

Veteran backlash at 'shameful' JD Vance after he dismisses Britain as 'a random country that hasn't fought a war in 30 years'... even though hundreds of UK troops died in Iraq and Afghanistan

07:07 EST 04 Mar 2025, updated 08:53 EST 04 Mar 2025 By [GREG HEFFER](#), [POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT FOR MAILONLINE](#)



[JD Vance](#) was today branded 'shameful' after the US Vice President appeared to dismiss Britain as a 'random country that hasn't fought a war in 30 or 40 years'.

Military veterans and MPs from across the House of Commons led a furious backlash against Mr Vance's 'shameful' comments and called on him to apologise.

They pointed out that 636 British troops died in [Afghanistan](#) and [Iraq](#) after the UK allied with the US to join military action in the wake of the [9/11](#) terror attacks.

Mr Vance was accused of 'erasing from history' the sacrifice of UK personnel in those bloody conflicts, with his remarks labelled 'deeply disrespectful'.

The Vice President ramped up transatlantic tensions as he poured cold water over Sir [Keir Starmer](#)'s plan for a 'coalition of the willing' to secure peace in Ukraine.

He dismissed the PM's offer of a peacekeeping force with UK and French boots on the ground and instead piled pressure on Ukraine to sign a minerals deal with the US.

Mr Vance told [Fox News](#): 'If you want real security guarantees, if you want to actually ensure that Vladimir [Putin](#) does not invade Ukraine again, the very best security guarantee is to give Americans economic upside in the future of Ukraine.

'That is a way better security guarantee than 20,000 troops from some random country that hasn't fought a war in 30 or 40 years.'

The Vice President later scrambled to claw back his remarks as he faced widespread anger at his intervention.

He claimed he hadn't been aiming his barb at Britain or France - the only two countries to publicly commit to a peacekeeping force in Ukraine - but failed to clarify which nations he had been referring to.



JD Vance was today branded 'shameful' after the US Vice President appeared to dismiss Britain as a 'random country that hasn't fought a war in 30 or 40 years'



Mourners pay their respects as the coffins British troops who died in Afghanistan pass through the village of Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire

Mr Vance had earlier been heavily criticised for his comments and told to 'wind his neck in' as he risked souring UK relations with US President Donald Trump's administration.

Downing Street slapped down the Vice President's comments, with Sir Keir's official spokesman saying: 'The PM and this country are full of admiration for UK troops who served in recent years in Iraq and Afghanistan alongside the US and other allies.'

Reform UK leader Nigel Farage said Mr Vance was 'wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong'.

'For 20 years in Afghanistan - pro rata our size against America's - we spent the same amount of money, we put the same number of men and women in, and we suffered the same losses,' he told GB News, as he attended a farmers' protest in Westminster.

'We stood by America all through those 20 years, putting in exactly the same contribution.

'And, alright, they may be six times bigger but we did our bit. So, on this one, JD is wrong.'

But Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch - who has launched a crackdown on Tory MPs posting on social media about Ukraine - suggested Mr Vance had been misrepresented over his remarks.

'I know JD Vance quite well. I've looked at the comments, I don't think he actually said that,' Mrs Badenoch said.

'A lot of people are getting carried away. They're saying loads of things and getting quite animated. Let's keep cool heads.'

'America is our closest ally and I believe President Trump and JD Vance want peace. They're looking after their national interest. We need to do so as well.'

This was despite one of Mrs Badenoch's top shadow ministers and a string of other Conservative MPs lashing out at Mr Vance's comments.

James Cartlidge, the shadow defence secretary, pointed to how [NATO](#) allies rushed to America's aid after the 9/11 attacks, when the US invoked the alliance's Article 5 collective defence clause.

'Britain and France came to their aid deploying thousands of personnel to Afghanistan, including my own brother and numerous parliamentary colleagues past and present,' Mr Cartlidge said.

'It's deeply disrespectful to ignore such service and sacrifice.'



Reform UK leader Nigel Farage, who attended a farmers' protest in Westminster today, said Mr Vance was 'wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong'



© Jordan Pettitt/PA Wire

But Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch suggested Mr Vance had been misrepresented over his remarks

Ex-Armed Forces minister James Heappey, a former soldier, said that serving alongside American and French troops were 'defining moments of my military career'.

'Sad to hear the relationship reduced to this,' he added, in response to Mr Vance's comments.

Fellow Conservative politician Johnny Mercer, who was veterans minister until July last year and served as a commando in Afghanistan, said: 'Vance needs to wind his neck in. Show a bit of respect and stop making yourself look so unpleasant.'

He added: 'This clown needs to check his privilege. I read his book making the mistake of finding him quite interesting.'

'By his own admission he spent his time in the Marines 'writing articles and taking pictures'.

'Perhaps if he had got his hands dirty serving his country like so many of his fellow American and British veterans, chasing his own country's crazy foreign policy ideas, he might not be so quick to dismiss their sacrifice.'

Ben Obese-Jecty, the Tory MP for Huntingdon, also noted how Mr Vance wrote in his 2016 memoir that he was 'lucky to escape any real fighting' during his time as a Marine Corps journalist in Iraq.

Mr Obese-Jecty, who served in both Iraq and Afghanistan himself, added: 'British troops stood shoulder to shoulder with the US after Article 5 was invoked following 9/11.'

'I served in Afghanistan in 2009 and 2010 during its most kinetic phase. In Sangin, I saw first-hand the sacrifices made by our soldiers; a quarter of the 457 British soldiers lost died there.'

'Vice-President Vance served in Iraq writing articles and taking photos for the US Marines. He should be well aware of the sacrifices made by America's allies in recent decades.'

'To suggest Britain did not pay our share of blood and treasure does a disservice to the close relationship between our two militaries.'

David Taylor, the [Labour](#) MP for Hemel Hempstead, said: 'This great nation has proudly fought shoulder to shoulder with our US allies, with 457 service men and women killed defending freedom in Afghanistan alone.'

'These shameful remarks will never undo their sacrifice or the gratitude we have for their defence of British values.'

Liberal [Democrat](#) MP Helen Maguire, a former captain in the Royal Military Police who served in Iraq, said: 'JD Vance is erasing from history the hundreds of British troops who gave their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

'I saw firsthand how American and British soldiers fought bravely together shoulder to shoulder.

'Six of my own regiment, the Royal Military Police, didn't return home from Iraq. This is a sinister attempt to deny that reality.'

She said Lord Mandelson, the UK's ambassador to the US, should 'call on Vance to apologise for these comments'.

Andy McNab, the former SAS soldier who fought in the First Gulf War, invited Mr Vance to visit Britain's war memorials.

The best-selling author said: 'He needs to read the names of the dead who have fought and shed blood alongside US troops.'

Graham Stuart, the Tory MP for Beverley and Holderness, said: 'We have to consider the possibility that President Trump is a Russian asset.

'If so, Trump's acquisition is the crowning achievement of Putin's FSB career - and Europe is on its own.'

In a post on X this morning, Mr Vance desperately attempted to limit the damage from his remarks.

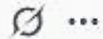
'This is absurdly dishonest. I don't even mention the UK or France in the clip, both of whom have fought bravely alongside the US over the last 20 years, and beyond,' he wrote.

'But let's be direct: there are many countries who are volunteering (privately or publicly) support who have neither the battlefield experience nor the military equipment to do anything meaningful.'

The Vice President's attempt to clarify his remarks brought further condemnation as critics pointed to the huge list of countries who lost troops after joining US military action in Afghanistan after 9/11.



James Cartlidge MP 🇬🇧 🇺🇦 🇬🇪 @jcartlidgemp · 1h



NATO Article 5 has been invoked once - on 12/9/01 by 🇺🇸, after 9/11.

🇬🇧 & 🇫🇷 came to their aid deploying 1,000s of personnel to Afghanistan, including my own brother & numerous parliamentary colleagues, past & present. It's deeply disrespectful to ignore such service & sacrifice.



James Heappey 🇬🇪

@JSHeappey



Serving with 🇺🇸 & 🇫🇷 were defining moments of my military career. Visiting 🇬🇧 🇺🇸 🇫🇷 joint ops around world - highlights of ministerial career. Being in room as 'P3' response to threats of recent years was considered, the most sobering. Sad to hear the relationship reduced to this.



Johnny Mercer 🇬🇪

@JohnnyMercerUK



This clown needs to check his privilege. I read @JDVance book making the mistake of finding him quite interesting. By his own admission he spent his time in the Marines "writing articles and taking pictures".

Perhaps if he had got his hands dirty serving his country like so many of his fellow American and British veterans, chasing his own country's crazy foreign policy ideas, he might not be so quick to dismiss their sacrifice.



Ben Obese-Jecty MP 
@BenObeseJecty



“I was lucky to escape any real fighting,” JD Vance wrote in his 2016 memoir about his time as a Marine Corps journalist in Iraq.

I was part of British forces fighting in highly kinetic operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the latter in response to Article 5 following 9/11.

The disrespect shown by the new US Vice President to the sacrifices of our service personnel is unacceptable.



Helen Maguire BEM MP  
@helenmaguiremp



JD Vance is erasing the hundreds of British troops who gave their lives in Iraq + Afghanistan from history.

Six of my own regiment, the Royal Military Police, didn't return home from Iraq.

This is a sinister attempt to deny that reality. Vance has demeaned his office.

It later emerged how Mrs Badenoch was attempting to order her party's MPs to limit their interventions over the Ukraine crisis.

In a message to every Tory MP, Rebecca Harris - the Conservative chief whip - said: 'We understand that there are many concerns about the unfolding events around Ukraine and US involvement. We do not need to tweet all of our thoughts in real time.

'When it comes to defence and national security, we need to raise the threshold for what needs to be said publicly and ensure the facts are clear first.'

Mr Vance's intervention came after Mr Trump inflicted another hammer blow on decades of Western alliances by pulling all military aid to Ukraine.

The White House has paused delivery of ammunition and other equipment to Kyiv after announcing overnight it was 'reviewing' assistance to 'ensure that it is contributing to a solution'.

The move appears to be part of a power play to heap pressure on Ukrainian President Volodymyr [Zelensky](#) to make concessions in negotiations with Russia.

Meanwhile, there are claims that Trump officials have been drawing up plans to ease sanctions on Mr Putin, the Russian President.

A Government spokeswoman said the UK is 'absolutely committed to securing a lasting peace' after the extraordinary decision by the US President.

In radio and TV interviews this morning, Deputy PM [Angela Rayner](#) admitted it is a 'very serious moment' but American military aid was a 'matter for the US'.

In his Fox News interview, Mr Vance heightened his criticism of Mr Zelensky, accusing him of 'needling' Mr Trump and having a 'certain sense of entitlement'.

'He showed a clear unwillingness to engage in the peace process that President Trump said is the policy,' he said.

'That's the real breakdown. I think Zelensky wasn't yet there. And, frankly, still isn't there. But I think he'll get there eventually, he has to.'

Mr Vance said Ukrainian officials have made at least one attempt to restart negotiations after leaving the [White House](#), but their efforts were shut down by the president.

He claimed the 'door is open' as long as 'Zelensky is willing to seriously talk peace'.

Highlighting the minerals deal, Mr Vance said that would amount to a security deal with the US that would prevent Putin 'invading Ukraine again'.

'If you want real security guarantees, if you want to actually ensure that Vladimir Putin does not invade Ukraine again, the very best security guarantee is to give Americans economic upside in the future of Ukraine,' he said.

'That is a way better security guarantee than 20,000 troops from some random country that hasn't fought a war in 30 or 40 years.'



Keir Starmer is 'engaging with key allies' today after Donald Trump 's bombshell move to pull all military aid to Ukraine



Relations between Mr Zelensky and Mr Trump reached new lows on Friday with a public slanging match in the Oval Office



European leaders and Canada gathered in London on Sunday to consider the response to the Ukraine crisis

A UK Government spokeswoman said: 'We remain absolutely committed to securing a lasting peace in Ukraine and are engaging with key allies in support of this effort. It is the right thing to do, and is in our interest to do so.'

'We have bolstered Ukrainian military capabilities through our commitment to provide Ukraine with £3 billion-a-year in military aid for as long as it takes and through a £2.26 billion loan using sanctioned Russian assets.'

'In addition, we've set up a partnership with Ukraine that allows them to use £1.6 billion of UK Export Finance to buy 5,000 air defence missiles manufactured in Belfast, putting Ukraine in the strongest possible position for peace.'

Ms Rayner said Sir Keir remains 'laser-focused' on securing a lasting peace for [Kyiv](#) and would not be 'derailed'.

'We are absolutely focused on making sure that we get that peace and the security guarantees as part of that,' she said.

'We won't be derailed or sidelined by commentary, ongoing commentary, but that we will use our relationship, our long-standing relationship, with the US and our European allies to support Ukraine and President Zelensky in getting that peace deal and making sure those securities are part of that.'

Sir Keir told the Commons just hours before Mr Trump's intervention that he 'understood' the US position was not to withdraw aid.

Relations between Mr Zelensky and Mr Trump reached new lows on Friday with a public slanging match in the Oval Office.

That triggered crisis talks between European leaders in London on Sunday, with Sir Keir trying to forge a 'coalition of the willing' that could enforce any peace deal with [Russia](#).

The UK and [France](#) have signalled they would be ready to contribute troops on the ground, while Canada, Italy and Poland are other potential participants.

But Sir Keir has made clear that UK troops would not be deployed without an underpinning of security guarantees from the US.

Mr Zelensky looks to be resisting Washington's demands that he accepts the principle of ceding territory to Russia, after the latest full-scale invasion in 2022. Putin's troops current occupy around a fifth of Ukraine.

A White House official said: 'The President has been clear that he is focused on peace. We need our partners to be committed to that goal as well. We are pausing and reviewing our aid to ensure that it is contributing to a solution.'

The decision casts doubt over Ukraine's ability to continue to defending itself against Russian invaders. It is understood the 'pause' will extend to undelivered aid already earmarked for Ukraine by the Biden administration.

A second official told Fox News that 'this is not permanent termination of aid, it's a pause'. All military equipment not currently in Ukraine will be halted and all future aid is now in jeopardy.

Mr Trump's shift followed an abrupt post warning that 'America will not put up with it for much longer' yesterday after Mr Zelensky suggested the end of the war is still 'very, very far away'.



Sir Keir told the Commons just hours before Mr Trump's (pictured) intervention that he 'understood' the US position was not to withdraw aid

Mr Zelensky was speaking after the London summit saw 18 allies joining to offer Ukraine security guarantees and reify their support. Sir Keir said the powers would work together to draw up a viable peace plan that could be presented to Mr Trump.

'This is the worst statement that could have been made by Zelensky, and America will not put up with it for much longer,' an infuriated Mr Trump posted on his Truth Social website.

Mr Trump also questioned Mr Zelensky's commitment to peace, saying that he 'doesn't want there to be peace as long as he has America's backing'.

He also hinted that Mr Zelensky might not be Ukrainian president much longer - a key demand of Putin.

Mrs Badenoch said the UK and Europe must 'rearm faster' following the US announcement.

She said: 'The news overnight that America is halting military aid to Ukraine is profoundly worrying.

'It is clear that Britain and Europe must rearm much faster if we want to provide Ukraine with more than just warm words of support.

'We must work to keep America in, and Russia out.'