

Press release: PM call with President Poroshenko: 11 April 2018

The Prime Minister spoke with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko this evening about the attack on Sergei Skripal and his daughter and the reckless endangerment of the British public through the use of a military grade nerve agent developed by Russia.

President Poroshenko condemned the appalling act and pledged that the Ukraine would continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the UK in the face of Russian aggression. The President also welcomed the news that the conditions of Mr Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, were improving.

The Prime Minister thanked President Poroshenko for the Ukraine's support and expulsion of 13 Russian diplomats. She noted that this was not just a strong signal of solidarity with the UK, but also of commitment to our collective security. The Prime Minister highlighted that the breadth and extent of the international response to Salisbury sent a clear message that Russia's malign actions will not be tolerated.

The leaders spoke about how Salisbury is only the latest act in a pattern of Russian behaviour which shows disregard for the international rules-based system, including its illegal annexation of Crimea and intervention in the Donbas, with the Prime Minister noting that continued support for Ukraine needs to be a key element in the West's response.

The Prime Minister and President Poroshenko also discussed Ukraine's reform agenda. They welcomed the progress that had been made, including through last year's reform conference in London. They agreed on the importance of maintaining this progress, with the forthcoming Copenhagen reform conference an important opportunity.

They both welcomed the UK and Ukraine's broad co-operation on defence and security and expressed the desire to develop this further in the future.

Press release: More good news for British businesses as exports growth continues

Demand for world class British goods and services continues to grow around the globe according to [new figures published by the ONS](#) today (Wednesday 11 April).

UK exports rose from £59.4 billion to £627.6 billion between March 2017 and the end of February 2018 – an increase of 10.4%.

Today's positive results for British business comes as a new report reveals that the growth in UK exports is set to double by 2030.

The [report from HSBC](#) found the export boom looks set to continue in the coming years, with the prediction that UK exports of goods and services will rise by 22% in value by 2020, and double by 2030. Their survey of more than 6,000 companies confirmed that nearly three-quarters (72%) of UK-based businesses expect their overseas trade to increase over the next 12 months.

HSBC's new trade forecast also predicted that UK goods and services exports will increase by 10% in 2018 – the fastest pace of growth since 2011.

Indications so far are positive, with the country's renowned service sector continuing to thrive with exports up 9.5% to £282.6 billion, increasing the service surplus to £108.3 billion. Goods exports also rose strongly by 11.3% to £345 billion. Exports continue to grow faster than imports with the overall trade deficit narrowing by £12.9 billion from £40.4 billion to £27.5 billion.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox said:

The UK is entering a period of unprecedented economic opportunity, with latest figures showing a surge in exports together with optimism for continued export growth in the years ahead.

As an international economic department, we are supporting UK businesses from every part of the country to succeed on the global stage, and ensure this creates more jobs and prosperity in every part of the country.

The UK also remains a strong destination for investment with the record numbers of foreign direct investment (FDI) projects into the UK in 2016 to 2017. The Department for International Trade (DIT) recorded 2,265 FDI projects up 2% on the previous year – estimated to have created or safeguarded more than 108,000 jobs.

Background

[Press release: Extended bankruptcy for](#)

financial controller who diverted funds from her employer to herself

The 13-year Bankruptcy Restriction Order made on 15 February 2018 against Chasjit Verma (39) of Romford, Essex, followed an investigation by the Insolvency Service.

Chasjit Verma was made bankrupt on 4 March 2016, having presented her own petition. On the day of her petition, Chasjit Verma showed she owed £243,903, with £164,507 going to her former employer.

But in making the bankruptcy restrictions order, the court accepted evidence presented by the Insolvency Service, which showed that the significant sum owed to her former employer was as result of Chasjit Verma abusing her position of trust as a financial controller by misappropriating funds.

The court heard evidence that Chasjit Verma was employed as a financial controller by the Jubilee Hall Trust Limited in July 2003 and her duties were extended to a related company, Jubilee Hall 2000 Limited.

As financial control, Chasjit Verma held a position of trust with her former employer and provided book-keeping services, including paying suppliers and providing information to the Management and Trustees of Jubilee Hall Trust Limited's external accountants.

But between 2 April 2015 and 3 November 2015, Mrs Verma initiated unauthorised payment transfers totalling £164,507 from her employer's bank accounts to bank accounts which were not legitimate consultants engaged by the Jubilee Hall Trust Limited or Jubilee Hall 2000 Limited.

The funds were transferred to Chasjit Verma's accounts or accounts controlled by her and this breached the duty of trust she owed to companies whose funds she has access to, by virtue of her position.

Laura Nicholls, the Official Receiver, said:

Mrs Verma held a position of trust with her former employer, which she subsequently breached by carrying out actions of dishonesty.

The Insolvency Service looks closely at individuals and takes action where wrongdoing is uncovered. These proceedings should serve to protect the public from future misconduct by restricting Mrs Verma from obtaining credit and acting in the management of a company.

The period of restrictions is in the top bracket, the maximum being 15 years, to reflect the seriousness of the case.

The order means Mrs Verma is therefore bound by the restrictions set out in insolvency law that a bankrupt is subject to until they are discharged from bankruptcy – normally 12 months – until 2030. In addition, she cannot manage or control a company during this period without leave of court.

Chasjit Verma is from Romford and her date of birth is March 1979.

The Bankruptcy Order was made against Mrs Chasjit Verma on 4 March 2016 following a petition presented by Mrs Chasjit Verma herself on 4 March 2016.

The County Court at Romford granted a 13 year Bankruptcy Restriction Order on 15 February 2018. Mrs Chasjit Verma did not defend the proceedings against her.

Laura Nicholls, the Official Receiver, acted for the Insolvency Service and the order was pronounced at the County Court at Romford on 15 February 2018, by Deputy District Judge Slaney.

If the Official Receiver considers that the conduct of a bankrupt has been dishonest or blameworthy in some other way, he (or she) will report the facts to court and ask for a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order (BRO) to be made. The court will consider this report and any other evidence put before it, and will decide whether it should make a BRO. If it does, the bankrupt will be subject to certain restrictions for the period stated in the order. This can be from 2 to 15 years.

These are restrictions set out in insolvency law that the bankrupt is subject to until they are discharged from bankruptcy – normally 12 months and include that bankrupts:

- must disclose their status to a credit provider if they wish to get credit of more than £500
- who carry on business in a different name from the name in which they were made bankrupt, they must disclose to those they wish to do business with the name (or trading style) under which they were made bankrupt
- may not act as the director of a company nor take part in its promotion, formation or management unless they have a court's permission to do so
- may not act as an insolvency practitioner, or as the receiver or manager of the property of a company on behalf of debenture holders

Additionally, a person subject to a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order, may not be a Member of Parliament in England or Wales.

All public enquiries concerning the affairs of the company should be made to: The Official Receiver, Public Interest Unit, 2nd Floor, 3 Piccadilly Place, London Road, Manchester, M1 3BN. Tel: 0161 234 8531 Email: piu.north@insolvency.gsi.gov.uk.

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures.

BEIS' mission is to build a dynamic and competitive UK economy that works for all, in particular by creating the conditions for business success and promoting an open global economy. The Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team contributes to this aim by taking action to deter fraud and to regulate the market. They investigate and prosecute a range of offences, primarily relating to personal or company insolvencies. The agency also authorises and regulates the insolvency profession, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 7596 6187 or 020 7637 6498

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Speech: Towards a basis for sustainable peace and stability in Mali](#)

Thank you very much Mr President. Thank you Mr Foreign Minister for taking time to join us today and I'd like to join colleagues in thanking the SRS for his briefing and my Swedish colleague for his report and the expeditious work of his committee.

Like other speakers Mr President, we too condemn the recent attacks against the peacekeepers in Mali and we offer our condolences to the families of the three United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) peacekeepers who were killed last week, to MINUSMA, and to the Governments and people of Chad and Niger. I would just like to say how much I agree with what the Ethiopian Ambassador said about the greatest reward being progress on the ground and I think we all want to help MINUSMA to that end.

The UK strongly supports the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. It is the primary basis for sustainable peace and stability in Mali and we need progress also in order to deny space to extremists.

As other speakers have noted, at the Security Council's last meeting on Mali in January and also in its subsequent press statement, we welcomed the renewed commitment of the Government of Mali and the signatory armed groups to actual implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation by the end of March and that was agreed in the revised timetable of 16 January.

However, and disappointingly Mr President, it has been common theme of all interventions today that the persistent delays, which tested the Council's patience in January are still continuing to frustrate us today, some time after the original deadline.

There has been some positive progress and I don't want to underplay that. It is also clear that this just has not been enough. The parties have agreed yet another new "road map" rather than focusing on implementation of the existing timetable. There have been numerous revised deadlines and they have not been met.

The delay to implementation will unfortunately have an impact on Mali's ability to conduct peaceful and inclusive presidential and parliamentary elections this year and that in turn, risks a further destabilisation to the security and humanitarian situation.

In January, this Council Mr President noted the tools available to it under the Mali sanctions regime, and it expressed its intention to respond with appropriate steps should the parties not implement the commitments they have made. In view of the lack of progress, the United Kingdom now supports action to identify those obstructing, delaying and threatening the implementation of the Agreement, with a view to imposing sanctions on those actors.

As I have stated Mr President, it is down to the parties themselves to implement the Agreement but like others I would like to note the key role played by MINUSMA in supporting this implementation. We commend the work of the Special Representative, the Secretary-General and all the staff, especially considering the challenging circumstances in which the military and the civilian components are operating.

And as we look forward to renewal of MINUSMA's mandate in June, we must ensure that its mandate is clear and that it focusses on supporting implementation of the Agreement and it is adequately equipped to support peace in Mali.

With that in mind, I have another call Mr President on all member states to ensure that the continued shortfall of troop numbers and equipment including the need for further air cover, reconnaissance capability and armoured personnel carriers are generously met.

The UK is committed to tackling threats in the Sahel. Following the Anglo-French summit in January. We have contributed Chinook helicopters to support

Op Barkhane. These are aligned and working closely with MINUSMA. This is all designed to promote stabilisation in a bid to enable MINUSMA to carry out its core mandate.

Finally Mr President, let me say that we too are disturbed by reports of summary executions by FAMA and strongly encourage the Government to investigate those reports and ensure accountability for those responsible. I join the French Ambassador in stressing how important this is. Human rights reporting and monitoring should be prioritised in the MINUSMA mandate and we hope that it will be able to address these and other important human rights violations by signatory armed groups.

Thank you Mr President.

[News story: British Army's rifle set for multi-million-pound upgrade](#)

The SA80 A2 hand held assault weapon will be upgraded into the A3 model under the Mid Life Improvement (MLI) project, which will ensure the rifle has the enhancements needed to remain in service until 2025 and beyond.

An initial investment of £5.4 million for the project, which will be carried out by Heckler and Koch, will help sustain around 20 highly skilled jobs at the Nottingham Small Arms Factory owned by the company.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb said:

This multi-million-pound upgrade will give our Army a lighter, more hardwearing, better-camouflaged combat rifle so our soldiers can perform on the frontline of some of the most dangerous locations across the world. This investment is also a boost to Nottingham's highly-skilled gun-makers who proudly support our troops in their task to protect our country in the face of intensifying threats.

The changes to the rifle include:

- A more durable hardwearing coating in a "Flat Dark Earth" colour offering better camouflage in a range of environments.
- The A3 is 100g lighter than the A2 and has a more streamlined fore grip making the weapon easier to handle.
- The A3 rifle has a bracket to secure new innovative low light sights which can clip on or in front of the day sight without the need to remove it. These sights are smaller, lighter and require fewer batteries whilst operating just as effectively in low light/night conditions.

Director Land Equipment at the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation, Major General Colin McClean said:

The SA80 is a battle proven weapon used by the UK Armed Forces on operations all over the world. The upgrade will build upon the rifle's state-of-the-art features enhancing accuracy and consistency. The Mid Life Improvement project will ensure that our troops have the right equipment at the right time.

The MLI project will see 5,000 weapons upgraded initially with the intent to upgrade more weapons in the future. The fielding of the first tranche began in February.