, humiliation, and emotional distress". They deliberated for just over a day.

Cosby did not testify at the trial, whose witnesses included Andrea Constand, the Temple University sports administrator he was convicted of sexually assaulting in a Pennsylvania criminal court in 2018. The state's Supreme Court threw out the verdict and Cosby was freed from prison after serving nearly three years of a three- to 10-year sentence.

Motsinger first made her allegations anonymously in a 2005 lawsuit filed by Constand.

In 2022, a jury in Santa Monica awarded \$500,000 to a woman who said Cosby sexually assaulted her at the Playboy Mansion

when she was a teenager in 1975.

Motsinger's lawsuit echoed allegations of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment made by at least 60 women against Cosby, all of which he has denied.

The former stand-up comedy and television superstar once widely known as “America’s Dad” became the first celebrity tried and convicted in the #MeToo era before his conviction was permanently thrown out when appeals court found he gave incriminating testimony in a deposition only after believing he had immunity from prosecution.

AP

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World news in brief



The former French prime minister Lionel Jospin has died at the age of 88 (AFP/Getty)

Architect of 35-hour week in France dies

Lionel Jospin, the former French prime minister credited with introducing the nation's 35-hour working week, has died at the age of 88. Jospin, who stepped away from politics after his tenure, died on Sunday, his family confirmed to Agence France-Presse. Sebastien Lecornu, the current prime minister, paid tribute on X, stating that Jospin “served France with constancy, rigour and a sense of responsibility”.

Before his unexpected ascent to lead the Socialist Party in 1981, appointed by then-newly elected president Francois Mitterrand, Jospin was an economics professor. His distinctive appearance, marked by a tousle of white curls and thick-rimmed glasses, often reflected his academic background.

Untarnished by allegations of corruption, Jospin re-established credibility for the Socialists after bribery and fraud scandals led to their downfall in the 1993 parliamentary elections.

He became prime minister in 1997, holding the post until 2002, leading a broad left-wing government under French conservative president Jacques Chirac in a power-sharing arrangement dubbed “cohabitation”.

As prime minister, he enacted France’s parity law, installed civil unions for LGBT+ and straight couples and lowered the work week from 39 hours to 35 hours. He abandoned politics after his loss to far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen in the first round of presidential voting in 2002. *AP*

Pope calls for ban on aerial military strikes

Pope Leo has condemned aerial bombardments, describing them as indiscriminate and calling for their outright ban. “No one should have to fear that threats of death and destruction might come from the sky,” he said.

“After the tragic experiences of the 20th century, aerial bombings should have been banned forever,” Leo said. “Yet they still exist ... this is not progress; it is regression!”

The Pope has called repeatedly for a ceasefire in the Iran war. On Sunday he called the conflict a “scandal to the whole human family”. *Reuters*

Landmark Mercosur free trade deal starts on 1 May

A landmark free trade deal between the European Union and four South American countries will begin on 1 May after more than a quarter of a century of negotiations.

The European Commission said yesterday that the start date for the EU-Mercosur free trade deal was triggered by Brussels receiving a “note verbale” from Paraguay that it had approved the deal, which is a key part of the 27-nation EU’s strategy to slash economic dependencies on China and the United States.

Parliaments in Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina have ratified the deal that links more than 700 million people and accounts for 25 per cent of global gross domestic product.

Bolivia, the newest Mercosur member, did not participate in negotiations but will be able to join the deal in the coming years.

“The priority now is turning this EU-Mercosur agreement into concrete outcomes, giving EU exporters the platform they need to seize new opportunities for trade, growth and jobs,” said European trade commissioner Maros Sefcovic. *AP*

China builds tourist sub capable of 1km dives

China has built its first deep-sea tourist submersible that will be capable of sending explorers as far down as 1km by 2030, rivalling a handful of largely Western ventures. The prototype, developed by engineers at the China Ship Scientific Research Centre in Wuxi, Jiangsu, has room for three passengers and a crew member.

The project has been in development for nearly four years and the prototype is likely to be launched by the end of this year.

“People will be able to travel to a depth of about 1,000 metres in the submersible,” Ye Cong, director of the research centre, told *China Daily*.

Deep-sea submersible tourism remains dominated by Western firms. Ocean Gate’s *Titan*, an experimental submersible, imploded at a depth of almost 4km in June 2023, killing all five people on board, including the company’s chief executive.



Americans must be sick of President Flip-flop's U-turns



Big mouth strikes again: Donald Trump has blinked first in his war with Iran (Reuters)

SEAN O'GRADY



To adapt the famous quotation attributed to the Duke of Wellington, I don't know what effect Donald Trump has upon the enemy but, by God, he must frighten his commanders.

Every time I see General Dan "Razin" Caine, the chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, I wonder how he copes with his biggest

single strategic challenge – making sense of his boss. The president's ever-shifting and sometimes contradictory war aims, threats, bombast and unilateral declarations are hardly the kind of direct, practical, consistent orders that any military needs to get the job done. How can they, if they don't know what the "job" actually is from one day to the next, or even from one minute to the next?

Never mind making America great again, Trump is actively weakening America's efforts to "win" this war, by any feasible definition. General Caine must be a very patient man.

Presumably, for example, a few days ago Razin's US Air Force pilots, bombers and associated forces were all ready to "obliterate" – a favourite Trump term – Iran's power plants, starting with the biggest one. It would be, quite arguably, a breach of the laws of war, being clearly civilian infrastructure, something tacitly admitted in past Trump statements. But it was at least a clear instruction to the military. A 48-hour deadline was set by Trump on his social media app Truth Social for Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz.

No longer. The Iranians, nihilistic as ever, countered with a promise to mine the oil supply routes and destroy desalination plants across the Gulf, meaning an intensified global energy crisis, and no drinking water across the Arabian peninsular, with obviously dire humanitarian and economic consequences.

Does Trump still want to take the oil refinery on Kharg Island? It would be an incredibly difficult task for US forces. And at what cost in lives? Senator Lindsey Graham, an increasingly grotesque figure, suggests that if they could take Iwo Jima from the Japanese in the Second World War, this little bit of Iran would be a pushover, although Iwo Jima cost 6,800 Americans and 26,000 casualties in total. Trump seems to have backed off the plan.

This conflict will eventually have to end in a settlement very similar to the one brokered by Oman that America and Iran almost signed before Benjamin Netanyahu convinced Trump to go to war



So Trump has lived up to his “Taco” nickname and has now chickened out – again. Instead of “reigning” [sic] more “fire and fury” down on the evil regime in Tehran, the administration has been having “very good and productive conversations” with them, and the bombardments have been called off, for five days. After that – who knows?

We might also wonder why such strikes are needed anyway, given that three weeks ago Trump contradicted his defence secretary Pete Hegseth. The latter had just told the world that the 8 March attacks on missile sites were “only just the beginning”. Not so, said the president, who insisted a day later that, “I think the war is very complete, pretty much.” Yet later the same day Trump corrected himself again: “We’ve already won in many ways, but we haven’t won enough.” Asked if the war was beginning or complete, he said: “Well, I think you could say both.” On 11 March, he said again that America had won, but: “We’ve got to finish the job.”

And why is Trump negotiating, even indirectly, with the ayatollahs anyway? It is not so very long ago that he demanded, at various points: “unconditional surrender”; the Iranian people to rise up in a counterrevolution, because “help is on its way” and this was “probably your only chance for generations”; regime change; and personal approval of any new Iranian leader. We no longer hear about CIA plots to foment civil war by encouraging Kurdish and other groups to take arms against the Islamic Republic.

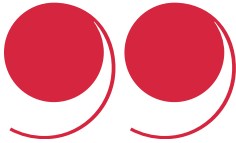
According to his latest set of aims, Trump would be perfectly happy to do a deal with Ayatollah Khamenei, the only real obstacle being the fact the Americans and the Israelis have killed most of his close family and friends. Trump wants a “total resolution of hostilities” through peaceful means – talks and one of his deals. It shouldn’t be any great surprise if Trump decides, on a whim, to fly into Tehran to sign the historic treaty with a previously intractable foe, as he tried to with Kim Jong Un in the first term. Yet only four days ago Trump rejected even a ceasefire.

Redoubtable figure as General Caine is, and routinely slathered with praise by the president as he may be, his life must be made just that little bit more difficult by a man who doesn’t even know whether his war is over, or what “victory” looks like, or what to target next. Sometimes Trump almost begs his allies for help in ending the Iranian blockade in the Strait of Hormuz, only to change his mind and scorn them as unnecessary. What is Caine supposed to do – talk to the French, the British, the Germans and the Japanese (no jokes about Pearl Harbor, please!), or ignore them?

US forces have been in the region for an unusually long time, mostly with little land support, and they cannot remain there indefinitely while Trump dithers and delays. Trump either needs to escalate this into an Iraq-style full-scale war of massive destruction with troops on the ground, which is what the Israelis want, or else cut his losses and get the hell out, which is what allies in the Gulf and the West need to avoid further catastrophe. But Trump cannot decide – a fatal flaw in a wartime leader.

The great irony is, of course, that this conflict will eventually have to end in a settlement, and one that will be very similar to the one brokered by Oman that America and Iran almost signed before Benjamin Netanyahu convinced Trump to go to war instead. Indeed, the restrictions and international oversight would be more or less the same as under the original Iran nuclear deal signed by Barack Obama but torn up by Trump because he thought he could do better than that.

As things stand (maybe not for long) all Trump now demands is the Iranian missile programme be frozen for five years, zero uranium enrichment, and decommissioning the Natanz, Isfahan and Fordow nuclear facilities (which the US and Israel bombed last summer). All of this was pretty much achieved before Trump launched his stupid, chaotic, counterproductive war a month ago. Maybe now more Americans will agree that this is no way to run a war, or their country.



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British Jews like me feel extra alone and intimidated



We have to find a way to move forward as a society because division helps nobody (Alamy/PA)

DARREN RICHMAN



I was jolted awake this morning by the news of another antisemitic attack in London, and felt a familiar numbness wash over me. It is a feeling I recognise.

I felt it when there were chants of “One man went to gas, went to gas – a Yiddo” during a Tottenham game screened in my

university halls. I felt it again years later, when a group of men sang about Auschwitz in Camden Town Tube station while police nearby declined to intervene because they were aiding a tourist with directions. And I felt it more recently at a small party when someone decided that the best course of action was to tell a joke in which Jews were the punchline.

I had long assumed such jokes were told only in rooms without Jews. It was a shock to learn otherwise.

How did we get here? Ernest Hemingway once described bankruptcy as happening “gradually, then suddenly”. The same now feels true of antisemitism in Britain.

Many Jews have never felt more isolated in this country than they do after this attack. And this is coming from someone who does not wear a yarmulke or attend synagogue if it can be avoided.

The pattern is already familiar. After the Yom Kippur attack on a Manchester synagogue last year, conspiracy theories spread quickly. They are spreading again now. Some claim this is a false-flag operation orchestrated by the Israeli government. Others suggest insurance fraud on the part of those sneaky Jews – because the ambulances were old.

My grandfather survived Auschwitz and settled in this country after the war. He never forgot the British soldiers who saved his life



Naturally, none of these people have picked up a history book and considered that hatred of Jews was around before 2023, or 1948. In fact, antisemitism has existed for as long as Jews have existed.

Then there is the question: why do Jews have their own ambulances? It is asked with suspicion, not curiosity. The

answer is simple. Hatzola does not just serve the Jewish community but all Londoners. It is a volunteer-run organisation that has saved countless lives and eased pressure on the NHS. Yet its Jewish aspect alone is enough for some to rationalise violence against it.

Hatzola exists to serve Jews and gentiles alike, but it does not feel as though that sense of allyship is mutual today. In truth, it hasn't felt mutual for quite some time. Hatzola translates as "rescue" or "relief" – two things we desperately crave as a community in 2026.

There are also those who do not buy into the conspiracy theories but still justify attacks as a response to the actions of a foreign state. Jews make up just 0.4 per cent of the UK population – small enough to fit into three Wembley Stadiums. At times like these, it can feel as though some would prefer that number to shrink further.

What do such attacks achieve? If someone like me – a lapsed Jew with no real connection to Israel – feels compelled to write this, then such senseless acts are not acts of resistance. They are acts of intimidation.

The masked perpetrators may see themselves as revolutionary warriors. In truth, they are cowardly thugs targeting the one minority group they believe had it coming.

My grandfather survived Auschwitz and settled in this country after the war. He never forgot the British soldiers who saved his life. He considered himself more English than the English since he chose to live here and it was not simply an accident of birth.

He died on his 93rd birthday in January 2023 after a lifetime preaching about the dangers of prejudice. He would have remained steadfast in his commitment to avoiding hatred, even on a day like yesterday. We have to find a way to move forward as a society because division helps nobody.

I was inconsolable on the day my grandfather died, but now I think his timing was as immaculate as ever. Only a few years have passed, and a thought occurs that once seemed

inconceivable – I'm glad he didn't live to see his beloved country like this.



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Section 2/ The Longer Read

Job swap: how to carve out a new career in middle age

With employers less likely to hire workers older than 45, it's easy to feel like the job market is a younger person's game.

Lucy Standing explains how to switch it up and stay relevant



Former lawyer Miranda (Cynthia Nixon) works as an intern in 'And Just Like That' (HBO)

We have a massive, disproportionately bad problem for people in the workplace as they get older. Evidence from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that employers are less likely to hire workers older than 45. And the duration of unemployment before finding a new job is twice

as long for workers aged 45-plus, compared to their younger counterparts.

That's partly because older people are seen as being harder to train and more expensive. But also because very few organisations are putting retraining schemes or entry pathways in place to support midlife workers to re-enter the workforce in a different capacity.

There are numerous reasons why people might want to change jobs: divorce, a return to work after children, the desire to futureproof, or redundancy. And I know from my own research that people who lose jobs, such as a photographer, a graphic designer, or a TV director, are open-minded about learning new things. But the training is not available.

Meanwhile, the NHS has 100,000 vacancies it can't fill. We need more strategies to get people into these jobs: come and job shadow, meet people, and here is the training you need. People need a better way of evaluating if that is something they want to do, and we have lost the art of helping them. Job shadowing is one of the most underutilised opportunities that organisations have.

So what else?



Lucy Standing is co-author of 'Age Against the Machine: New Rules of Working in an Ageist World' (Supplied)

We need to rethink how recruitment works

The evidence is clear that CVs do not work and do not predict future job performance. Part of the reason is that people are applying blindly, often via the “Easy Apply” LinkedIn button, often for jobs they don’t want or understand. That is overburdening the recruiters, who are using AI to filter out applications, with the chance of any possible risks they might take on the potential of an applicant getting lost as a result.

But also, the people traditionally doing recruitment are younger – and AI learns from humans. It is not that AI is programmed to screen out older people; it is just more likely to favour younger people.

The recruitment model is broken because it assumes that people know what job they want to do. But the longer we live, the more we have to accept that we are going to have to change jobs, to adapt, retrain – and reinvent.

How to survive the reinvention years

1 Accept change: I often work with people who have left a corporation after 20 years and are so out of touch with how the market has changed, that they’re shocked and horrified by how things have moved on. Be commercially aware: what is the market for the job that you might have first started 10 years ago? What does the landscape look like now? Being realistic will help you adapt. Not all jobs have longevity; don’t take it personally.

2 Swallow your ego: Don’t assume that experience and salary in the past are indications of what you will get going forward. Rising employment rights and national insurance mean that fewer companies are hiring, so there are fewer jobs available. If you’re looking for a new job, engage with as many people doing that job now as you can. Research what is being paid, and how many people are applying for a role when it comes up. Update yourself so your expectations are realistic.

3 Do the “so what” test: Too many people assume that the experience they have will do the talking for them – and it won’t. Understand your value proposition and be able to articulate that

really clearly: what specific value will you be able to add to an employer? Be able to answer the challenge: “so what?” For example: “I have 22 years of communication experience”... So what? “So I can run a highly effective campaign in less than three weeks, drawing on my network of 200 people – with these concrete results for your business.”

4 Join a group: Trying to find work alone is isolating and depressing. Find people with a similar length of experience and with commonalities, but with whom you are not necessarily competing. Exploring options together opens up chances for “coincidences” to happen; share and link networks, be generous, supportive and constructive. Unlock chances for others and they will do the same. It’s incredibly validating to all look after each other.

5 Polish your skills: Being made redundant or edged out of the workplace for age-related reasons is hugely demoralising, of course. However, the only thing that will help you recover is experience and action. If you’ve spent the two or three months since being out of work supporting a particular charity, at the same time as defining a “proof project” – researching a particular plan by doing market research, volunteering, learning how to do a Google survey, printing flyers, developing a website or an AI app, making connections and understanding different Facebook groups – when you walk into a job interview or are pitching for work, you’re in a stronger position. That is what gives you confidence.



Interviewing for the first time in 20 years is daunting (Getty/iStock)

6 Identify what's in your control – and what isn't: In your control is what you learn, who you network with, what organisations you research, who you volunteer for, identifying which skills you want to develop and which charities you engage with to develop certain skillsets. Out of your control is hitting “Easy Apply” for a job where you have no idea who will be looking at the application and how many other people, with what qualifications, are applying. Focusing your activity on things that are out of your control will lead to poor mental health.

7 Don't get too hung up on gendered ageism: Yes, there is a gender pay gap, and women's pension contributions take more of a battering because of maternity leave. And from a practical perspective, women are worse off. However, my anecdotal experience of men is that they are, in fact, often in a weaker position. That's because it's more acceptable for women to start over, and there are pathways and norms that make it easier for them to do so. Women taking time off for kids is still the norm, so they have stronger role models and more societal acceptance and support if they want to retrain as a yoga instructor, midwife, or psychotherapist.

There's less of that societal expectation for men, and fewer pathways to retrain. If I see real fear and anxiety during a conversation about retraining or leaving a career, it is always

from a man. The other problem is also often their partner: I've never had a woman say that their partner is questioning their desire to change career, whereas men say that on a regular basis.

8 Adopt an entrepreneurial mindset: Historically, over time, there are only two ways that people get a job: because people want something (like lunch, or their hair cut) or because they need something (they have a hole in the roof or a broken toilet). Identify an organisation you like and try to get some face time with someone there. Aim to identify what gaps there are, then try to plug the gaps. Find out what their big problem is, and how to deliver a solution. It can be possible to create and build your own job if you take a problem-solving approach.

9 Be pragmatic: The market doesn't adapt to your needs – you have to adapt to the market. And if TV production has moved on, then you might have to restart. Identify any skills that are transferable, and lose your ego; too often, people decide to do what they *want* to do – for example, train as a coach – then wonder why there's no market. You have to research first: who will pay for your services if you get a particular qualification, and how much they will pay? In the meantime, be aware that there are jobs in social care, and logistics.

10 Allow yourself to say, 'It's not my forever job': Starting from scratch can be quite liberating. One woman I worked with was formerly a community manager who became a security officer – a bouncer at a nightclub – mainly because she needed the money. Then found she quite enjoyed it because the majority of people out on a Friday night are in a good mood and quite fun to be around.

11. Stay optimistic: Yes, the market is fragmenting and we've seen 40 months of full-time job vacancy decline. But people still need labour, and there are more interim and part-time jobs; more contracting and more fractional recruitment – and people who are older and more experienced will be able to reap more of those opportunities because they have a network and more confidence. And more people are tuning into this demographic: organisations such as Noon and 55/Redefined are amplifying the dialogue about older people in the workplace, and the Centre for

Social Justice, the International Longevity Centre and other think tanks, are talking about how to make changes at a policy level. Legal & General did a big report examining the issue more deeply, and Standard Life, the largest provider of pensions in the UK, is funding careers and career change events. It might take some time, but things are changing.

Lucy Standing is co-founder of Brave Starts CIC, which supports people aged 45–65 considering their next move, and co-author of a new book: 'Age Against the Machine: New Rules of Working in an Ageist World' (De Gruyter)

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Section 2/ Ask Simon Calder

Any hidden gems in eastern Canada that we should see?



The Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec has its own version of Land's End (Simon Calder)

Q My wife and I are off to Canada in 10 days' time for two weeks. Landing in Montreal, our only set agenda is going to Nova Scotia for a few days to see friends, so we are favouring eastern Canada. We've rented an SUV, and done the normal research using Lonely Planet. Have you any secret gems of

landmarks, locations, driving routes, hotels or restaurants you would recommend?

Dave B

A I hope this selection will enhance your trip. The first, in Montreal, is not exactly a secret: a smoked beef sandwich at Schwartz's Deli – a fixture at 3895 St Laurent Boulevard since 1928.

Quebec City, northeast of Montreal along the ever-present St Lawrence River, is the most beautiful city in Canada. The vast Hotel Le Concorde, a Brutalist landmark to the west of the centre, rarely appears on tourist itineraries – but definitely should. Take the inland route from Quebec City to the city of Saguenay, a place of haunting industrial archaeology that testifies to its role as the “Chicago of the North” when paper manufacturing and aluminium smelting were at their peak. A spectacular fjord carries the Saguenay River to Tadoussac, where it meets the St Lawrence.

Spend the night at the Hotel Tadoussac in the eponymous riverside resort, then cross by ferry from Les Escoumins, slightly northeast, to Trois-Pistoles on the opposite shore, and set the controls for the Gaspé Peninsula – a tongue of land extending beautifully into the Atlantic, offering a great coastal drive as well as manageable hikes – one to Quebec's own version of Land's End.

Complete the circuit to Campbellton, then make your way through New Brunswick. Pausing at handsome Moncton to make the most of the astonishing tidal range of the Bay of Fundy.

You really can't go wrong in Nova Scotia, and I am sure your friends will have plenty of ideas. But I recommend taking the ferry from Digby to Saint John, back in New Brunswick. You can then cut through the US state of Maine (check your vehicle insurance first) to serene southern Quebec before a final flourish in Montreal.

Email your question to s@hols.tv or tweet @SimonCalder

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Section 2



ON THIS DAY



Elvis Presley was inducted into the US army on this day in 1958 (DPA/AFP/Getty)

1603: Elizabeth I died aged 69, after nearly 45 years as Queen.

1834: Artist and poet William Morris was born in London.

1877: The Boat Race between Oxford and Cambridge ended in a dead heat.

1887: Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle, US silent film comedian, was born. In 1921, he was involved in a sex scandal that ruined his career.

1944: The breakout of prisoner of war camp Stalag Luft III by 76 inmates began. The event was the inspiration for the movie *The Great Escape*.

1946: Alastair Cooke read his first *Letter From America* on BBC Radio.

1953: Queen Mary, widow of George V, died after a lengthy illness.

1956: In the Grand National, the Queen Mother's horse Devon Loch collapsed after clearing the final fence in first place. The unlucky rider was Dick Francis.

1958: Elvis Presley, 23, signed up for the US army in Memphis, Tennessee.

1965: David Steel, aged 26, won Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles for the Liberals to become Britain's youngest MP.

1976: President Isabel Peron of Argentina was deposed in a bloodless military coup.

1989: The *Exxon Valdez* tanker ran aground on a reef in Prince William Sound off the Alaskan coast and released 11 million gallons of crude oil into the sea.

1993: Ezer Weizman was elected president of Israel.

1999: Nato commenced an air bombardment against Yugoslavia during the Kosovo war, the first attack by the alliance on a sovereign country.

2008: Bhutan officially became a democracy, with its first-ever general election.

2016: Garry Shandling, American comedian, died at 66.

On this day last year: Parliament's expenses watchdog confirms that MPs' salaries will rise by 2.8 per cent to £93,904 in the next financial year,

Birthdays

Patrick Malahide, actor, 81; **Archie Gemmill**, coach and former footballer, 79; **Alan Sugar**, businessman, 79; **Nick Lowe**, musician, 77; **Tommy Hilfiger**, fashion designer, 75; **Kelly**

LeBrock, actor, 66; **Lara Flynn Boyle**, actor, 56; **Alyson Hannigan**, actor, 52; **Jessica Chastain**, actor, 49; **Lake Bell**, actor, 47.

PA

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Section 2/ Film review

SPECIAL BRANCH

Enid Blyton's more regressive ideas have been traded for something altogether fresher in Simon Farnaby's whimsical triumph, 'The Magic Faraway Tree', says **Clarisse Loughrey**



Peek performance: Andrew Garfield and Claire Foy star in this thoroughly modern adaptation of an evergreen story (Entertainment Film Distributors)

★★★★☆

At last, we might be free of the hegemony of Paddington. That well-mannered ursine need not be the British public's sole cinematic obsession. One of the franchise's co-writers, Simon Farnaby, is quietly building his own empire of wholesome

whimsy, all spiritual successors to *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (1968). Post-*Wonka* (2023), he's come back for another spin on a literary classic, this time adapting Enid Blyton's *The Faraway Tree* series (here titled *The Magic Faraway Tree*) for director Ben Gregor.

Farnaby keeps it fresh and witty, combining the wordplay and low-stakes surrealism of his roots in *The Mighty Boosh* and *Horrible Histories* with a keen eye for literary adaptation. He's never precious about the source material – *Wonka* was, after all, an origin story prequel to the *Chocolate Factory* – yet keeps a core respect for the wonder and imagination that makes literary classics out of bedtime stories.

And Blyton, as both one of Britain's most popular and most contested writers, is ripe for the Farnaby treatment. He preserves the basics of her four-book series, with its rigid child's-eye view of the world. Here, the magnificent English countryside conceals a magical tree, in which reside Moonface (Nonso Anozie) and his enormous crescent hair; the fairy Silky (a luminous Nicola Coughlan); the cheery laundress Dame Washalot (*Baby Reindeer*'s Jessica Gunning); the Don Quixote-like Saucepan Man (Dustin Demri-Burns); Mr Watzisname (Oliver Chris), who's forgotten what he's called; and the tiny Angry Pixie (Hiran Abeysekera).



Tim is a stay-at-home dad, so attuned to the manic pixie dream boy mould that it lets Garfield practically bounce off the walls



Their home offers a gateway to other worlds, where a child's greatest dream – an endless supply of sweets – can collide with their greatest fear – the stern headmistress Dame Snap, played by a sneering Rebecca Ferguson in answer to the question, “What if we made the Child Catcher hot?” Ann Maskrey's outsized costumes and Alexandra Walker's playhouse sets offer a sense of joyous abandon, all accompanied by Isabella Summers's heart-swelling score. There are French disco elves and an office that operates by the same rules as *Twin Peaks*'s Red Room (wonk uoy, wonk uoy fi).

Farnaby, as you'd expect, does leave behind Blyton's more regressive ideas, as well as the comparatively simplistic outlook of her stories, which seemed interested less in passing down wisdom than indulging in playtime fantasies. Here, child heroes Beth (Delilah Bennett-Cardy), Fran (Billie Gadsdon), and Joe (Phoenix Laroche) are being raised by two rather brilliant parents, Polly and Tim. And we immediately know they're brilliant because they're played by Claire Foy and Andrew Garfield.

Tim is a stay-at-home dad, so attuned to the manic pixie dream boy mould that it lets Garfield practically bounce off the walls. Polly kickstarts the plot by quitting her job as a smart fridge designer in protest against privacy invasion – she's the more authoritative, practical parent, yet Foy has enough of her own frenetic energy to prevent the character from devolving into the humourless scold.

Both are fun, eccentric parents whose children can't appreciate the fear that they've wasted their childhoods on digital screens. Not only does the tech angle lead to some brilliant gags (Farnaby turns up as a local farmer who confuses “Wifi” for “wife, aye”), but it's a lovely way to tether Blyton's work to a thoroughly modern world, in a way that feels regenerative rather than dismissive. Because there's more out there, after all, than Paddington.

Dir: Ben Gregor. Starring: Andrew Garfield, Claire Foy, Nonso Anozie, Nicola Coughlan, Jessica Gunning, Jennifer Saunders, Rebecca Ferguson. Cert U, 110 minutes.

In cinemas from Friday

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Section 2/ Album review



A RAYE OF DELIGHT

The brilliant London singer throws vocal virtuosity and infectious pleasure into every moment of her second album, 'This Music May Contain Hope', writes **Helen Brown**



Sax appeal: Raye brings jazz, blues, neo-soul, funk and many other flavours into the mix on her new album (Press)

★★★★★

"I'll swing round this street lamp and I'll give you a story..." promises Raye on *This Music May Contain Hope*. And boy, does she deliver, with an epic Technicolor movie of an album. The artist born Rachel Keen leans hard into the romance of vintage

Hollywood melodrama while keeping a witty, modern head on her shoulders. Trad and cocktail jazz, blues, pop, sax solos, Prince-indebted power balladry, silky neo-soul, chamber music, funk, house, hip-hop, and accordion-backed chanson... it all comes pelting round the bends for a series of close-up cameos. Such fearless musicianship sets a stage on which great love can die like a phone battery, toxic south London lover-boys stalk the streets like B-movie beasts and our plucky high-heeled heroine must put on her headphones to dance away her despair.

If this all sounds a bit chaotic, don't worry. There is a structure. The album works its way through the seasons, starting with the autumn melancholy of "Girl Under the Grey Cloud" (a spoken word affair buoyed by cinematic strings, on which we meet "a woman in her late twenties" walking from a bar to her hotel). "She has no umbrella, she is seven negronis deep and knows there is a hole she is desperately trying to fill," Raye tells us. She dives into the darkness with "Winter Woman" (containing echoes of her 2023 hit "Escapism"), thawing out with the spring soul of "Goodbye Henry" (featuring R&B legend Al Green) and building to the giddy summer brass of single "Where Is My Husband!" The way the 28-year-old throws her vocal virtuosity and infectious delight into every moment of her storytelling is breathtaking.



Anyone daft enough to still be dissing Britain's most exhilarating pop star as the Shein Amy Winehouse (an insult she laughed off in a recent 'Vogue' interview) will have to can it now



For all her musical brilliance, Raye's problems are relatable. She'll be overheard in one out-take offering to make tea for the band and despairing over her single status in another (it's been five-and-a-half years now, she says). She has a matey warmth that translates well on this album, as she sings about needing her girlfriends to drag her out on a Friday night (on the snappy feminist anthem "Click Clack Symphony", aided by Hollywood maestro Hans Zimmer), and fesses up to her insecurities on the jazz-scatty "I Hate The Way I Look Today". There's communality in the many layers and styles of backing choirs, from a casual vox-popping of friends and family insisting, "I'm not giving up yet", on "Life Boat", to a cameo from her grandfather Michael, who tells her, "You can feel lonely in a crowded room" on the bluesy "Fields".

Anyone daft enough to still be dissing Britain's most exhilarating pop star as "the Shein Amy Winehouse" (an insult she laughed off in a recent *Vogue* interview) will have to can it now. Yes, like the late Camdenite, she's putting a messy, modern spin on old-school sounds. But pop has always eaten itself (I remember my grandad describing his amazement on hearing Rodgers and Hart's 1930s ballad, "Blue Moon", reinvented as a peppy doo-wop hit in 1961). Raye devours it all and spits it back out as stardust.

In that same *Vogue* interview, she described parting ways with former label Polydor and her triumphant independent release of Mercury-shortlisted 2023 debut album, *My 21st Century Blues*, as a full-throttle pursuit of her creative freedom. Even after the massive success of that record, though, she still feels she's "running after her career" as though somebody is chasing her. Her appetite for the heart-on-sleeve razzle-dazzle of it all is glorious. *This Music May Contain Hope* is a pure audio spectacle that will have you screaming for an encore.

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Business news in brief



Leonid Radvinsky, whose firm has been credited with revolutionising the sex industry, has died at the age of 43 ([LinkedIn/leoradvinsky](#))

OnlyFans owner dies of cancer

Leonid Radvinsky, the owner of adult-content platform OnlyFans, has died of cancer at the age of 43, the company said in a statement.

Radvinsky, a Ukrainian-American entrepreneur, acquired Fenix International Limited, the parent company of OnlyFans, in 2018 and served as its director and majority shareholder. He also ran Leo, a venture capital fund he founded in 2009 that focuses primarily on investments in technology companies.

OnlyFans, founded in 2016 by British entrepreneur Tim Stokely, surged in popularity during the Covid pandemic as lockdowns drove creators and consumers online, turning the subscription-based platform into a mainstream source of income and entertainment globally.

Reuters reported in January that OnlyFans was exploring the sale of a majority stake to investment firm Architect Capital in a deal valuing the company at about \$5.5bn, including debt.

Reuters

Danone to buy British meal-replacement firm

Food and drink giant Danone has agreed to buy British meal-replacement company Huel.

Hertfordshire-based Huel was founded by Julian Hearn in 2015 to provide nutritionally complete food products, aimed at reducing meal times and providing essential nutrients. Bosses said the deal, which is subject to closing conditions including regulatory approval, will help accelerate Huel's growth ambitions and drive its international expansion.

Chief executive James McMaster said: "We've grown into an omnichannel business with a strong direct-to-consumer foundation, an expanding international footprint and a retail business that's scaling quickly."

The companies have not disclosed the value of the deal, but the *Financial Times* valued the British business at around €1bn (£870m). *PA*

Airbus buying Ultra Cyber to boost defence capabilities

European aerospace and defence giant Airbus has agreed to acquire Maidenhead-based cybersecurity firm Ultra Cyber, a strategic move to bolster its cyber defence capabilities.

The company, employing over 200 staff, will be purchased for an undisclosed sum from private equity firm Advent International. Ultra Cyber currently forms part of Advent's Cobham Ultra

defence business. Airbus expects the deal, set to finalise in the second half of 2026, to reinforce its position as a “trusted, sovereign partner for the UK and a key supplier to its allies”.

The acquisition will also bolster its cybersecurity presence across Europe, complementing existing operations in Newport, Wales. *PA*

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Spurs staring into the abyss due to disastrous decisions



Xavi Simons, Cristian Romero and Pape Matar Sarr trudge off the pitch after the home loss to Nottingham Forest on Sunday (AFP/Getty)

BEN MCALEER

It wasn't supposed to be like this. Not Sunday, and not this season. Tottenham Hotspur are in freefall. They are plummeting to earth without a parachute, and hoping West Ham can cushion their landing. The relegation fears are real.

The 2025-26 campaign was supposed to be the one when Spurs really pushed on. The Europa League triumph was expected to be the springboard for further success. They'd finally won. But at what cost? Out went Ange Postecoglou, and in came Thomas Frank. A steady hand on the tiller, or so it seemed.

To the Dane's credit, it started off well enough. Spurs went blow-for-blow with Champions League winners PSG in the Super Cup. They were minutes away from a second European trophy in the space of three months. They beat Manchester City and West Ham in the opening weeks with ease. The north London side made a solid start to their Champions League campaign, beating Villarreal 1-0 in front of their fans.

The wheels, though, started to come off at the beginning of November. Spurs' home form had already been called into question. Their sole league win in their opening four at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium came on the first weekend of the season against Burnley. It took a late Joao Palhinha equaliser against table footers Wolves to ensure they didn't lose all of the subsequent three.



Igor Tudor has tasted defeated in five of his seven games in charge (AP)

In a bid to correct their form, Frank called on the fans to back the team as Chelsea made the short trip across the capital. Spurs needed the supporters to drag them over the line. "We need the

fans behind us,” the former Brentford head coach outlined. Reader, Spurs put in one of the worst performances of the season. That was the game the penny dropped for most. “I’m beginning to think that Thomas Frank was not the brilliant tactician I thought he was.”

Following that (un)eventful London derby, the only way has been down for Spurs.

Since the start of November, Tottenham have beaten as many German teams as they have English sides. That would be somewhat forgivable if Spurs plied their trade in the Bundesliga.

Frank, unsurprisingly, was sacked last month. In came the master firefighter, Igor Tudor. To Dare is Tudor. The ultimate interim manager, who’d saved Udinese – twice – and hauled Lazio and Juventus to Europe with a final season flourish. Fans are yet to see the best of Tudor. Truth is, they probably never will.



Dominic Solanke cover his face after the final whistle on Sunday (Getty)

Sunday’s 3-0 defeat to Nottingham Forest marked Spurs’ fifth defeat from his seven games in charge. They’ve lost to Arsenal, Fulham, Crystal Palace, and now the Tricky Trees in a relegation six-pointer. The only victory was a 3-2 win over Atletico Madrid in the Champions League. Spurs lost the two-legged tie 7-5. They won the battle but lost the war.

And with seven games to go, Spurs are very much staring into the abyss. Sunday was supposed to be the turning point. Spurs rescued a late point at Liverpool last week. The aforementioned home triumph over Atletico followed suit, a morale-boosting victory if you will.

Yet as Spurs have found out all too often this season, the Premier League and the Champions League are a whole different kettle of fish. The capital side won all five home European games this season. They've won twice in front of their fans in England's top tier this term. Only a Sheffield Wednesday side in administration and on the receiving end of two points deductions have a worse home record than Spurs in the top four tiers of English football.

In truth, Spurs will have welcomed the international break, if only to ease the relentlessness of the season. It's a chance to actually take stock of the perilous situation they find themselves in. Years of underspending, cutting corners and mismanagement are finally catching up on Spurs. The departure of Daniel Levy was supposed to usher in a new era with "The Lewis Family" in charge. A leopard, though, never changes its spots. ENIC have exhausted the fans' patience.



Guglielmo Vicario shipped three goals against Forest (Getty)

The appointments of Vinai Venkatesham and Johan Lange were questionable on paper. In practice, they've arguably been the

worst the club has ever made. And with Tudor unlikely to be in charge in time for the trip to Sunderland next month, the question on everyone's lips is: what next for Tottenham?

It's a question few, if any, can answer. If Tudor goes, who comes in? And how do they correct the club's current predicament? Defeat to Forest extended Spurs' winless streak in the league to 13 matches, their longest such run in 91 years, according to Squawka. Are there any positives the club can take?

Well, they have key personnel still to return from injury. Mohammed Kudus is expected back after the international break. Spurs have missed his spark down the flank. Despite not playing since the 1-1 draw with Sunderland in January, the Ghanaian still ranks fourth for successful dribbles (52) in the Premier League this season.

Rodrigo Bentancur will at least provide a semblance of experience in the middle of the park once he recovers from a hamstring issue. Saying that, we're clutching at straws here.

This is very much a Spurs side in dire straits. "Every time I've seen the light at the end of the tunnel, it's usually been an oncoming train," Postecoglou said when he spoke of Tottenham's injury crisis last season.

At least the Australian had hope. For Spurs fans, there is none. The tunnel has been plunged into darkness and is taking the north London powerhouse straight into the Championship.

Igor Tudor left the stadium on Sunday without speaking to the media due to what was described as a "family issue". It emerged yesterday that his father, Mario, had died.

Tottenham issued a statement reading: "Everyone at Tottenham Hotspur is deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Igor Tudor's father, Mario. Our thoughts and condolences go out to Igor and his family during this incredibly difficult time."

Spurs are without a fixture for three weeks and return to action away to Sunderland on 12 April.



England find nobody is to blame for Ashes disaster



The cap fits: Ben Stokes will continue to skipper the England Test side (PA)

CAMERON PONSONBY

AT LORD'S

“There is a big brain that is working through every decision and action.”

And with that, ECB chief executive Richard Gould’s rallying cry, played on a kazoo, was complete. Brendon McCullum remains the man to take England forward as the head coach.

The news, in truth, is that there is no news. McCullum was the men's head coach yesterday, and he will be the men's head coach tomorrow. Rob Key, the men's managing director, will keep his job, and so too will the captain Ben Stokes.

Bloodlust rarely leads to progress. You need only look to the conveyor belt of managers in the Premier League, or of prime ministers at No 10, to tell you that change isn't a guarantee of success. But the feeling that apathy has won the day in ECB towers is hard to shake.

An hour-long press conference at Lord's, conducted by Gould and Key, where they laid out all the mistakes that had been made in recent times, delivered the conclusion that the best people to learn from those mistakes were the guilty parties in the first place.



Head coach Brendon McCullum insists progress has been made during his England reign in tandem with Stokes (PA)

“When you see where Test cricket has come in this country in the last four years,” said Gould, “This is not the time to throw everything out.”

Gould's opinion is not without reason. According to the ECB CEO, the average viewership of Test cricket has increased 25 per cent since McCullum took over. The cricket under

McCullum has been wild and the results have been erratic, but it has got the people watching. And for a sport that craves eyeballs more than anything, that is not to be sniffed at.

But the problem with more people watching is that more people have been paying attention.

Viewing figures, again, according to Gould and the ECB, were up 45 per cent during the Ashes. A series that left passionate fans furious and casual fans bemused. What do you mean, they had a week-long piss up in Noosa? And what do you mean, the white ball captain got punched by a bouncer the night before a game? Is this normal?

Everyone agrees it went too far. But no one, it has been decided, was to blame. The result is an unhappy middle ground where the leadership group whose greatest quality was their boiling forthrightness have been brought down to a simmer.



McCullum and England's managing director of cricket Rob Key at the Gabba in Brisbane in December (AFP/Getty)

McCullum believes in stripped-back backroom staff and relaxed environments. But he is now in charge of a growing backroom staff and a team where they have to log their whereabouts past 9pm, according to a report by *The Telegraph*.

Rob Key wanted international attributes, not domestic statistics, from his county players. But with an overhaul ahead, he now

finds himself on a charm offensive in order to repair a broken relationship between England and the counties.

“We put a real premium on having a settled team,” Key explained, with a renewed emphasis being placed on domestic performance ahead of the Test summer. “We overplayed that really...We didn’t want to be giving someone a debut in an Ashes Test match. But what happens then is that there’s a lack of consequence for substandard performance.”

The very first message to come out of this group was: “Be where your feet are.” Focusing on the here and now.

And now? “We have to understand where our priorities are,” said Gould. “And our priorities are largely with winning the Ashes and Test series against India.” McCullum’s record in Test series against India and Australia? Played four, won zero.

They say a good compromise is a situation that everyone leaves unhappy. And now we have a great compromise.



Stokes cuts a frustrated figure as Steve Smith piles on the runs during Australia’s win in Sydney in January (PA)

“We are not going to select or deselect management based on a popularity campaign,” said Gould. “Moving people on can sometimes be the easy thing to do. That’s not the route that we’re going to take.”

“It may not be the popular route. It may not be the easiest route, but I think it’s the right route.”

This is now a caveat-free leadership group. Between Gould, Key, McCullum and Stokes, they have had a full four-year cycle to enact and carry out their plans. No failures can be blamed on previous eras, and now the second iteration of their rule begins. That McCullum and Stokes parted ways during the Ashes is now on record, but the ECB and England remain of the belief that the pair are the best men for the job.

Sport is the most important of all the non-important things in the world. And when actions do not have consequences, an important illusion is broken. You realise that, yeah, England probably will lose to Australia or India across five Tests, and they probably will beat New Zealand or Pakistan when they come to town. Whether it’s McCullum in charge, Peter Moores, me, or you, Joe Root and Harry Brook will go out and score some runs. And one of the lads who wangs it down will get someone out or something.

The greatest success of this leadership team is that they got people watching, and their reward is that it will continue to be them that people watch, even when it shouldn’t be.

England’s next Test takes place in June, when New Zealand come to town for three Tests. Make sure to tune in.

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Apprentice Itauma looks to turn master in danger bout



Moses Itauma, 21, takes on American Jermaine Franklin on Saturday (Photos Getty)

STEVE BUNCE

Moses Itauma is getting closer. The serious part of his boxing career will start at about 11pm on Saturday in Manchester, when his ring apprenticeship ends and the real fights begin.

This weekend, Itauma meets American Jermaine Franklin, a veteran of 26 fights but still a young man in the heavyweight business at 32, and whose only two losses are more relevant than

any of his 24 wins; there is a subtle difference between winning in risk-free fights and losing in fights where you have no chance.

Franklin is tough, tested, rested, and the type of seasoned and underestimated fighter that could beat any boxer on any given night. Itauma is still only 21, a wide-eyed kid in a division of dangerous old men, and he is also one of the most hyped fighters in the modern business.

The hype started when he was still a schoolboy (at 16, he showed up to spar with the world's best heavyweights in his school uniform) and has continued through his 13 professional fights. The Franklin fight is the first real test, a bout where Moses might have to go into the heavyweight unknown; Franklin's two losses were over the full 12-round distance, to Dillian Whyte and Anthony Joshua.



Itauma made short work of Dillian Whyte in Riyadh in August

So far, Itauma has done everything right in a ring apprenticeship that launched with bold claims that he would win a world heavyweight title at a younger age than Mike Tyson. Luckily, that storyline vanished, and Itauma could get on with learning, winning, and growing as an adult and a boxer. Itauma has often talked about his sacrifices to get where he is – he lost his teenage years to the gym and his chosen profession.

In Itauma's last fight, he travelled to Saudi Arabia in August and dropped and stopped the ghost of Whyte in just 119 seconds; we

had no idea that Whyte would be beaten so quickly. It was a real message, and what was needed was a strong man, a man with a credible record and a man who posed a risk, but not a threat: Franklin is ideal, and this might just be one of Frank Warren's greatest pieces of matchmaking.

Franklin is in many ways the last of a once-essential heavyweight breed; he is the real definition of a journeyman fighter, a man who poses problems and can educate the boxers that beat him. He can also deliver a career-shattering loss, and last September in Las Vegas, he beat double Olympic medalist Ivan Dychko, who was unbeaten in 15 as a professional with 14 knockouts.

For context, there is no way that Itauma would have been matched with Dychko on that night. Franklin is a danger, and Itauma knows that very well; young Moses has a smart head for boxing and does not believe the hype.

There is bold talk of world titles later this year, and even Oleksandr Usyk has entered the Itauma debate; the great Ukrainian has said he will not fight him because he doesn't "want to break him". The rest of the heavyweights have all welcomed the challenge.

Itauma is also on his way to becoming, assuming he beats Franklin, one of the sport's major cash cows. Itauma is a boxing baby, but he fights like a veteran, and that is a contradiction that might just elevate him from schoolboy menace to world heavyweight champion. The real road to glory for the kid from Kent starts on Saturday night.

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Sports news in brief



Arsenal defender Ben White will join the England squad for the upcoming friendlies (Getty)

White handed first England call-up in three years

Ben White has been handed a shock England recall after more than three years out of the squad as Thomas Tuchel was forced into making two changes for the upcoming international matches. The Arsenal defender has not featured in a Three Lions camp since leaving the squad under dramatic circumstances during the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, with White subsequently asking not to be considered for selection by Gareth Southgate.

The rift stemmed from a reported falling out with the then England assistant Steve Holland, who allegedly claimed that

White was not sufficiently interested in football. White has since been on a self-imposed England exile, one that was not resolved during the interim reign of Lee Carsley following Southgate's departure in the summer of 2024, but has now been lured back into the fold by Tuchel.

He replaces Jarell Quansah in the squad for March's internationals against Uruguay on Friday and Japan on 31 March, with the Bayer Leverkusen defender dealing with a thigh injury, while Gunners teammate Eberechi Eze has also been ruled out due to a calf problem. Newcastle winger Harvey Barnes has been chosen to fill the void left by Eze, whose only appearance for the senior team came in October 2020.

City smell blood in title race, says O'Reilly

Nico O'Reilly says Manchester City smell blood in their pursuit of Arsenal in the title race after beating Mikel Arteta's team in the Carabao Cup final. The England international was the match-winner at Wembley on Sunday, scoring two goals to end Arsenal's hopes of the quadruple.

And he believes it is a boost for City and a blow for Arsenal in the title race, with Arteta's league leaders having to visit the Etihad Stadium on 19 April. "Obviously, it's a big blow for them," said O'Reilly. "They were going for everything, just as we were [before being knocked out of the Champions League by Real Madrid]."

O'Reilly added that City smelled blood in the water now. "Yeah, 100 per cent," he added. "The blood never went, we've always smelt blood. We're confident in ourselves, we know we can do it, they've got to come to our place, which is a tough place to come to, as everyone has seen this season. So we do smell blood, and we've got to keep going."

Fitzpatrick sets sights on Masters after Valspar win

Matt Fitzpatrick won his first PGA Tour title in three years on Sunday but will spend the next couple of weeks looking for the

improvements needed to challenge at the Masters.

The Sheffield golfer bounced back from his final-hole bogey disappointment at last week's Players Championship to birdie the last and win the Valspar Championship by a stroke.

"I'm obviously very confident in my game right now but what it takes to win a major is very different to what it takes to win on the PGA Tour," said the 2022 US Open champion.

"Particularly the Masters, there's extra pressure on the Masters, no matter who you are. It just has that standing above all the other events, as well as the majors."

Hassan pulls out of London Marathon

The Olympic champion Sifan Hassan has pulled out of next month's London Marathon because of an Achilles injury. The Dutch runner, who did the 5,000 and 10,000 metres double at Tokyo 2020 before winning the women's marathon at Paris 2024, suffered the injury when training on a treadmill six weeks ago.

Ethiopia-born Hassan won the London Marathon in 2023 but has accepted she will not be fit in time for this year's race, which will be held on 26 April.

"No London Marathon for me," she wrote on Instagram. "I am disappointed because this race means so much to me but right now my Achilles is holding me back and I'm not ready to be at my best. I wish everyone racing an amazing day out there!"

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