

## How long for Starmer?

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The front page of The Times this morning notes Labour MPs calling for 'regime change'.

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**Glato Caitlin Moran meets Emily Eavis**

**I want sex on the NHS! Deborah Ross**

**INSIDE TIMES2**

**US officials to visit Iran for talks on nuclear programme**

Richard Spencer  
President Trump said he was sending US officials to build talks next week with Iran, he said. "We may sign an agreement, I don't know. To me, I don't think it's that necessary."

In his initial announcement of the US strikes at the weekend on Iran's three main nuclear sites at Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan, Trump said they had been "completely and fully obliterated". However, the Pentagon and Israel said full assessments were still being carried out. The report by the US defence intelligence agency said the US attacks had been only partially successful and would allow Iran to rebuild a nuclear programme within months.

The White House called the announcement "flat-out wrong" and reaffirmed the release of a more positive assessment by Israeli Atomic Energy Commission. "The devastating US strike on Fordow destroyed the site's critical infrastructure and rendered the enrichment facility inoperable," it said.

Trump insisted he was sure the site had been "obliterated" but also said the intelligence was "very inconclusive", adding that he did not think Iran would try to rebuild its programme.

He also gave a rare insight into Iran's domestic regulatory strikes on a US military base in Qatar on Monday. "They were very nice," Trump said. "They said, 'We're gonna show 'em. One o'clock OK?'" said "the fact".

Trump of Idaho, pages 25-31  
Caitlin Moran, pages 25-31

**Trump hails 'a big win' as Nato agrees to raise spending**

Larissa Brown Defence Editor  
Doreen Waterfield The Hague

President Trump hailed a "great victory" at the Nato summit as the Netherlands after alliance members agreed to a 5 per cent target for defence spending and apparently told him: "Thank God for the US."

He said he was leaving the two-day meeting "thinking people love their country" and that Nato "is not a rip-off" after years of attacking fellow member states for not spending enough on defence.

At a lengthy news conference, he showered praise on Mark Rutte, the Nato secretary general, describing him as "brilliant". Rutte had earlier referred to Trump as "Daddy" for his role in securing a ceasefire in the Middle East.

Trump was flanked by Marco Rutte, his secretary of state, and Peter Hain, referred to as the "secretary of war".

"It has been a long time but worth it," the president said, noticeably more confident on page 2.

**Rebel MPs want 'regime change'**

Pressure grows on prime minister as backroom team of 'overexcitable boys' blamed for welfare row

Patrick Maguire, Max Kinnell, Chris Smith, Oliver Wright

Sir Keir Starmer's most senior aide is facing mounting criticism from Labour MPs and ministers over the handling of welfare reform, with some suggesting that the time has come for "regime change" in No 10.

Labour MPs walked for the first time last July have told colleagues that voting down Starmer's key benefits legislation would help "not overexcitable boys" from his team of advisers.

They blame Morgan McSWEN, the prime minister's chief of staff, for alternating and ignoring backbenchers. Some ministers are also highly critical of the "bunker mentality" adopted in Downing Street.

Mr government sources described the MPs attacking McSWEN as "pathetic" and suggested Sir Alan Campbell, the chief whip, bore responsibility for the collapse in the government's authority over backbenchers.

One said: "It's so depressing to think Keir and Morgan did all that work to cleanse the party of this self-indulgent rabble, only for it to erupt back."

Starmer insisted that the government would press ahead with a vote next week on welfare reform, dismissing the backlash as "noise off" and insisting his party was "pretty united behind the need for change. Downing Street misled infaming lessons by suggesting that it was unusual to oppose the welfare reforms.

But it has mounted a resurgent action to stem the revolt and believes many of the rebels can be won over with extra assurances and concessions on the timing and extent of changes to the welfare system. The row centres on reforms that would make it harder to claim the main disability benefit, known as personal independence payments. Critics are afraid that 800,000 disabled people will be denied payments even if they struggle to walk or dress themselves before the week.

McSWEN has in recent days spent hours in conversations with dozens of backbenchers. Cabinet ministers, including Rachel Reeves, the health secretary, and Nita Davies, the health secretary, have been dispatched to representatives. However, the rebellion is growing. The number of MPs who have signed a rebel amendment rose from 115 on Tuesday to 120 yesterday.

While the rebels do not want to force Starmer's resignation, one disgruntled told The Times they hoped the revolt would lead to a clear-out of staff in Downing Street. The MP who has led efforts to sign colleagues up to an amendment under which the welfare bill would fail, said forcing a change of prime minister was "not the answer."

"We are all very happy that we have a leader who we respect and would the world," they said. "We just think he needs lower overexcitable boys in his team."

McSWEN did not deny the welfare reforms and has sought to reassure on page 2.

Let me caveat that. First, this is The Times. They are no lovers of Labour.

Second, this is what I am hearing. The discussion is open, accelerating, and expectations of timescales are getting shorter. The thought was that Starmer would go in 2026, having more than outstayed his welcome. Now the expectation is shorter.

You can only claim to be Labour and act as if you're a Tory/Reform hybrid for so long, and eventually, you push those who have a vestigial recall of what Labour was supposed to be about too far. Has that happened as yet? I am not sure. To be candid, I think the summer recess will probably save Starmer for now, presuming, as is inevitable, that he backs down in some way next week, as I suspect he will.

But the damage will have been done, and it will be deep-seated enough that I very much doubt that he, Rachel Reeves, Liz Kendall, and those most associated with Starmer as regular mouthpieces (Streetering, Reynolds, and maybe others) can survive this.

When will the coup happen, if not now? That is obviously hard to tell, but all those MPs who have found both sufficient cover and courage now to attack Starmer will never be as compliant again. They will realise that having at the Party's helm people who were willing to sacrifice disabled people to the great god of balanced budgets will not be forgotten by the electorate.

They will also notice [what has happened in New York](#). They might realise that a little red water between them and the Tory/Reform position might be good for Labour. And then Starmer will be gone. His chance of fighting the next election now is near zero.

What has done for him? Three things.

First, his total hypocrisy is claiming to support the positions of Jeremy Corbyn, and then abandoning them all and having Corbyn ejected from the party.

Second, is his total inability to choose chief executives for his operations capable of delivering anything that looks to be remotely Labour at all. Sue Gray was a disaster, not appearing to understand politics. And Morgan McSweeney only appears to understand what the far right wants, hence the debacle now in play.

Third, Starmer lacks the essential quality of a good leader, which is a moral compass and the understanding to let that become apparent in ways that mean people comprehend just what the prime minister stands for. Starmer appears to stand for nothing, not even his own survival. All he has done is serve the balanced budget, and deep down, people do not believe in that.

So, Starmer will go. Of the Labour MPs not on the government payroll, approximately half have now shown their willingness to stand up to him. It is quite reasonable to think some in the payroll would be delighted to see the back of him (Yvette Cooper, more than any other).

Starmer will join Boris Johnson in having won a large, effectively meaningless, majority in the Commons and not seeing out his term. No one will mourn his departure, except Morgan McSweeney, maybe, although I am sure Farage has a job lined up for him.