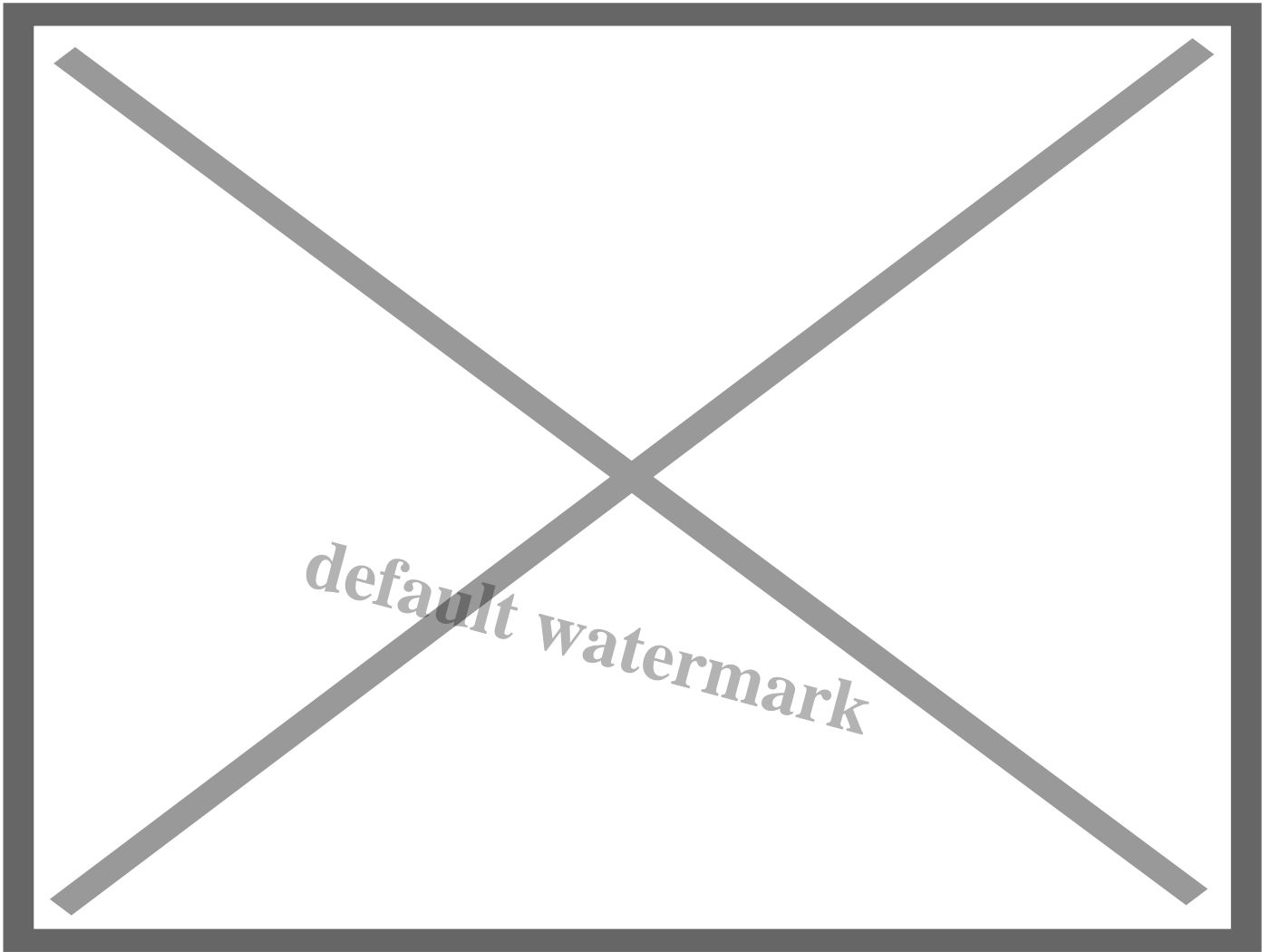




What the media are not telling you about Christopher Harborne

Description

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The attempts to dismiss an undeclared [£5 million gift](#) are falling flat, and Reform UK leader Nigel Farage is under more pressure than ever.

The party's largest donor, Christopher Harborne, is showing no signs of backing away from political donations. Farage [says](#) that he would "gladly" accept further contributions from the billionaire.

Although Farage has long said that his priority is putting Britain first, his main backer is a Thai citizen with shares in an arms firm that exports components to the Israeli military. Indeed, Harborne is the largest shareholder in weapons manufacturer QinetiQ. In 2022, QinetiQ were granted licenses to export [over £13 million worth](#) of aerial target and military training equipment to the Israeli state, as well as over £700,000 of military guidance/navigation equipment.

Reform, Friends of Israel

Reform have followed Labour and the Conservatives in pledging their support to the Israeli state during the assault on Gaza.

Like Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Farage has [denied](#) that a genocide is taking place. He also declared that a future Reform government would keep exporting weapons to Israel. After what we now know about his links to Harborne and QinetiQ – a company that [profits](#) from military aggression – perhaps these sentiments should not come as a surprise.

Last September, at Reform UK’s conference in Birmingham, Israeli deputy ambassador Daniela Grudsky [declared](#)

We do believe that we have friends here.

It was the first time an Israeli government official had attended.

Just weeks later, deputy leader Richard Tice was in occupied Palestine on a trip paid for by the newly formed Reform Friends of Israel (RFI), which Tice [funds](#) himself.

Reform’s deputy leader was met with Israeli president Isaac Herzog and foreign affairs minister Gideon Sa’ar, telling them what his party would:

stand rock solid with Israel.

Upon his return to the UK, Tice explained that the Israeli politicians “recognised and appreciated” Reform’s position.

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Not so anti-establishment

Farage tries to portray himself as an anti-establishment figure, but Tice and Harborne are two of a host of former Conservative Party donors who have switched to his Reform project.

[Millions have been raised](#) from other sources, including Nick Candy, Jeremy Hosking, and Paul Sykes amongst others.

According to [one investigation](#), 81% of Reform’s funding comes from current or former Tory funders.

Harborne and the Conservatives

Like Farage, former Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson has also been [accused](#) of concealing a “gift” from Harborne. In his case, this came in the form of a private jet and pilot in January 2023 for a flight to Poland. Johnson was on his way to meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

An earlier £1 million donation from Harborne to the Office of Boris Johnson had been declared in December 2022. Johnson, a [long-standing supporter](#) of Conservative Friends of Israel, [refuses](#) to say what the money was for. However, we do know that, in the run up to the 2019 general election, Farage [stood down](#) over 300 Brexit Party candidates to ensure a Johnson victory.

According to leaked documents, Harborne was travelling with Johnson on the Ukraine trip, with the schedule documenting that the former Prime Minister transferred from the private jet to an overnight sleeper train to Kyiv [with CHâ?». That same month, a QinetiQ-led consortium signed an Â£80-million, ten-year deal with the Ministry of Defence.](#)

Worrying influence

This was not the first time QinetiQ had secured a major government contract.

In November 2021, QinetiQ were part of a Babcock-led consortium, which also included the UK-based subsidiary of Israeli arms firm Elbit Systems, awarded a [Â£100 million contract](#) to work on the MEWSIC electronic-warfare programme.

Then Conservative Party Defence Minister Ben Wallace described the companies involved as [â??key industry partnersâ?». What Wallace did not mention was that he was previously QinetiQâ??s overseas director resigning from their board the same month as becoming an MP.](#)

Whether [Labour](#) the Conservative [claims](#) are in power, the arms industry continues to have a worrying influence on the political establishment, one that [no-one caresâ?» about the Â£5 million he received from Harborne. However, successful \[election\]\(#\) defeats and a challenge from ex-Reform MP \[Rupert Lowe\]\(#\) have put his position in jeopardy.](#)

[Andy Burnham](#) has the marketing and media to take the reins of power, for now. However, there remains a cache of wealthy donors determined to get Farage into No. 10.

Featured image via [Desmog](#)

By [Jody McIntyre](#)

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