

Appeal for information on missing man in Wan Chai (with photo)

Police today (April 14) appealed to the public for information on a man who went missing in Wan Chai.

Zhao Guan-jie, aged 38, went missing after he left his residence in Wan Chai yesterday (April 13). His family made a report to Police on the same day.

He is about 1.86 metres tall, 86 kilograms in weight and of medium build. He has a round face with yellow complexion and short black hair. There is a mole on his face. He was last seen wearing black T-shirt, dark coloured trousers, black sports shoes and carrying a white rucksack.

Anyone who knows the whereabouts of the missing man or may have seen him is urged to contact the Regional Missing Person Unit of Hong Kong Island on 3660 6490 or 9886 0034, or email to rmpu-hki@police.gov.hk, or contact any police station.



First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's visit to China: boosting trade, tourism, culture and education links

Nicola Sturgeon has just ended a visit to China to promote Scotland. From promoting Scottish businesses to building new education and cultural links,

it's been a successful visit.

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Author:

Speech: PM's press conference statement on Syria: 14 April 2018

Prime Minister Theresa May:

Last night British, French and American armed forces conducted co-ordinated and targeted strikes to degrade the Syrian Regime's chemical weapons capability and deter their use.

For the UK's part four RAF Tornado GR 4's launched storm shadow missiles at a military facility some 15 miles west of Homs, where the regime is assessed to keep chemical weapons in breach of Syria's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

While the full assessment of the strike is ongoing, we are confident of its success.

Let me set out why we have taken this action.

Last Saturday up to 75 people, including young children, were killed in a despicable and barbaric attack in Douma, with as many as 500 further casualties.

We have worked with our allies to establish what happened. And all the indications are that this was a chemical weapons attack.

We have seen the harrowing images of men, women and children lying dead with foam in their mouths.

These were innocent families who, at the time this chemical weapon was unleashed, were seeking shelter underground, in basements.

First-hand accounts from NGOs and aid workers have detailed the most horrific suffering, including burns to the eyes, suffocation and skin discolouration, with a chlorine-like odour surrounding the victims.

And the World Health Organisation has received reports that hundreds of patients arrived at Syrian health facilities on Saturday night with "signs and symptoms consistent with exposure to toxic chemicals."

We are also clear about who was responsible for this atrocity.

A significant body of information including intelligence indicates the Syrian Regime is responsible for this latest attack.

I cannot tell you everything. But let me give an example of some of the evidence that leads us to this conclusion.

Open source accounts allege that a barrel bomb was used to deliver the chemicals.

Multiple open source reports claim that a Regime helicopter was observed above the city of Douma on the evening of 7th April.

The Opposition does not operate helicopters or use barrel bombs.

And reliable intelligence indicates that Syrian military officials co-ordinated what appears to be the use of chlorine in Douma on 7th April.

No other group could have carried out this attack. Indeed, Daesh for example does not even have a presence in Douma.

And the fact of this attack should surprise no-one.

We know that the Syrian regime has an utterly abhorrent record of using chemical weapons against its own people.

On 21st August 2013 over 800 people were killed and thousands more injured in a chemical attack also in Ghouta.

There were 14 further smaller scale chemical attacks prior to that summer.

At Khan Shaykhun on 4th April last year, the Syrian Regime used sarin against its people killing around 100 with a further 500 casualties.

And based on the Regime's persistent pattern of behaviour and the cumulative analysis of specific incidents we judge it highly likely both that the Syrian regime has continued to use chemical weapons since then, and will continue to do so.

This must be stopped.

We have sought to do so using every possible diplomatic channel.

But our efforts have been repeatedly thwarted both on the ground and in the United Nations.

Following the sarin attack in Eastern Damascus back in August 2013, the Syrian Regime committed to dismantle its chemical weapon programme – and Russia promised to ensure that Syria did this, overseen by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

But these commitments have not been met.

A recent report from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has said that Syria's declaration of its former Chemical Weapons programme is incomplete.

This indicates that it continues to retain undeclared stocks of nerve agent or precursor chemicals – and is likely to be continuing with some chemical weapons production.

The OPCW inspectors have investigated previous attacks and on four occasions decided that the Regime was indeed responsible.

And on each occasion when we have seen every sign of chemical weapons being used, any attempt to hold the perpetrators to account has been blocked by Russia at the UN Security Council, with six such vetoes since the start of 2017.

Just this week, the Russians vetoed a draft Resolution that would have established an independent investigation into this latest attack – even making the grotesque and absurd claim that it was “staged” by Britain.

So we have no choice but to conclude that diplomatic action on its own will not be any more effective in the future than it has been in the past.

Over the last week the UK government has been working intensively with our international partners to build the evidence picture, and to consider what action we need to take to prevent and deter future humanitarian catastrophes caused by chemical weapons attacks.

When the Cabinet met on Thursday we considered the advice of the Attorney General, the National Security Adviser and the Chief of the Defence Staff – and we were updated on the latest assessment and intelligence picture.

And based on this advice we agreed that it was both right and legal to take military action, together with our closest allies, to alleviate further humanitarian suffering by degrading the Syrian Regime's Chemical Weapons capability and deterring their use.

This was not about interfering in a civil war.

And it was not about regime change.

As I discussed with President Trump and President Macron, it was a limited, targeted and effective strike with clear boundaries that expressly sought to avoid escalation and did everything possible to prevent civilian casualties.

Together we have hit a specific and limited set of targets. They were a chemical weapons storage and production facility, a key chemical weapons research centre and a military bunker involved in chemical weapons attacks.

Hitting these targets with the force that we have deployed will significantly degrade the Syrian Regime's ability to research, develop and deploy chemical weapons.

A year ago, after the atrocity at Khan Shaykhun, the US conducted a strike on the airfield from which the attack took place. But Assad and his regime hasn't stopped their use of chemical weapons.

So last night's strikes by the US, UK and France were significantly larger than the US action a year ago and specifically designed to have a greater impact on the regime's capability and willingness to use chemical weapons.

And this collective action sends a clear message that the international community will not stand by and tolerate the use of chemical weapons.

I also want to be clear that this military action to deter the use of chemical weapons does not stand alone.

We must remain committed to resolving the conflict at large.

The best hope for the Syrian people remains a political solution.

We need all partners – especially the Regime and its backers – to enable humanitarian access to those in desperate need.

And the UK will continue to strive for both.

But these strikes are about deterring the barbaric use of chemical weapons in Syria and beyond.

And so to achieve this there must also be a wider diplomatic effort – including the full range of political and economic levers – to strengthen the global norms prohibiting the use of chemical weapons which have stood for nearly a century.

Although of a much lower order of magnitude, the use of a nerve agent on the streets of the UK in recent weeks is part of a pattern of disregard for these norms.

So while this action is specifically about deterring the Syrian regime, it will also send a clear signal to anyone else who believes they can use chemical weapons with impunity.

There is no graver decision for a Prime Minister than to commit our forces to combat – and this is the first time that I have had to do so.

As always, they have served our country with the greatest professionalism and bravery – and we owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

We would have preferred an alternative path.

But on this occasion there is none.

We cannot allow the use of chemical weapons to become normalised – either within Syria, on the streets of the UK or elsewhere.

We must reinstate the global consensus that chemical weapons cannot be used.

This action is absolutely in Britain's national interest.

The lesson of history is that when the global rules and standards that keep us safe come under threat – we must take a stand and defend them.

That is what our country has always done.

And that is what we will continue to do.

Getting things done – Nethergate #dundeewestend



Residents have drawn to my attention that in Nethergate – north side, between Park Place and bus stop just west of that – one of the large pavement edging stones has been dislodged, probably by heavy vehicle.

As a result, a big hole has appeared between the stone and the pavement, which someone might easily put their foot into and twist their ankle.

I reported this to the council's Roads Maintenance Partnership and have received the following positive response :

"The Road Maintenance Partnership inspector for the area has raised an order to re-set the whin kerb at this location."

The international order, Russia and the rules based system

We constantly hear these days that there is a rules based international order which all decent states follow. Russia is condemned for not following these same rules.

Those who think like this usually divide the world up into a majority of states who follow these rules, and a minority of rogue states like North Korea who pose problems for the rest. When it is one of the world's larger military powers who has greater diplomatic reach, some world support and a

seat on the UN Security Council that does not follow the world order this analysis has its limitations.

I am no apologist for Russia, and understand the ruthless pursuit of Russian interests by that state can lead to unacceptable conduct. I condemn atrocities and illegal acts whichever state carries them out when they are reported and proved.

The truth is there is no one set of rules, no single world order that is codified in many areas of government activity which every state should obey. Within NATO and the advanced west there are varying rules of law. The USA has its own set of laws and legal constraints on the actions of its President and senior officials. The EU has another set of laws and legal requirements on its member states. The EU will not accept all the US rules, and will certainly not accept US jurisdiction, nor will the USA of course accept EU rules and control.

The West does come together in some world bodies and helps shape a global approach. There are world trade rules supervised by the WTO which all members accept, though the USA currently feels those rules are not fairly administered with regards to China and Germany. There are important conventions on nuclear and chemical weapons which most countries have signed. North Korea becoming a nuclear power and alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria causes problems under these global rules. As the current disputes reveal, the countries accused of breaking world rules often argue they have not. China and Germany pose as supporters of a world free trade order, whilst the USA cites evidence that they are not. The West rightly condemns chemical attacks in Syria, only to be told by Russia that no such attack has happened.

The main countries and blocs appeal to world rules when it suits them, and seek to interpret them in directions which fit with their national interests. Russia clearly plays by different rules to the West in several respects. In Syria it will accept more deaths as the regime seeks to restore its control over the country, as Russia judges an Assad government to be the least bad outcome. The West is against both ISIS and Assad, but lacks the power and commitment to enforce a different government on that country, whilst condemning the many deaths the current civil war is causing.

Those who protest most about the need to create and follow a rules based system need to be punctilious themselves to obey it. Any Western military intervention in Syria today will need a legal base, made more difficult by Russia's veto of any UN Resolution which could directly support action. The UN is a world body which comes closest to providing a rules based system for the conduct of diplomacy and where unavoidable to regulate the use of force between states. That body cannot have a clear single view or straightforward rule where the Security Council is divided and where a veto has been wielded.