

# From Bond girl to opera diva

## How Monica Bellucci is putting Maria Callas back in the spotlight *Review*



# The Daily Telegraph

BRITAIN'S BEST QUALITY NEWSPAPER

# Russia set to invade 'any day now'

- ◆ Biden says war in Ukraine is imminent
- ◆ UK and US tell citizens to leave
- ◆ Putin could order 'rapid assault on Kyiv'

By Nick Allen in Washington, Dominic Nicholls in Moscow and James Rothwell in Kyiv

JOE BIDEN last night warned world leaders that Vladimir Putin was preparing to invade Ukraine within days. The US said it did not know if the Russian president had made a "final decision", or given an order to his troops, but that Russia now had enough soldiers and military hardware on the Ukrainian border to attack "any day now".

The Government last night ordered British citizens to leave Ukraine. "It is essential to begin with aerial bombing and missile attacks that could obviously kill civilians without regard to their nationality. A subsequent ground invasion would involve the onslaught of a massive force. It may well happen, it may happen now."

John Sullivan, the US president's national security adviser, said: "If a Russian attack on Ukraine proceeds, it is likely to begin with aerial bombing and missile attacks that could obviously kill civilians without regard to their nationality. A subsequent ground invasion would involve the onslaught of a massive force. It may well happen, it may happen now."

The Russians are in a position to mount a major military action in Ukraine any day now. He said a "rapid assault on Kyiv" was a possibility.

The US said it was prepared to introduce sanctions and other penalties in co-ordination with Britain and the EU in the event of an invasion. Extra troops and military equipment were poised to be sent to NATO's eastern flanks.

However, Mr Sullivan stressed that the US military was "not going to war in Ukraine" but would defend NATO countries such as Poland and Romania. Mr Sullivan said he expected Mr Biden would "engage by telephone with President Putin", but said: "It is an urgent message because we're in an urgent situation."

Other US officials said an invasion, with the threat of severe regime change in Kyiv, could be "horrific and bloody". Mr Biden said "things could go crazy quickly" and told American citizens to leave Ukraine immediately.

Japan and the Netherlands also asked their citizens to leave Ukraine to leave.

US officials said a Russian invasion may come before the end of the Winter Olympics in Beijing on Feb 20. They had previously believed Mr Putin might wait until after the games so as not to overshadow a big global event for Xi Jinping, the Chinese president.

Russian foreign ministry said Western countries, with help from the media, were spreading false information. Mr Biden held a phone call last night



A Ukrainian marine in a trench on the new front line near Sloviansk, Donetsk, as Russia ramps up its military presence on the border

to discuss the crisis with leaders including Mr Johnson, Emmanuel Macron, the French president, Olaf Scholz, Germany's chancellor, and the leaders of Italy, Poland, Romania, Canada, the EU and Nato. Ben Wallace, the Defence Secretary, visiting Moscow, said an invasion could happen "at any moment", as did Anthony Blinken, the US secretary of state, who was on a visit to Australia. Meanwhile, Ukraine officially demanded an explanation from Moscow about the build-up of Russian troops on its border.

The sense of urgency from Mr Biden came after a situation room meeting with his national security advisers on Thursday night.

Intelligence officials told him the crisis could be reaching a critical point, with rhetoric from Moscow hardening, six Russian warships reaching the Black Sea, and more Russian military equipment arriving in neighbouring Belarus.

Mr Biden said: "American citizens should leave now. It's not like we're dealing with a terrorist organisation. We're dealing with one of the largest armies in the world. It's a very different situation, and things could go crazy quickly." Asked if there were circumstances under which he would send troops to rescue US citizens living in Ukraine, Mr Biden said: "There's not that a world war when Americans and Russia start shooting at one another. We're in a very different world than we've ever been in."

"What I'm hoping is that if he [Mr Putin] is foolish enough to go in, he's smart enough not to, in fact, do anything that would negatively impact American citizens."

Mr Wallace held talks in Moscow with his Russian counterpart, Sergey Shoigu, and said he had received an assurance that the Kremlin was not planning to attack its neighbour.

But he said Moscow would be judged by its actions. Speaking at the British Embassy, Mr Wallace said: "Currently, there's over 150,000 troops stationed at readiness exercising, plus warplanes, plus ships into the Black Sea, on the borders of Ukraine, and that is an action that is not normal."

"It is beyond normal exercising. Therefore, we will judge that statement on the evidence." He added: "The effect of a full invasion will have long-term consequences for the Russian position in the 'West' world."

Mr Biden did not detail the reasons behind the state department's latest security alert for US citizens to leave Ukraine. He said: "Simply put, we continue to see very troubling signs of Russian escalation, including new forces arriving at the Ukrainian border. We're in a window when an invasion could begin at any time and, to be clear, that includes during the Olympics."

Russia says it has no plans to invade but wants the 'West' to keep Ukraine and other former Soviet countries out of Nato.

Ukraine announced yesterday that it was giving Russia 48 hours to explain the presence of its troops at the border under the terms of the Vienna Document, a series of agreements on European security.

Dmytro Kuleba, the Ukrainian foreign minister, played down the latest warnings from Mr Biden as "nothing new". He said: "This statement is not evidence of some radical change of the situation." Commercial satellite images

published by a private US company showed new Russian military deployments at several locations near Ukraine.

Maxar Technologies, which has been tracking the build-up of Russian forces for weeks, said images taken on Wednesday and Thursday showed significant new deployments in Crimea, western Russia and Belarus.

In Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, Maxar said it had identified a large new deployment of troops and equipment at Chornobylskoye airfield, north of the city of Simferopol, including 500 troop tents and hundreds of vehicles.

Additional troops and equipment also arrived near Crimea's Novosvobodnaya, and near the town of Sloviansk. In Belarus, additional troops, military vehicles and helicopters arrived at Zytovka airfield near Gomel, less than 15 miles from the border with Ukraine.

The US will be sending 5,000 extra troops in Poland in the coming days to try to reassure Nato allies, US officials said yesterday. Mr Biden was expected to speak to Mr Putin about the escalating crisis today, Paris said.

# Johnson facing prospect of fine after being contacted by police

By Ben Riley-Smith, Martin Evans, Lucy Fisher and Charles Flynn

BORIS JOHNSON faces being fined for breaking covid laws after the Metropolitan Police formally approached him to answer questions about "partytown" events he attended.

Downing Street confirmed last night that the Prime Minister had been handed a questionnaire as part of the Met's inquiry into allegations of lockdown-breaking parties in government buildings.

It is the latest indication yet that Scotland Yard believes Mr Johnson himself has a case to answer about whether

he attended events which broke the covid laws he set for the country.

A No 10 spokesperson said: "We can confirm the Prime Minister has completed a questionnaire from the Metropolitan Police. He will respond as required."

The Daily Telegraph can reveal that Mr Johnson is preparing to argue he did not break Covid laws and he was working in the Downing Street that on the night of the alleged "Alba party".

More than 50 people who attended the dozen events being investigated by the police are starting to receive the same questionnaires, which could lead to fines or penalty notices. Downing Street sources declined to specify last night

whether Mr Johnson faced questions for attending a single event or more. He was at half a dozen gatherings being investigated.

The Prime Minister has seven days to provide a "reasonable excuse" for why his presence at events being looked into did not amount to a breach of Covid regulations at the time.

Mr Johnson is not getting his legal advice paid for by the taxpayer. It remains unclear whether he has hired a private lawyer and, if he has, who is paying the bills.

Two MPs have privately warned that if Mr Johnson is fined, then a renewed attempt to oust him as Prime Minister is

expected. However, he is expected to mount a robust defence of his conduct. This will leave detectives working out whether to prosecute, and if so, on what basis, having to decide whether to accept this as a "reasonable excuse".

If they do not accept it, Mr Johnson could be asked to submit to a face-to-face interview with officers in order to explain his position before any final decision is made on whether to issue a fine. Others who attended gatherings with him could also be interviewed.

It poses a dilemma for Dame Cressida Dick, who was forced out as Metropolitan Police commissioner on Thursday, but is expected to stay on for at least two months, by which time the partygate inquiry is likely to have been concluded.

Tensions between Priti Patel, the Home Secretary, and Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, are likely to make the task of finding Dame Cressida's replacement difficult, with a war of words involving and between the two sides over the way the resignation was handled.

Mr Patel said yesterday that the new commissioner needed to demonstrate "strong and decisive" leadership to root out sexism and racism, and cut crime.

Sir Mark Rowley, who retired from Scotland Yard in 2018, has emerged as an early favourite, but previously moved out on the job and clashed with the Government when he was running

country-terrorism policing. The only woman who is seen as a serious contender is Dame Lynne Owens, the former head of the National Crime Agency (NCA), who retired in October having been diagnosed with breast cancer.

But her treatment is understood to have gone well and she would be a popular choice within Scotland Yard, where her experience is widely respected.

While Dame Cressida's resignation might be seen as drawing a line under the recent slew of scandals involving the Met, there are likely to be more damaging revelations to come from events over recent months.

The police watchdog has completed its investigation into alleged abuse of opportunities to arrest Wayne Couzens, the killer of Sarah Everard for indecent exposure before her murder and is expected to publish its findings shortly. Two serving officers and one retired are expected to speak to *Avuk Thursday*. Page 5

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# TRAVEL

**THEY'RE GONE!**  
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10 thrilling indoor attractions for when the weather turns wet



## All back to Oz

As Australia finally reopens to British travellers, we reveal how and when to explore one of the world's most extraordinary holiday destinations

The excellent news that Australia is re-opening to tourists on July 20 (and likely brought back a vital supply of air that by then, nearly seven years ago, I was still taking around the world and had longed into two young women from Sydney. We had spent the day exploring the coastline, then stopped over night in a small town in the middle of nowhere. The only bar was one of those where the locals have their beer and they talk about and looked up to majestic when we walked in. The stand-off had lasted about an hour before one of them picked up on my accent and called me out as a Posh. It was the beginning of

absolutely of her. I should regard detailing the assets of the Geoffrey Boycott's background and the status of the (my) family in Australia. I remember thinking, half-way through the evening, what chance you had of getting in? I had been told I was about as far away from England as it was possible to get, in a strangely remote world of mountains and giant condors and yet, it felt as though I had walked into a bar home town. And that is what makes Australia so intriguing for British travellers: the contrast it offers between the most rural of bar home. The familiar popovers, the place names, the rugby pools on the

playing fields, the Victorian mansions in Sydney and the colorful beach life in Melbourne. And the reality? Where do you start? Australia is vast – hundreds of hours – and its landscapes range from the green tropical rainforests of Queensland to the vast red wildernesses of the Outback. From busy beach life to the most law of empty roads that may stretch for 2,000 miles of coastline. With so much to offer, the issue for travellers whose wanderlust has been attracted by the thought that one of our favorite destinations is back on the map, is where to start. How do you best get a feel for this vast country and its friendly, yet rival

from locals? You might be drawn to the vibrant food culture of Sydney and Melbourne. The Old Gold Coast (beach, night, sport), or working on the Great Barrier Reef. Maybe you are into wine or whale watching. Or you want to make the most of a classic road trip through the Blue Mountains. To make your trip down under as memorable as possible, we have picked a range of holidays tailored to your particular mood. Here's a great tip.



## Where to plan a really romantic break

Love is all around, but where best to make it flourish? Laura Fowler asks the experts to help you find your dream destination for a date

In these heady early days of Valentine's, romance can be found wherever you go. Love is blind to skylined backdrops, red velvet and solo cigarette smoke. Indeed, to some degree are essential ingredients for your love weekend break together.

It's almost true that the honeymoon should be your ultimate magical moment, a stage where you would be happy almost anywhere. "out of context," my husband used to say, referring to my hope to our relationship but in fact that we couldn't see where we were in our car, in a quiet moment of love. In the year past, things change.

As a guide to the best places to go, I've put together "The Guide to the Best Places to Go".

People get pickier and more particular of what makes a romantic date. It's not just the location, but the way it's done. It's not just the location, but the way it's done. It's not just the location, but the way it's done.

romantic holiday of romance, dinner of the heart, a love story, but most in gardens of love, love story with romance - long through water, and the dream of romance and your chosen night interrupted by alluring to romantically pillow, romance, romance, romance and a performance of romance, it's not like it to imagine which led to next experience.

So romance can be found in the heart of what we do, it's not like it to imagine which led to next experience. It's not like it to imagine which led to next experience. It's not like it to imagine which led to next experience. It's not like it to imagine which led to next experience.

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'We have a shared love for remote islands'

That's the spirit, says the author of the new book 'The Secret Garden'...



TUSCANY

For all the obvious reasons, Tuscany is a popular holiday destination...

MARRAKECH

Marriage and romance in Morocco's capital city...

INDIAN OCEAN

For all the obvious reasons, the Indian Ocean is a popular holiday destination...

'We met in Chira, though he lived near my parents'



She met her husband in Chira, though he lived near his parents...

THE GREEK ISLANDS

For all the obvious reasons, the Greek Islands are a popular holiday destination...

CRUISE THE RHINE ON A BRAND-NEW RIVER SHIP. SAGA Cruises advertisement.

And if money is no object... SAGA Cruises advertisement.

TRAILFINDERS THE TRAVEL EXPERTS. NO ONE LOOKS AFTER YOU BETTER. Advertisement for Trailfinders.

FRANCE If long-term commitment is what you seek, head to Provence with all its charm...



'A pick-up line in a Spanish disco led to years of bliss!' Bridges Riley and Derek Edgson, Hertfordshire.

KENYA In 1965 Mary Stoop and Robert Redford brought the romance of Kenya to the silver screen in Out of Africa...

BATH AND THE COTSWOLDS 'Old Who can ever be tired of Bath?' wrote Jane Austen...

CALIFORNIA Most people are familiar with Napa Valley, but there are more than 100 other wine regions in California...

Early birds! Catch the sunrise from the misty Mt Leelanau meadows.

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## FRANCE

If long-term commitment is what you seek, head to Provence with all its dreaminess: the lavender fields of Gordes, vibrato with bees; the hilltop villages of the Luberon; the Vaucluse's shuttered manoirs set in impressionist landscapes. Two dreamy hotels are here: Crillon Le Brave and the newly revamped Airelles Gordes, La Bastide.

- *Crillon Le Brave* ([crillonlebrave.com](http://crillonlebrave.com)) reopens April 22; from £227 B&B.
- *Airelles Gordes, La Bastide* ([airelles.com](http://airelles.com)) reopens 28 April; from £530 B&B
- **Covid rules** Over-12s must provide proof of full vaccination and a negative PCR or antigen test taken within 48 hours of travel, plus a sworn statement saying they are symptom-free. Unvaccinated travellers must quarantine.