

# May to quit as party leader, opening race for new PM

By JILL LAWLESS  
Associated Press

LONDON — Theresa May ended her failed three-year quest to lead Britain out of the European Union on Friday, announcing that she will step down as Conservative Party leader June 7 and triggering a contest to choose a new prime minister who will try to complete Brexit.

"I have done my best," May said in a speech outside 10 Downing St., as close aides and her husband Philip looked on, before acknowledging that it was not good enough.

Concluding her remarks, she struggled to contain her emotions and her voice broke as she expressed "enduring gratitude to have had the opportunity to serve the country I love."

Then she turned and strode through the famous black door of No. 10.

May will stay on as a caretaker prime minister until the new leader is chosen, a process the Conservatives aim to complete by late July. The new party leader will become prime minister without the need for a general election.

She became prime minister the month after the U.K. voted in June 2016 to leave the European Union, and her premiership has been consumed by the attempt to deliver on that verdict.

May was brought down by Brexit, but her nemesis wasn't the EU, with which she successfully struck a divorce deal.

She was felled by her own Conservative Party, which refused to accept it. The plan was defeated three times in Parliament, rejected both by pro-EU opposition lawmakers and by Brexit-supporting Conservatives who thought it kept Britain too closely bound to the bloc.

Many Conservative lawmakers came to see May as



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May and her husband Philip leave a polling station after voting in the European Elections in Sonning, England, on Thursday.

an obstacle and blamed her for the U.K.'s failure to leave the EU on the scheduled date of March 29. The bloc has extended that deadline until Oct. 31 in hope Britain's politicians can break their political deadlock.

The pressure on May reached breaking point this week as House of Commons Leader Andrea Leadsom quit and several Cabinet colleagues rejected the bill she planned to put before Parliament in a fourth attempt to secure lawmakers' backing for her Brexit blueprint.

In her farewell speech, May defended her record, saying she had "negotiated the terms of our exit and a new relationship with our closest neighbors that protects jobs, our security and our Union."

"I have done everything I can to convince MPs to back that deal," she said. "Sadly, I have not been able to do so."

"It is now clear to me that it is in the best interests of the country for a new prime minister to lead that effort," she added.

Multiple contenders are already jockeying to replace her in a contest that will see

a new leader chosen by Conservative lawmakers and party members. The early front-runner is Boris Johnson, a former foreign secretary and strong champion of Brexit. Other contenders are likely to include Leadsom, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and former Brexit Secretary Dominic Raab.

Johnson, whose relentless criticism helped push May out of the door, tweeted: "Thank you for your stoical service to our country and the Conservative Party. It is now time to follow her urgings: to come together and deliver Brexit."

Whether it is Johnson or another contender, the next prime minister is likely to be a staunch Brexiteer, who will try to renegotiate the divorce deal, and if that fails, to leave the bloc without an agreement on the terms of the departure.

"The person who will replace her will embrace the possibility of a no deal with alacrity rather than fear," said Steven Fielding, professor of political history at the University of Nottingham. "They will have to embrace it if they want to be elected by

the Tory party membership."

Most businesses and economists think that would cause economic turmoil and plunge Britain into recession. Parliament has voted to rule out a no-deal Brexit, though it remains the legal default option.

But many Conservatives think embracing a no-deal Brexit may be the only way to keep the support of voters who opted in 2016 to leave the EU.

The Conservatives expect to take a bruising when results come in late Sunday from this week's European Parliament election, which many British voters are expected to use to express displeasure over the political gridlock. Opinion polls suggest Conservative voters deserting in droves to the single-issue Brexit Party led by Nigel Farage.

Any attempt to take Britain out of the EU without a deal will be fiercely resisted by Parliament, and could see pro-Europeans leave the Conservative Party.

# Authorities raid 247 Colorado homes growing black market pot

By DAN ELLIOTT  
Associated Press

DENVER — Authorities said Friday they raided hundreds of black market marijuana operations in Colorado that flouted the state's cannabis law by growing tens of thousands of plants in Denver-area homes and selling the drugs out of state.

Investigators seized more than 80,000 plants and 4,500 pounds of harvested marijuana, state and federal prosecutors said at a news conference. Officers raided 247 homes and eight businesses and arrested 42 people in Denver and seven nearby counties.

State law allows up to 12 marijuana plants per residence for personal use, but some of the homes had more than 1,000 and many had hundreds, U.S. Attorney Jason Dunn said.

Colorado and nine other states have broadly legalized marijuana use but it remains illegal under federal law. That has created tension between some state and federal officials.

But George Brauchler, district attorney for the south and east Denver suburbs, stressed the investigation was a joint state-federal operation, not the U.S. Department of Justice imposing its will on Colorado.

"Make no mistake, we are equal partners in this," Brauchler said.

State and federal officials said the nearly three-year investigation showed that illegal marijuana trafficking mushroomed after voters approved recreational use in 2012.

Dunn said Colorado has become the epicenter for a nationwide black market in marijuana.

Brauchler warned that Colorado is becoming "the

wild West of weed." He said the provision in the law that allows small-scale home marijuana cultivation opened the door to big, illegal operations.

Brauchler warned that other states considering allowing home marijuana plants could expect the same but added he was not trying to discourage them from doing so.

"I think states are entitled to do whatever they want," he said. "But they need to know the reality of this."

Mason Tvert, a spokesman for the Marijuana Policy Project, which advocates for decriminalizing marijuana, questioned how prosecutors know that Colorado's law attracted illegal growers.

"Did they conduct a survey of illegal marijuana cultivators to determine why they decided to operate where they did?" he said. "Are they able to know whether those operations existed prior to legalization or not?"

Tvert blamed the illegal operations on states that still ban marijuana, and said if they legalized and regulated it as Colorado does, there would be little illegal production.

Dunn said investigators plan to use federal forfeiture laws to seize 41 homes, 25 vehicles and \$2.2 million in cash connected to the marijuana operations.

He said the 41 homes have an average market value of \$400,000.

"These grow operations are not occurring in abandoned houses or poor parts of the metro area," he said.

"These are happening in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods where many of us live and raise families, and they're occurring all over the metro area."

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