

WASHINGTON President Trump celebrates his bond with Queen Elizabeth II. He is less charitable about those who serve her.

On Monday, Mr. Trump said the White House would no longer deal with the British ambassador to the United States after the envoy described the Trump administration as clumsy and inept in confidential cables that were leaked. The president also accused Prime Minister Theresa May of botching Britains negotiations to leave the European Union, reviving a critique he first leveled against her a year ago.

Mr. Trumps criticisms, delivered in a pair of midday tweets, were a rude farewell to Mrs. May and a British leadership that is likely to be replaced in the coming weeks by harder-line, pro-Brexit forces more to the presidents liking. In his rebuke of the ambassador, Sir Kim Darroch, Mr. Trump came close to declaring him persona non grata an extraordinary breach between the United States and one of its closest allies.

The British government scrambled to repair the damage, dispatching its trade minister to Washington to apologize to the presidents elder daughter, Ivanka Trump. The sudden rupture of the so-called special relationship came barely a month after the queen feted Mr. Trump with a 41-gun salute and a lavish state banquet at Buckingham Palace.

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It was a reminder of the fact that underneath the pageantry, the ties between Britain and the United States have been fraying for some time.

What a mess she and her representatives have created, Mr. Trump said of Mrs. May. I told her how it should be done, but she decided to go another way. Of Mr. Darroch, he said, I do not know the Ambassador, but he is not liked or well thought of within the U.S. We will no longer deal with him.

Unlock more free articles. Create an account or log in Mr. Trumps threat left Mr. Darrochs status uncertain, though the British government stoutly defended his right to send home honest, unvarnished assessments of the political situation in Washington. In a statement on Monday, the government lamented the leaking of the cables, which, it said, do not reflect the closeness of, and the esteem in which we hold, the relationship.

The diplomatic uproar came at an awkward moment for Britain, which has been isolated and paralyzed by its looming deadline to leave the European Union. After failing to win support in Parliament for a negotiated exit, Mrs. May announced she would step down as leader of the Conservative Party and relinquish the prime ministers post as soon as the party elects a new leader.

Boris Johnson, a pro-Brexit former foreign secretary and former mayor of London, is the odds-on favorite to replace her a prospect that clearly delights Mr. Trump, who all but endorsed him last month during his visit to Britain. Mr. Johnson has pledged to pursue a no deal exit from the European Union.

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The good news for the wonderful United Kingdom is that they will soon have a new prime minister, Mr. Trump said. While I thoroughly enjoyed the magnificent State Visit last month, it was the Queen who I was most impressed with!

Mr. Trump praised the queen as a spectacular woman and claimed that during their meetings, her staff said she had not had so much fun in 25 years. By contrast, he and Mrs. May joked uneasily about their differences over how Britain handled its negotiations with the bloc.

I seem to remember the president suggested that I sue the European Union, Mrs. May said. Which we didnt do. We went into negotiation, and we came out with a good deal.

I would have sued, but thats O.K., Mr. Trump replied. I would have sued, and settled, maybe.

In his cables, Mr. Darroch described the White House as a uniquely dysfunctional environment and said Mr. Trump was an unpredictable character. There is no filter, he wrote. He also said the president faced the prospect of further disclosures that could lead to disgrace and downfall.

The cables were obtained by a British tabloid, The Mail on Sunday, which published them over the weekend. The leak prompted theories about whether pro-Brexit forces were less interested in harming Mr. Darroch, whose tenure in Washington is nearing an end, than in torpedoing a likely successor: Mrs. Mays national security adviser, Mark Sedwill. Mr. Sedwill is viewed by some in London as having maneuvered to prevent the government from pursuing a no-deal Brexit.

For all of his private criticism, Mr. Darroch has cultivated close ties with people in Mr. Trumps orbit. He hosted lavish diplomatic parties at the ambassadors baronial residence that drew a parade of prominent officials, including Ms. Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner; a former Trump White House chief of staff, John F. Kelly; the former White House chief strategist, Stephen K. Bannon; and Mr. Trumps senior adviser Kellyanne Conway.

In London on Monday, former diplomats debated whether Mr. Trump had effectively made Mr. Darroch persona non grata in Washington, a step that generally leads to a diplomats removal.

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I think Sir Kim is done in Washington, said Lewis A. Lukens, who served as deputy chief of mission at the American Embassy in London from 2016 to 2019. Its a shame because he has been an extraordinarily effective ambassador for the U.K. in Washington. And he was just doing his job providing the government in London with his candid, honest assessment of the dynamics in Washington.

Sir Christopher Meyer, who was ambassador in Washington from 1997 to 2003, said it was too early to know what the presidents tweet meant for Mr. Darrochs status.

Does he mean that Kim will never be able to meet him again? he asked. Does he mean access to the White House staff, like the chief of staff, is blocked? Does he mean that Kim is denied access to the National Security Council?

Mr. Meyer said Mrs. Mays support seemed unshakable, but that when a new prime minister takes office in two weeks, the situation may change. A new prime minister, he said, could select a political appointee who could take a strong partisan position, instead of a career diplomat like Mr. Darroch.

He said he doubted it would be Nigel Farage, the Brexit Party leader, whom Mr. Trump has repeatedly recommended for the job.

Farage? Well, Darth Vader could be appointed, if that was the wish of the British government, Mr. Meyer said. But now hes sitting on top of a burgeoning political party. I think his larger ambition would be there, rather than in Washington.

Whatever the motivation, analysts agreed that the leak was particularly destructive, given the fragility of Britains diplomatic position. The British government has parted company with the United States over the Iran nuclear deal, the Paris climate accord and Mr. Trumps attacks on the NATO alliance.

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The overall relationship is in bad shape, said Thomas Wright, an expert on Europe at the Brookings Institution. There are so many things that Trump has done to irk or undermine the U.K. government.

Mr. Trumps state visit, he said, was choreographed to paper over those differences, reflecting how dependent on the United States British officials believe they will be once Britain leaves Europe. So did Britains panicky reaction to the leaked cables. Britains trade minister, Liam Fox, said he planned to apologize to Mr. Trumps daughter when the two meet this week during his visit to Washington.

Either our Civil Service or elements of our political class have not lived up to the expectations that either we have or the United States has about their behavior, which in this particular case has lapsed in a most extraordinary and unacceptable way, Mr. Fox said Monday on BBC Radio.

His act of contrition with Ms. Trump speaks equally to her rising status in the administration and Britains dwindling status as it faces a post-Brexit future.

Ellen Barry contributed reporting from London.

A version of this article appears in print on July 9, 2019 of the New York edition with the headline: Leaked Cables Prompt Trump To Shun Envoy. Order Reprints — Todays Paper — Subscribe

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