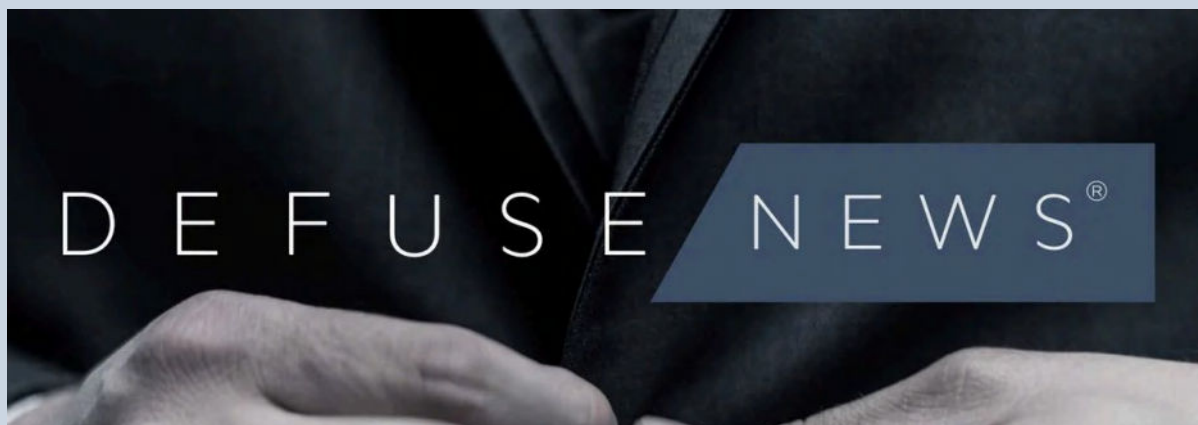




Welcome to this week's edition of Defuse News

A weekly briefing for people whose profile attracts attention.

When a family stops visiting and starts living somewhere

The Sussexes are settling in Britain. The row about who pays has missed what changes.

THE SHORT VERSION

- Relocation raises both halves of the threat picture, not just one.
- Losing royal duties removed the protective structure, not the exposure.
- The public argument itself is doing harm.
- Every objection so far has been about likelihood. Impact is the other half.
- My view: the state should own the responsibility entirely. Bodies can be contracted; command cannot.

The Sussexes are moving their family from California to a private home outside London. They will not resume royal duties. The Prime Minister calls it a private matter, and RAVEC, which decides these things, is reported to be reopening the Duke's case after Ann Widdecombe's murder in July.

The commentary settled into two camps within hours.

- He is the King's son, so protect him.
- Or they chose to go and return, so let them pay. My view comes at the end.

Threat, vulnerability and risk

THREAT = intent + capability

VULNERABILITY = opportunity

RISK = likelihood x impact



Relocation shifts the first two, and the commentary has noticed one.

Start with threat. A person here with a grievance but no means of reaching California now needs a train ticket. The intent has not changed; the capability has.

Fixation fades with distance and wakes with proximity, and the coverage puts them before people who had forgotten them.

None of it is hypothetical: al-Qaeda called for the Duke's death after he wrote about Afghanistan.

Then vulnerability. Residence has no end date.

A VISIT

- fixed dates, a few known venues, then gone
- a front door and a postcode
- a school gate, twice a day
- staff coming and going
- habits legible to a patient observer inside three weeks

A RESIDENCE

Emotion is not evidence

Listen to the objections and you notice what drives them. Not analysis. Emotion. The irritation about the interviews, the memoir and the criticism aimed at this country is real, and many would say deserved. It has no bearing on whether they should have protection, and every bearing on whether they need it, though not as objectors imagine.

Grievance drives targeted violence, and the man on that path rarely invents his justification. He borrows it from the columns and comment threads telling him his anger is shared. Almost everyone voicing it is harmless. The few moving towards action are listening, and years of contempt tell them the target is disliked and the state has washed its hands.

How the funding row is framed matters too. Set an argument about police officers for a wealthy family against a cost of living crisis and the anti-wealth rhetoric common in politics, and it becomes an aggravating factor.

Deciding how much danger someone is in from how you feel about them is no assessment. It is a verdict.

No duties does not mean no exposure

No official functions, people assume, means nothing official to protect. The opposite is true. An official engagement is the safest thing a prominent person does: venue surveyed ahead, routes planned, police liaison built in. Every one I worked on had a structure the public never saw.

Take that away and only unstructured private life remains. The school run. The charity dinner nobody surveyed.



WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS

Ann Widdecombe left Parliament in 2010. Sixteen years out of office, no duties, no structure. In July she was murdered at home in a Devon village, and her gardener found her. Counter-terrorism officers are involved.

Nor should anyone lean on the state's screening. The Fixated Threat Assessment Centre works within a narrow scope, and I saw those limits at close quarters in Parliament. Look at the fatal attacks on MPs of the past twenty-six years: FTAC would have been involved in one, perhaps two. The rest were on nobody's list, until the creation of the team set up and led, The Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation team (PLaIT).

A decision resting on no identified threat rests on a system that misses most who kill.

What money cannot buy

A private team in Britain:

- Cannot carry firearms. Not on the road, not at the gate, not in the house.
- Cannot stop and search or close a road.
- Has no more power of arrest than anyone on the pavement.
- Cannot see classified product, or what an investigation already knows about the man writing letters.

Intelligence, though, is no state monopoly. Parts of this industry monitor fixated individuals better than the state does. As a Counter Terrorism Security Coordinator, I planned protective security for royal, government and military events, and most of what the state puts around a movement never shows.

The argument is doing harm

Attackers read the papers too. The couple have asked that their children's school and address stay private, and the reporting carrying that request names areas from the Cotswolds to Northampton. Protection deters because people believe it is there. A disputed gap does the reverse.

Impact is the other half

All of that concerns likelihood, which on any given day is low.

Suppose the state declines and one of them is killed here, in public, with other children nearby. A constitutional crisis follows, a diplomatic one, and an inquiry running for years.

Low likelihood and catastrophic, irreversible impact is not something you decline to manage. You act early, because there is no second attempt.

Someone will answer that armed officers would arrive within the hour on intelligence of an imminent threat. True, and beside the point, because it is what any of us would get. A shopkeeper in Doncaster facing a credible threat gets the same response. That is the floor every resident stands on, not protection.

Imminent means minutes. Protection is what stands around a family on an ordinary Tuesday when nobody knows anything, and what disrupts a plot at the planning stage rather than the door.

WHERE I COME DOWN ON IT

They should be given state protection, and the state should own that responsibility entirely. Not everyone in the operation need be a police officer, but one organisation must be accountable for all of it.

1. One chain of command, one plan, one organisation answerable when it fails.
2. Private officers can stand at the gate, tasked, briefed and answerable to the police.
3. Who contributes to the cost is a question for ministers, and a separate one.

He is the King's son, and that is the point. It is no claim on the public purse; it is the reason the danger exists. Being royal is not his argument, it is his exposure, and most of what any assessment concerns.

Our profession is rebuilt backwards, after failures. The team I set up and led in Parliament to assess threats against MPs came into being after Jo Cox was murdered in 2016, not before. It took her murder to release the money. Ten years on, RAVEC is reported to be moving because another former MP was killed in her kitchen.

The hybrid model, where the family buys the day to day and the state adds armed cover on top, is where I part company with much of my industry. Two rosters, two briefing chains, two sets of assumptions about who owns the school run, nobody holding the whole picture. Gaps open at the joins, and gaps are where attacks succeed.

Bodies can be contracted. Command cannot.

With apologies to those scrambling for this contract, it is not one to win. It is a police operation that may hire some of us, and it should be settled before the removal van arrives.

FOR THE REST OF US, ON A SMALLER SCALE

- What is findable about your home
- What is findable about your children's school
- Who holds your keys and your diary
- Who is assessing those already writing to you

If a threat has landed and you are unsure whether the response on the table is proportionate, speak to a specialist.

**Murders, stabbings, terror plots:
are Britain's MPs safe?**



🎧 New episode: The Crime Agents, with Neil Basu, Andy Hughes and me on threats to public figures.

Neil was my boss at Scotland Yard. After Jo Cox was murdered, he asked me to go into Parliament and set up and run The Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team.

We covered a lot of ground.

- ◆ What separates the people who make threats from the people who carry them out.
- ◆ Why most of the abuse aimed at public figures never becomes anything, and why that makes the rest harder to spot rather than easier.
- ◆ What happens to someone when the protection ends and the profile does not.

The Crime Agents comes from Global, the team behind The News Agents, and it is on Apple, Spotify, YouTube and the usual platforms.

🛡️ If you look after someone with a public profile, a principal, a client or a family member, it is worth an hour of your time.



[Click here to download](#)

A promotional banner for Defuse News. It features three book covers: 'THE DEFUSE HANDBOOK', 'Personal Threat Management', and 'DEFUSE NEWS'. To the right is the 'SPEARS 500' logo, which reads 'SECURITY, INTELLIGENCE & INVESTIGATIONS', 'SPEARS 500', 'TOP RECOMMENDED', and '2025'. On the far right is contact information: a phone icon with '+44 (0)207 293 0932', a globe icon with 'www.defuseglobal.com', and an email icon with 'philip@defuseglobal.com'.

If anything in this newsletter has caused you to think, you may benefit from our help.
Contact us at info@defuseglobal.com

Defuse Ltd, 124 City Road, Old Street, London EC1V 2NX, United Kingdom, +44 02072930932

[Unsubscribe](#) [Manage preferences](#)