

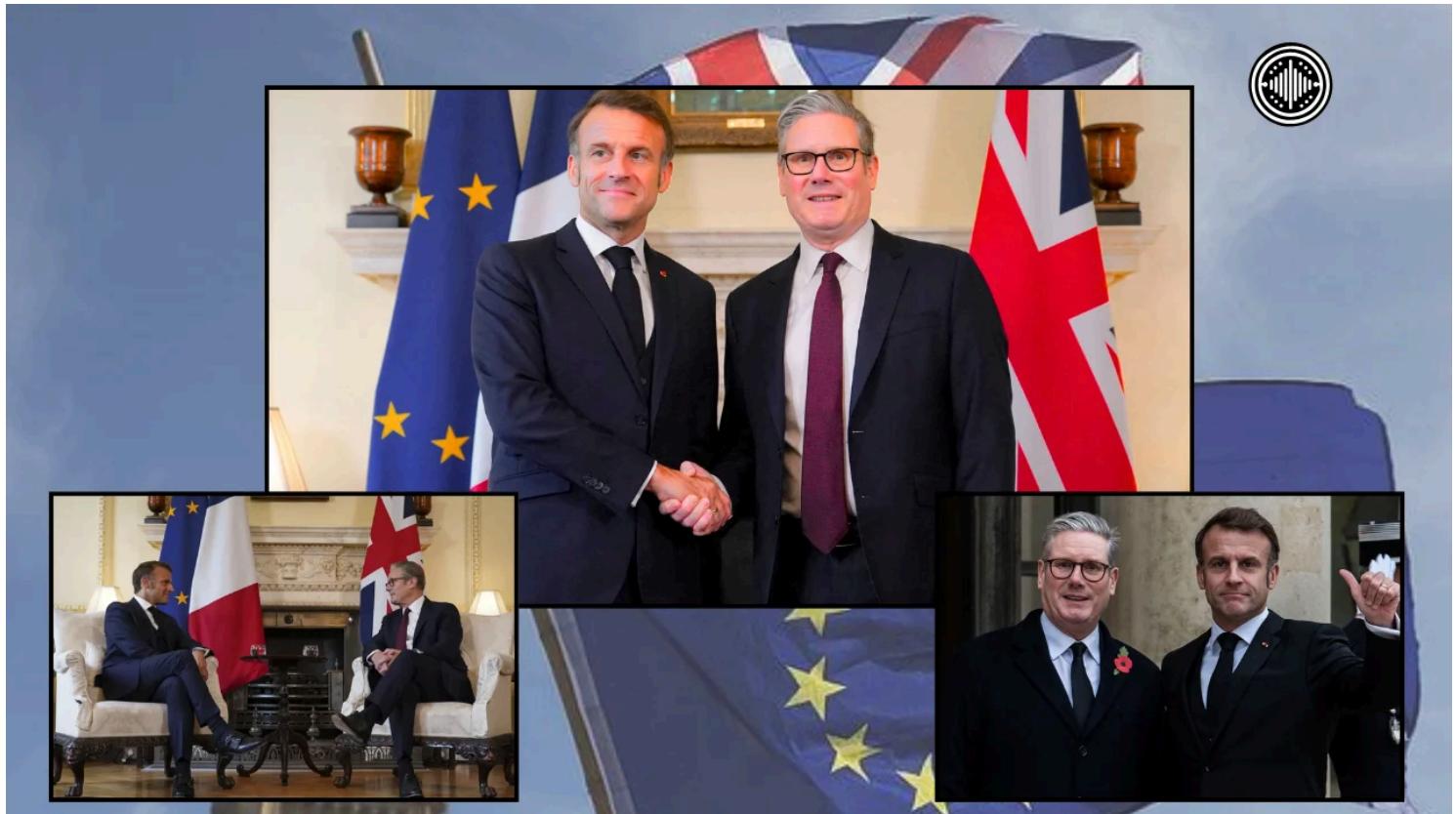
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Starmer and Macron Agree New Deterrent Needed to Stop Small Boats

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Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron have publicly acknowledged the urgent need for a new strategy to address illegal Channel crossings, amid rising pressure on the UK government to deliver results on migration. Despite their united front, the details of any effective deterrent remain vague, fuelling concerns that rhetoric continues to outpace real solutions.

Following Macron's visit to London, both leaders expressed mutual intent to deepen cooperation on tackling the surge of small boats entering the UK via the English Channel. Starmer admitted that current measures were insufficient and backed Macron's call for a reinforced response, though neither confirmed what the so-called "new deterrent" would entail. This has sparked criticism from opposition figures and commentators alike, many of whom argue that action, not ambition, is now desperately needed.

The concept of a "new deterrent" appears to centre on clamping down on illegal working and dismantling the incentives that fuel people smuggling operations. Starmer's government has signalled a tougher stance on employers who exploit undocumented workers, a move Downing Street claims will remove one of the key "pull factors" drawing migrants to the UK. However, without a robust mechanism for removals and returns, these measures risk falling flat.

Meanwhile, the much-discussed "one-in, one-out" migrant returns policy, aimed at ensuring balanced entry and exit, remains in limbo. Talks between British and French officials have so far failed to reach a formal agreement. With UK taxpayers footing over £500 million in border enforcement payments to France over recent years, questions are mounting over the lack of clear progress.

Critics argue that the Labour government is treading carefully to avoid internal divisions, with Starmer appearing reluctant to commit to policies that might provoke his left flank. In contrast, centre-right voices are urging the Prime Minister to show firmer resolve, warning that anything short of bold, immediate action will see public confidence in the immigration system continue to erode.

While Starmer and Macron may share common ground diplomatically, voters in Britain are unlikely to be impressed by promises of future cooperation unless they translate quickly into fewer boats on British shores.