

Press release: PM's Trade Envoy visits Panama

HMA Damion Potter, Trade Envoy Simon Hart, PM and Roberto Roy, Minister of the Panama Canal

As part of the visit of Simon Hart MP, Prime Minister Theresa May's Trade Envoy to Panama, the British Embassy hosted a reception at the residence of British Ambassador Damion Potter with distinguished members of the national government and the business sector. This event was held to welcome him to Panama and to celebrate the close commercial ties between both nations.

Simon Hart is the British Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Panama, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic and his role is to facilitate the strengthening of trade relations between the UK and markets of particular global interest. The United Kingdom continues to be one of the most important foreign investors in Panama and the intention of the British Government is to increase interaction at the highest level between officials of both nations, to the benefit of bilateral trade relations.

UK Trade Envoys are a global network of Members of Parliament, elected from the British political spectrum, and engage with one or more markets where the British Government has identified trade and investment opportunities.

The United Kingdom is the fourth largest investor in Panama, with an investment of US\$ 2.6bn in 2016. Driven by substantial investment in infrastructure and backed by its role as the logistics, commercial and banking centre of Latin America, Panama has averaged annual GDP growth of over 7% over the last decade. Many UK companies – in more than a dozen sectors – have their regional offices in Panama.

During his visit, Simon Hart met with the President of the Republic, Juan Carlos Varela, British companies with presence in Panama and visited the Miraflores Locks of the Panama Canal. After completing the visit to Panama, he will be visiting Costa Rica as part of the trade mission in the region.

Speech: British Ambassador to Russia briefing on the Salisbury attack following the OPCW report: 13 April

2018

Thank you for joining me today for an update on the Salisbury incident.

As you know, on 14 March, the UK concluded that the Russian state was highly likely to have carried out the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the UK. We made this assessment on the basis of 4 conclusions:

1. The positive identification by experts at Porton Down of the specific chemical used as a type of Novichok nerve agent
2. The knowledge that Russia has produced this agent within the last 10 years and remains capable of doing so
3. Russia's record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations – including in the UK, and
4. Our assessment, based amongst other things on the statements of Russia's leadership, that Russia views defectors as suitable targets for assassination

The purpose of today's briefing is to provide an update on the further information that has been released that supports our conclusion that the Russian state was highly likely to be responsible for the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal.

I'll start with the first of our 4 conclusions: that the Skripals were poisoned by a specific chemical – a type of Novichok nerve agent.

Our identification of the chemical as one of the Novichok type was on the basis of analysis by world-leading experts at Porton Down. To ensure full transparency and strict adherence to international chemical weapons protocols, we invited the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to independently test these samples.

Yesterday the [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons published an executive summary](#) of its findings following a visit to Salisbury by OPCW inspectors between 19 and 23 March. The report says that the analysis by 4 separate OPCW designated laboratories outside the UK, I quote, "confirm the findings of the United Kingdom relating to the identity of the toxic chemical that was used in Salisbury and severely injured 3 people".

The OPCW report released yesterday confirmed that the chemical was of high purity, with an "almost complete absence of impurities". This indicates expert production, in a controlled scientific environment. It is consistent with that the UK's view that the substance used in Salisbury was a weapons-grade nerve agent of the Novichok type that cannot have been produced by non-state actors.

Two things are key in understanding the OPCW findings:

First, throughout the OPCW's analysis, the OPCW maintained its own independent chain of custody for all samples. The samples were tested in 4

world-leading laboratories outside the UK. All drew the same conclusion as Porton Down. There is no doubt as to what was used in Salisbury. The OPCW's analysis puts the question of identification of the nerve agent beyond doubt.

Secondly, the purpose of the OPCW analysis was independently to confirm the identity of the toxic chemical used in Salisbury. It was not, and has never been, the remit of either the OPCW or our experts at Porton Down to confirm the source of the nerve agent or to assess a motive for the attack.

I would therefore like to explain a little more about how we reached our assessment that it was highly likely Russia was responsible for the attack in Salisbury.

The UK assessment that Russia is highly likely to be responsible for the attack in Salisbury – a dangerous, irresponsible act and clear violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention – is based on a number of factors, including but not limited to the scientific analysis of the nerve agent.

We are today making public a [letter from the UK's National Security Adviser to NATO's Secretary General](#) with further information that supports the UK's assessment that only Russia had the means, operational experience and the motive for carrying out the attack on the Skripals. The information is a collection of open-source analysis and secret intelligence that has formed our assessment. Printed copies of the letter have been distributed. And the newly released information shows that:

First, in the last 10 years, Russia has had a research programme to test means of using chemical warfare agents for assassination and to train personnel from special units in the use of these weapons.

This programme included investigation of ways of delivering nerve agents, including by application to door handles.

Second, our information shows that within the last decade, Russia has produced and stockpiled small quantities of Novichoks under the same programme. This supports the public statements of former Soviet scientists who have confirmed that the Novichok programme existed in the 1980s and was inherited by the Russian Federation.

And thirdly, our newly released information confirms that Russian intelligence services have maintained in recent years their long-standing interest in the Skripals. Sergei Skripal was arrested on suspicion of treason in Russia in 2004, sentenced to a 13-year prison term before being pardoned in 2010, after which he moved to the UK. Our information released today shows Russia Intelligence Service interest in the Skripals, dating back at least as far as 2013, when email accounts belonging to Yulia Skripal were targeted by Russian military intelligence (GRU) cyber specialists.

We know that the Russian state has a record in state-sponsored assassinations including in the UK. We also know from public statements of Russian leaders that the Russian state views defectors as legitimate targets for assassination. The [2016 inquiry into the death of former FSB agent Litvinenko](#)

concluded that he had been deliberately poisoned by the radioactive substance Polonium-210 and that it was a “strong probability” that the FSB directed the operation.

Put the facts together and there is only one conclusion: only the Russian state had the means, the motive, and the record to carry out this crime. There is no plausible alternative.

Everything that the Russian state has done since the attempted assassination is consistent with that conclusion. Since the incident Russia has responded with denials, distraction and disinformation.

Russia has responded with countless theories and speculation: that it was an accidental overdose, suicide following addiction and stress, or even a drone. We have counted at least 28 different versions. Earlier this week, journalists from Russian state media entered the Salisbury hospital without permission in an attempt to cast doubt on whether the Skripals had even been poisoned at all.

The released OPCW evidence, confirming that the Skripals were seriously injured by the toxic chemical identified as one of the Novichok type, exposes those versions as fiction.

Russia has also continued to deny the existence of the Novichok programme, despite the testimony of several scientists who worked on the original programme in the 1980s, and our newly released information that Russia has stockpiled small quantities of Novichoks in the last 10 years. This is a clear breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Russia was and is obliged to declare all Chemical Weapon programmes back to 1946.

We do not expect the release of this information, or the conclusions of the OPCW report, to change Russia’s behaviour.

As the Salisbury incident showed, as well as Russia’s actions in Crimea, Eastern Ukraine, MH17, cover-up for Asad’s use of chemical weapons in Syria, and malign cyber activity, Russia’s modus operandi is to flout the rules of the international system, and to cover its tracks with a barrage of disinformation designed to confuse and distract. This pattern is a fundamental threat to the rules based order which keeps us all safe.

This is why the response of the international community in holding Russia to account is so important. 28 countries have responded with an unprecedented expulsion of more than 150 Russian diplomats; this is the largest collective expulsion of undeclared intelligence operatives in history and an unequivocal statement that their persistent attacks on our security will not be tolerated. We are grateful to our allies and partners for standing with us.

We need to continue our efforts. We have called a meeting of the OPCW Executive Council to discuss the findings of the report on 18 April. We have also requested a meeting of the United Nations Security Council next week. We need to continue to hold Russia to account for its clear breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention and for the attempted assassination in the UK

using a nerve agent. The use of weapons of this kind can never be justified and must be ended.

Thank you for your support and solidarity over the last few weeks and in coming months. All the countries represented in this meeting have a common interest in maintaining and strengthening the moral taboo and the legal prohibition on the use of these terrible weapons by anyone, anywhere at any time.

Speech: Britain's commitment to Canada's future

Good morning.

It is a pleasure to be here in Vancouver, and an honour to be a guest of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade.

This remarkable organisation has been dedicated to the commercial success of the city for more than 130 years – in short, for almost as long as Vancouver has existed.

That success, of course, was not long in coming. Almost from the moment that Jack Deighton built a makeshift tavern here in 1867, the city has been a hub of international trade – and good cheer.

People ask me: why did you choose to come to Vancouver? The answer is: perched at the very edge of the Western World, Vancouver is a vital link between East and West, and the gateway to the vast opportunities of the Asia-Pacific region.

Those who know Vancouver are not surprised at the city's comparative youth. I can see that just looking round this morning. There is an energy and drive here, apparent to anyone who visits, that few other places can match.

I was surprised to learn, however, that I am the first UK Cabinet Minister to perform an official bilateral visit just to this city in living memory. You can choose, looking around the room, how long you think that happens to be!

But of course, any Brit should feel right at home in a city founded by a Yorkshireman and built around a pub – so it's natural that we feel a cultural affinity and a comfort here.

But I am here to show our commitment to UK-Canada ties, and to demonstrate that British commitment doesn't stop in Ottawa or Montreal or Toronto.

In an increasingly globalised world, Vancouver will become ever more important in facilitating global commercial opportunity – a natural pivot in

the economic rebalance of East and West.

It is only natural that HSBC would choose this city for their Canadian headquarters.

They join a host of other high-profile British firms, from infrastructure giant Balfour Beatty to Oscar-winning special effects company 'Double Negative', tapping into a film industry that, in 2017, posted its best year ever – and gave me my best photo opportunity, my only one so far to pose with an Oscar.

These are only some of the hundreds of firms whose commercial relationships augment the ties of history, culture and family that already unite Canada and the UK.

All in all, there are around 700 UK firms currently operating in Canada, and around 750 Canadian firms operating in the UK.

The multitude of workers, professionals and entrepreneurs that operate on both sides of the Atlantic have vastly enriched both our economies, as well as building those personal relationships that are vital to international cooperation.

Our bilateral trading relationship is worth over C\$ 27 billion, with British engineering giants such as Rolls Royce and BAE systems joining our financial institutions in their expansion into Canadian markets.

It is a partnership, of course, that goes both ways.

Canadian investments in the UK may not match the size of those from countries such as the USA, but they are remarkably visible.

Canary Wharf dominates the east London skyline, while Fortnum & Mason – a treasured institution of a department store in the heart of the Capital, and one of my wife's favourite spending places – is also Canadian-owned.

And millions of people across southern England feel the benefits every time they turn on their taps, through Canadian investment in Thames Water.

These are only 3 examples. But they highlight how Canadian investment, and our broader economic partnership, has become part of the fabric of national life in the United Kingdom.

This favour will soon be repaid – during Prime Minister Theresa May's visit to Canada in September last year, a contract was signed for UK firm Turner & Townsend to refurbish the central block of the Canadian Houses of Parliament in Ottawa. We might even get them to do the same in the UK, before ours falls down!

It's clear, then, that our 2 countries share a close commercial bond. But I'm sure that there's not a single person in the room today who couldn't have told me that already.

In fact, for the financial year just ended, our preliminary FDI results from Canada are at or near record numbers.

Preliminary figures show that Canadian institutional investors invested around £3 billion UK in real estate, infrastructure and private equity – bringing total Canadian institutional investment in the UK to over £30 billion. Moreover, Canadian FDI in the UK over the past year created around 2,000 new jobs, and that is before we consider those safeguarded.

So that is all terrific. What then, of the future? What will our future trading relationship look like.

As I'm sure every single person here is aware, Britain is currently negotiating the terms of our withdrawal from the European Union following our referendum.

Some sections of the international press seem bent on presenting the vote as a symptom of insularity, despite all the growing evidence to the contrary. There are those who peddle the narrative still that Britain will be withdrawing from the world and abdicating from our international responsibilities.

Let me tell you, nothing – absolutely nothing – could be further from the truth.

Our decision to leave the EU stemmed from an awareness of the opportunities of the wider world, and a concern that, in an age when globalisation and new technologies have revolutionised the world economy, the EU lacked the flexibility to realise opportunities or negotiate timely access to new markets.

Put simply, it was about broadening our horizons, not narrowing them.

Canada of all nations understands and values our dedication to international cooperation.

For as much as Canada is a part of Britain's past, and vice-versa, we are also part of one another's future.

We share a unique degree of cooperation in almost every area of international relations.

We are members of the G7, the G20, the Commonwealth – the [Heads of the Commonwealth Governments will gather next week in London](#) – and we're part of the Five Eyes intelligence network and NATO.

And we are both champions of free trade who understand that commerce is the best means to reduce global poverty and increase global prosperity.

This last point is an extremely important one at the present time. It is the UK's ambition to become the world's foremost champion of free trade, using all of our economic and diplomatic influence to remove barriers, open up new markets, and spread prosperity to every corner of the globe.

Achieving this ambition will mean working not only bilaterally, but also through international forums such as the WTO, working with our allies to support and extend the crucial rules-based international system. The alternative to a rules-based system is a deals-based system, and that will be in nobody's interests.

For our success, the potential payoffs are vast. Free trade is not simply a dogma or blind article of faith.

It is about positioning ourselves as the natural partners to the emerging economies of Asia and Africa that will drive global growth throughout the 21st Century. Trade is mutually beneficial. And protectionism, on the other hand, has never done well. Protectionism will never do well. It is a false ally.

As the gateway to those economies, Vancouver knows all of this better than any city in the region – perhaps better than any city on earth.

But we must also think about the vast bilateral commercial opportunities that exist between the UK and Canada.

Part of our ongoing dedication to free trade is our support for the ratification of CETA.

Of course, this is part of our commitment to a common EU trade policy for as long as we are a member.

But it is also recognition of the vast benefits that the removal of 98% of duties will have for UK-Canadian trade, for our businesses, and ultimately for our consumers – the group that seems to be least-mentioned in any trade discussions.

My Department for International Trade is working with companies across the UK and Canada to ensure that they take full advantage of the widening transatlantic opportunities.

This takes the form of export and investment promotion, trade missions, and ministerial visits such as this one.

But crucially we also offer practical support. UK Export Finance, for example, offers fully underwritten financial support for any Canadian company looking to 'Buy British', and source goods or services from the UK.

This means that trading with the UK is safer and more economically viable than ever before.

And, with both our countries committed to transitioning CETA seamlessly into a bilateral free trade agreement, the opportunities are just beginning.

Traditionally, Canadian exports to the UK have focussed on raw materials and precious metals.

These continue to be vitally important, perhaps more than ever.

Yet the Canadian economy, and the economy of Vancouver in particular, is beginning to align with the UK in other ways, creating new bilateral possibilities.

The burgeoning tech industry is a good example.

London is the undisputed technological capital of Europe. The UK boasts some 58,000 tech companies, and last year in the capital new ones were founded at the rate of approximately 1 every hour.

In the same period, London alone attracted more tech venture capital funding than the whole of Germany, France, Spain and Ireland combined.

Vancouver, too, boasts an enviable concentration of tech talent and expertise, and the exchange of people, companies and ideas between the 2 cities is gathering pace.

For example, the Vancouver-based social media management platform, Hootsuite, has plans to grow their UK operation to over 250 staff.

The confidence of companies such as this is indicative of the broadening of UK-Canada economic opportunities, and of the increasingly important role that services will play in international trade.

The rules-based international trading system has many strengths, but its provisions remain under equipped to effectively govern the global trade in services.

As a post-industrial economy, the UK recognises the vast potential of liberalising the global trade in services.

Because of this, facilitating this trade is the 'low-hanging fruit' of the global economy, where barriers can be removed swiftly and easily without many of the tariff and quota complications of more traditional FTAs.

Such action offers a clear path for mature economies to tap into the resource-rich and expertise-hungry markets of the developing world.

As global poverty continues to fall and demand for services expands across the world, it would be remiss for developed nations such as ours not to recognise this potential and lead the way on trade in services liberalisation.

Even for the UK and Canada, who will enjoy the benefits of a full-blown trade agreement, ensuring free and open access for services must remain a priority.

Services already make up 42% of the UK's exports to Canada – a total value of almost £4 billion in 2017. In the same year, we imported £2 billion of services from Canada. Canada's total service exports are now worth more than its fuel exports.

Above all, liberalising trade in services the surest way to future-proof our economic relationship, weathering the imbalances of a changing world economy

to ensure that the UK and Canada remain natural partners through the 21st Century and beyond.

Today, I just want to leave you with 1 message.

My department – the Department for International Trade – exists solely to promote UK exports, attract investment, and create the best legal and regulatory environment for businesses across the UK, and our overseas partners.

I would encourage every member of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade to get in touch with our team here and begin exploring the vast opportunities available.

We stand at a pivotal moment of world economic history, and together I believe that the UK and Canada have a great synergy and will build a brighter and more prosperous future – for our countries, for our people and beyond.

The only limit is the scale of our ambitions.

Thank you.

Press release: Liam Fox to promote FDI opportunities to further boost UK trade

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox today announced his department will launch new content to promote more than £30 billion worth of FDI opportunities, which will help to drive growth across the UK.

UK Invest, which is set to launch in the coming weeks, will make use of the Invest in GREAT website to publicise more than 60 opportunities across the country, and ensure the international investment community understand the rich breadth of the UK offer.

Hosted on invest.great.gov.uk, the portfolio will provide a quick and simple signpost for international investors looking to gain access to or grow their existing holdings in the UK economy.

The UK is the number one destination for inward investment in Europe. The portfolio will appeal to global investors who are attracted to the UK's open, liberal economy, flexible and dynamic labour market, business-friendly taxation and regulation and strong, transparent rule of law.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, said:

As an international economic department, we have been building relationships with the world's most important investment stakeholders, including sovereign wealth funds, pension funds and investor developers.

UK Invest will work with every part of the UK to identify investment opportunities, and ensure the strong appetite for investing in the UK generates prosperity and jobs in every part of the country.

The announcement comes as statistics released this week by the ONS reveal that [UK exports rose 10.4%](#) to £627.6 billion between March 2017 and the end of February 2018, with increases in both goods and services and a £12.9 billion reduction in the trade deficit.

A [new report from HSBC](#) also revealed that the export boom looks set to continue in the coming years, predicting that the value of UK exports of goods and services will rise by 22% by 2020, and double by 2030.

DIT is the focal point for foreign investment capability across government, and helped attract a record [2,265 FDI projects in 2016 to 2017](#), up 2% on the previous year. This is estimated to have created or safeguarded more than 108,000 jobs.

The [invest.great.gov.uk](#) site already provides a range of information to help international businesses invest in the UK. This includes details on:

- how DIT can help companies to build connections with businesses across their sectors in the UK
- advice on hiring staff from recruitment through to salary benchmarking
- unique insights into specific markets in the UK based on companies' needs
- information on grants and incentives to help businesses grow in the UK
- assistance with visa applications and other immigration issues

[News story: Asian hornet identified in Lancashire](#)

The National Bee Unit has confirmed a sighting of the Asian hornet in the Bury area of Lancashire. It was spotted by a member of the public in a cauliflower, which has since been traced back to Boston.

The Asian hornet is smaller than our native hornet and poses no greater risk to human health than a bee. However, they do pose a risk to honey bees and work is already underway to identify any nests, which includes setting up a

surveillance zone and traps in the two identified locations and deploying bee inspectors to visit local beekeepers.

This is the first confirmed sighting since last year, when a nest was discovered in Woolacombe in North Devon. [That Asian hornet incursion was successfully contained](#) by bee inspectors who promptly tracked down and destroyed the nest.

Nicola Spence, Defra Deputy Director for Plant and Bee Health, said:

While the Asian Hornet poses no greater risk to human health than a bee, we recognise the damage they can cause to honey bee colonies. That's why we are taking swift and robust action to locate and investigate any nests in the Bury and Boston areas following this confirmed sighting.

Following the successful containment of the Asian hornet incursion in North Devon last year, we have a well-established protocol in place to eradicate them and control any potential spread.

We remain vigilant across the country, working closely with the National Bee Unit and their nationwide network of bee inspectors.

Bee inspectors from APHA National Bee Unit will be carrying out surveillance and monitoring in a 1-2 km radius around the initial sighting. Additional monitoring and surveillance will be carried out in the Boston area where the cauliflower was grown.

If you suspect you have seen an Asian hornet you can report this using the iPhone and Android app 'Asian Hornet Watch' or by emailing alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk. [Identification guides and more information are available.](#)

- The cost of eradication on private land will be met by APHA.
- Members of the public can also report sightings by email to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk with a photo or on the Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat website.
- At this time of year the hornet is likely to be a newly emerged queen which is looking to establish a nest. If a nest was established last year it would have died out over winter.
- The Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat is a joint venture between Defra, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government to tackle the threat of invasive species. More information can be found on their [website](#).
- For details on the appearance of an Asian hornet please can be found on [Bee Base](#) guide or the [non-native species identification guide](#).
- Photographs of the Asian hornet are available on our [Flickr account](#)