

Press release: Nuclear Safeguards Bill introduced today

- Equivalent high standards of Euratom to be maintained

The UK will establish a domestic nuclear safeguards regime under measures contained in the [Nuclear Safeguards Bill](#), introduced to Parliament today (Wednesday 11 October).

As set out by Business Secretary Greg Clark on [14 September 2017](#), the government is committed to a domestic nuclear safeguards regime which will deliver to existing European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) standards, exceeding those required by the wider international community.

The Bill, first announced in the [Queen's Speech](#), will bolster the roles and responsibilities of the UK's existing nuclear regulator, the [Office for Nuclear Regulation \(ONR\)](#), once the UK leaves Euratom.

The UK will continue to be a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and work is ongoing on new agreements with international parties to ensure it continues to meet relevant international standards.

Energy Minister Richard Harrington said:

The Nuclear Safeguards Bill will help secure the future of the UK's nuclear industry and high standards of nuclear safety and safeguards once we leave Euratom.

We are bringing forward the UK's first new nuclear power plants in a generation and it is in our mutual benefit to maintain the successful working relationship we have now with Europe, and the rest of the world, on nuclear matters. This is what we will be looking to secure in negotiations with our partners.

Nuclear safeguards are processes which allow countries to show to the international community that civil nuclear material is used for peaceful purposes.

The UK will withdraw from [Euratom in 2019](#) as a result of the decision to leave the EU and the Nuclear Safeguards Bill will ensure that the UK has the right regime in place for the ONR to regulate nuclear safeguards.

News story: Home Office announces changes to Grenfell immigration policy

Under the original policy, eligible foreign nationals directly affected by the fire with uncertain immigration status could be granted 12 months' limited leave to remain in the UK with full access to relevant support and assistance.

The changes announced today will enable those who qualify under this policy and who come forward before 30 November to have their limited leave extended and to qualify for permanent residence after a total period of 5 years' leave granted under the policy, subject to meeting security, criminality and fraud checks.

Immigration Minister Brandon Lewis said:

Our initial response to this terrible tragedy was rightly focused on survivors' immediate needs in the aftermath of the fire and ensuring they could access the services they need to start to rebuild their lives.

However, since the Grenfell Tower immigration policy was announced, we have been planning for the future of those residents affected by these unprecedented events and listening to their feedback, as well as the views of Sir Martin Moore-Bick.

The government believes it is right to provide this specific group of survivors greater certainty over their long-term future in the UK, subject to their continued eligibility and the necessary security and criminality checks being met.

Eligible survivors granted the initial 12 months' leave outside the Immigration Rules will be able to apply for further periods of limited leave with access to public funds and permission to work, and indefinite leave to remain after 5 years' lawful residence.

Meanwhile, relatives of survivors or victims of the tragedy will be able to stay in the UK for up to six months from their date of entry, it was confirmed today.

The new dedicated immigration policy allows relatives who have come to the UK to provide a short period of support to a survivor or to arrange the funeral of a family member to have their stay extended.

Anyone who believes they are eligible for either scheme can speak face-to-face to a specialist Home Office team at:

The Community Assistance Centre
10 Bard Road
Nottingdale
West London
W10 6TP

Press release: Small firms benefitted from over £12 billion of government spending

Figures out today show that SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) benefitted from £12.2 billion worth of central government spending in 2015 to 16.

They also show that the amount government spends directly with SMEs has continued to climb. This now stands at £5.6 billion, representing a significant increase since 2011 to 12 when £4.4 billion was spent.

The proportion of total government spend going to SMEs currently stands at around one pound in every four.

But the government recognises that the latest figures show there is more to be done to reach its aspiration of spending one pound in every three with these businesses by 2022. While direct spend has increased, the overall target continues to be challenging, with issues of counting down supply chains causing difficulties for businesses themselves.

That is why it is proposing new measures to encourage more spend to flow to SMEs.

Caroline Nokes, Minister for government Resilience and Efficiency says:

SMEs are the backbone of the UK economy, fuelling economic growth and providing more than 15 million jobs. These businesses also play a vital role in helping government to deliver efficient, effective public services that meet the needs of our citizens and provide value for money for taxpayers.

We have set ourselves a challenging target, but we know this is the right ambition. This Government is doing more than any previous Government to break down barriers for SMEs who want to supply to the public sector. We are confident these new measures will be welcomed by small businesses throughout the UK.

FSB National Chairman Mike Cherry said:

I welcome the commitment to make more use of the UK's ambitious and innovative small businesses when awarding public procurement contracts. Today's figures show there is still some way to go to reach the 33 per cent target, but I look forward to working with ministers to see it delivered and for this to be hardwired into the Government's upcoming Industrial Strategy.

It is also important for government departments and agencies not to hand public money to bigger companies which have a track record of treating smaller suppliers appallingly, with late payments and unfair contracts, and today's commitment on that is a positive step.

The proposed new measures include:

- using transparency to encourage large businesses to employ more SMEs in the supply chain
- improving visibility of opportunities available to SMEs in the supply chain
- making prompt payment part of the selection process for larger suppliers

The government will launch a consultation on these proposals in the coming weeks.

Earlier this year, it was announced that for the first time all of government's strategic suppliers have signed up to the fair payment terms in the Prompt Payment Code – helping to boost cash flow for small businesses and allowing them to invest in growth.

The Crown Commercial Service – the government's central procurement body – is leading the way in simplifying the application processes for small businesses who wish to become government suppliers.

All central government contracts above £10,000 are openly advertised on the government's procurement website, [Contracts Finder](#).

At the same time, government is also publishing a list of the 100 small and medium-sized enterprises who received the most spend from government departments during 2015 to 16.

For more information about government spend with SMEs, go to www.gov.uk/CCS.

Further information

You can [view the statistics on government spending with SMEs on GOV.UK](#).

- government departments now spend around £5 billion more with SMEs than in 2011 to 12, when comparable figures were first collected. That year, around one pound in six was spent with SMEs.
- Network Rail are included as part of central government in the published figures for the first time, taking the total government procurement spend to £50.9 billion in 2015 to 16.
- with Network Rail spend excluded – to allow measuring on a like-for-like basis against 2014 to 15's figures – the government's overall percentage spend with SMEs is 25.5%. When Network Rail spend is included the overall percentage spend with SMEs is 24%.
- one of the biggest areas of spend is on defence. Ministry of Defence contracts are typically large and complex. Without MoD spend included, SME spend would be 27.7%.

Further details of the measures to boost spend include:

- using greater transparency to increase SMEs in the supply chain, by requiring them to publish annual data on their spend from government contracts flowing to smaller businesses in their supply chains
- improving visibility of opportunities available to SMEs by requiring suppliers to advertise their subcontracting opportunities on Contracts Finder so SMEs can bid
- making prompt payment part of the selection process for larger suppliers, and excluded them from the procurement process if a bidder fails to satisfy this selection condition

Speech: 86th Session of the OPCW Executive Council

Thank you Mr Chair,

The United Kingdom supports the statement made by the Ambassador of Estonia on behalf of the European Union.

We commend your work, Mr Chair, to steer the Executive Council through the selection process for the next Director General, and thank you for your warm welcome yesterday. This organisation is being superbly served by Ahmet Uzumcu. We believe that we have a strong successor in Ambassador Fernando Arias of Spain, and hope that the Executive Council will agree his nomination by consensus.

In other positive developments, the successful completion of the verified destruction of the Russian Federation's declared chemical weapons stockpile underscores the global commitment to rid the world of chemical weapons. The UK was pleased to contribute funding and expertise to support Russia's work. We also welcome the progress made by the Iraqi authorities to destroy the final remnants of Saddam Hussein's era chemical weapon stockpile at the Al Muthana complex.

Unfortunately, despite this progress, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the norms that underpin it face significant challenge. In the last year alone this Council has witnessed:

1. regular credible reports of the use of chemical weapons by state actors in Syria, and an attack in Malaysia against a DPRK national;
2. multiple reports of chemical weapons attacks by Daesh linked terrorists in Iraq; and
3. insidious attempts to undermine the credibility of the OPCW, including by attacking the OPCW's technical competence and integrity, and attempts to limit the Conference of States Parties' engagement with civil society;

For more than four years, we have seen the devastating impact of continued chemical weapons use in Syria. Sarin has been used with horrific effect in Ghouta in 2013 and in Khan Sheikhoun in April this year. Sarin has now been found in samples from Al-Lataminah, close to Khan Sheikhoun, following credible reports of an attack there on 30 March. The OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism confirmed that the Syrian regime used chlorine as a weapon three times in 2014-15, and that Daesh used sulphur mustard on one occasion in 2015. No one has yet been brought to justice for these crimes. All perpetrators must be held to account – however long that takes. We have full confidence in the professionalism and dedication of the JIM and FFM and look forward to their upcoming reports.

Mr Chair,

Use of chemical weapons is a grave violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Yet this is just one of the issues where Syria has failed to comply. The Convention, UN Security Council resolutions and this Executive Council all require Syria to produce a comprehensive declaration of its chemical weapons programme. The Technical Secretariat has worked tirelessly to uncover the truth, in the face of Syrian obstruction contrary to what we have just heard from the Syrian Ambassador. Despite four years of engagement,

there has been minimal progress. The Director General reported last week evidence of “potential undeclared chemical weapons activities involving production or weaponisation of chemical agent” in Syria, and that he could not verify that the Syrian Declaration was accurate or complete.

Syria’s response to the findings of such respected international bodies is to deny reality and forensic evidence. The Syrian Regime has failed to engage appropriately with the Technical Secretariat to answer the long list of serious questions about gaps, inconsistencies and anomalies in its chemical weapons programme declaration. We’ve heard this morning further denial of scientific reality from the Syrians, they still refuse to engage meaningfully with the OPCW’s findings that show agents present at facilities which have not been declared, and types of chemical warfare agent that Syria has not declared at all. After more than four years, the only conclusion can be that Syria has not declared or destroyed all of its chemical weapons. The Syrian Regime has continued to use chemical weapons against its own people, and continues to pose a significant chemical threat.

Chemical weapons use is not confined to Syria. In Malaysia, an assassination in February using the nerve agent VX shocked the world. We note that court proceedings have started in Malaysia to examine the circumstances that led to the death of a North Korean national at Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2. We thank Malaysia for the helpful update that they provided to this Council yesterday, and encourage Malaysia to continue to inform the Executive Council about their investigation.

It is not just state programmes that demand this Council’s attention. All of us must work to ensure that terrorists cannot develop chemical weapons capabilities. We hope that this Council will adopt the draft decision proposed by the US and Germany to combat chemical terrorism.

We remain deeply concerned that Daesh retains the capability and intent to use chemical weapons. We welcome the Technical Secretariat’s work with Iraq to deal with the chemical threat that they face, including by supporting Iraqi investigations into chemical weapons use. We encourage both Iraq and the Technical Secretariat to keep the Executive Council informed of their work.

Finally, we have all acknowledged that to enhance the global fight against chemical weapons we need to engage a wide range of stakeholders, from industry to civil society. The UK welcomed the 2013 Review Conference decision to open the annual Conference of States Parties to civil society groups. We share the concerns voiced yesterday by Canada, Switzerland and the Netherlands that a number of NGOs have been refused accreditation to attend this year’s CSP, based purely on the objections of one or two states. No reasons have been given for the decision to refuse accreditation. In our view, the exclusion of ECOSOC accredited NGOs from the Conference of States Parties harms the reputation of states and the OPCW. We should be at the forefront of transparency as an International Organisation, not a backmarker. Our work is too important to hide.

Thank you Mr Chair

News story: Royal Air Force squadrons recognised for gallantry

The Battle Honours have been awarded to commemorate notable battles, actions, or engagements in which squadron aircrew or RAF Regiment personnel played a memorable part.

Battle Honours were approved for 27 operational flying squadrons and eight Royal Air Force Regiment squadrons for their service during Operation TELIC in Iraq. Five operational flying squadrons and three Royal Air Force Regiment squadrons have been awarded the highest honour of 'Battle Honour with Emblazonment'.

For Operation DEFERENCE and Operation ELLAMY in Libya, Battle Honours were approved for 13 operational flying squadrons with three being awarded the highest honour of Battle Honour with Emblazonment.

There are two levels of Battle Honour within the Royal Air Force, the first is entitlement, signifying that a squadron took part in the campaign. The second, higher level, gives the right to emblazon the Battle Honour on the Squadron Standard itself. This highest level has been awarded to squadrons who were involved in direct confrontation with the enemy, and who have demonstrated gallantry and spirit under fire.

The RAF's Deputy Commander for Operations, Air Marshal Stuart Atha said:

Whilst individuals are often recognised for bravery and courage, the award of a Battle Honour to a unit is rare, so I am delighted to hear that the fighting spirit of Royal Air Force squadrons has been recognised at the highest level by their award today. Those Air Mobility, Rotary, Fast Jet, Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance squadrons, and RAF Regiment units, whose people have contributed so much to these operations in the air and on the ground, should be hugely proud of this important addition to their legacies.

The honours will be awarded for participation in Operation TELIC, which took place between 1 May 2003 and 22 May 2011, Operation DEFERENCE, which took place from 22 February 2011 to 27 February 2011, and Operation ELLAMY, which took place from 19 March 2011 to 31 October 2011.

To mark the awards, the MOD is releasing a number of examples of outstanding service during these campaigns:

FIRST UK LAUNCHED STRIKES SINCE WW2

Royal Air Force Squadrons II (Two) and IX (Nine) are two of three units to be awarded the honour of emblazoning the battle honour "Libya 2011" on their standards.

On 19 March 2011, under strict secrecy and in the dark of night, four Tornado fast jets from IX (Bomber) Squadron, Royal Air Force Marham, roared into the Norfolk night sky to deliver long-range airstrikes against Libyan Regime targets.

Storm Shadow, the Tornado's highly capable stand-off cruise missile, which is currently seeing service in Iraq and Syria, was used as the weapon of choice against heavily defended and hardened targets in a gruelling 3000-mile round trip. For the missions, RAF Marham operated as a cohesive team. II (Army Cooperation) Squadron personnel worked tirelessly to plan this complex mission and prepare the aircraft, while aircrew from IX (Bomber) Squadron flew and delivered successful mission.

This historic event was the first direct delivery of airborne weapons launched from Royal Air Force aircraft based in the United Kingdom since World War Two and demonstrated the Royal Air Force's ability to conduct highly effective surprise airstrikes at great distance. The missions were ably supported by RAF Voyager in-flight refuelling aircraft, which were used four times during the eight-hour sortie.

Following these strikes, IX (Bomber) Squadron deployed to Italian Air Force Base Gioia Del Colle and mounted an intensive bombing, close air support and armed reconnaissance campaign against the Libyan Regime's mobile military forces. The unit was relieved by II (Army Cooperation) Squadron one month later.

At this point, the campaign had grown significantly, requiring II Squadron to undertake complex strike missions by day and night using, Paveway precision guided bombs and Brimstone missiles.

PUMAS PROVIDE IMPORTANT SUPPORT TO OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

Number 33 Squadron, based at RAF Benson, Oxfordshire, was one of seven RAF units to earn the right to emblazon the battle honour 'Iraq 2003-2011' on its standard.

33 Squadron operated Puma helicopters during the Iraq campaign. Working in close cooperation with UK and allied land forces, their role was to move equipment and soldiers around the battlefield, as well as provide convoy escort, reconnaissance and resupply of Forward Operating Bases (FOB). They also transported the wounded quickly away from the front line for emergency medical care.

Aircraft often flew at 50 feet above the ground, to try and avoid ground fire

due to the level of the insurgent threat. Working in the highly unstable area around central Iraq, the Pumas operated at a furious pace, often at the limits of their performance. Nevertheless the helicopters proved to be highly reliable; a testament to the superb efforts of the squadron's engineers based at FOB Kalsu.

In November 2004, a formation of one 33 Squadron Puma and one Lynx helicopter operated in support of the Black Watch (now Scottish Regiment) Battle Group. Working from Camp Dogwood which was in an area locally dubbed 'the Triangle of Death', the two aircraft came under heavy mortar fire within minutes of landing. Later, due to the volume of enemy ground fire, both the Puma and the Lynx were hit by enemy rounds with the Lynx pilot suffering injury.

Flight Sergeant Andy Leys, a crewman on the Puma said:

On arrival back at base after operations, the sense of satisfaction and achievement was immense. This period was the busiest and most intense operational tasking I have completed in my 19 year flying career. All of our tasking was completed safely and professionally with crews returning to base wiser and more experienced aviators – something that can never be too highly valued.

Recognised squadrons:

With the Right to Emblazon 'IRAQ 2003- 2011' on Squadron Standards

- No 7 Squadron RAF
- No XXIV Squadron RAF
- No 33 Squadron RAF
- No 47 Squadron RAF
- No 230 Squadron RAF
- No 1 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 26 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 34 Squadron RAF Regiment.

Without the Right to Emblazon 'IRAQ 2003- 2011' on Squadron Standards

- No II (Army Cooperation) Squadron RAF
- No IX (Bomber) Squadron RAF
- No 10 Squadron RAF
- No 12 (Bomber) Squadron RAF
- No XIII Squadron RAF
- No 14 Squadron RAF
- No 18 Squadron RAF
- No 27 Squadron RAF
- No XXVIII (Army Cooperation) Squadron RAF
- No 30 Squadron RAF
- No 31 Squadron RAF

- No 32 (The Royal) Squadron RAF
- No 39 (Photographic Reconnaissance) Squadron RAF
- No 51 Squadron RAF
- No LXX Squadron RAF
- No 99 Squadron RAF
- No 101 Squadron RAF
- No 120 Squadron RAF
- No 201 Squadron RAF
- No 206 Squadron RAF
- No 216 Squadron RAF
- No 617 Squadron RAF
- No II Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 3 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 15 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 51 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 63 Squadron RAF Regiment.

With the Right to Emblazon 'LIBYA 2011' on Squadron Standards

- No II (Army Cooperation) Squadron RAF
- No IX (Bomber) Squadron RAF
- No 47 Squadron RAF.

Without the Right to Emblazon 'LIBYA 2011' on Squadron Standards

- No 3 (Fighter) Squadron RAF
- No V (Army Cooperation) Squadron RAF
- No VIII Squadron RAF
- No XI Squadron RAF
- No 30 Squadron RAF
- No 32 (The Royal) Squadron RAF
- No 51 Squadron RAF
- No 99 Squadron RAF
- No 101 Squadron RAF
- No 216 Squadron RAF