

Press release: Foreign Secretary calls for a united response

While we await an explanation from Russia of how a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia came to be used in the UK, the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has today been calling his counterparts and leaders of international organisations to set out what we know and our concerns that, if as we suspect is highly likely the Russian state was responsible, this would be further reckless behaviour which threatens the international community and requires an international response.

The Foreign Secretary has emphasised that if this was a direct act by the Russian state then it would not simply be a threat to the UK, but a clear violation of the chemical weapons convention, a breach of international law and a threat to those who abide by the rules-based international order as a whole.

The French Foreign Minister Le Drian offered France's total solidarity for an unacceptable act, and noted that President Macron had promised to stand by the UK as it prepares to take concrete measures against Russia's breach of international order. The French government stressed particular concerns about Russia's use of chemical weapons elsewhere, as is evident with their support to Asad's murderous regime in Syria.

In speaking to the German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, the Foreign Secretary emphasised how countering Russian disinformation, halting Russia's adventurism in the western Balkans and reducing Russia's ongoing involvement in Ukraine's humanitarian crisis were issues of paramount importance to Germany and the UK alike.

Speaking to the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, the Foreign Secretary reiterated the importance of NATO standing together to counter the threat Russia poses not just to the UK, but to our NATO allies also. He was pleased that the NATO Secretary General expressed his support and solidarity, and agreed that NATO unity was paramount, as it was to counter other existing threats to NATO partners, including in eastern Europe where UK troops are stationed alongside troops from various Allies. They both agreed that Russian actions repeatedly threaten the security of NATO partners – from the Baltics, Balkans, Ukraine and Georgia – and NATO must stand as an alliance to call out Putin's behaviour. The UK will brief the North Atlantic Council at tomorrow's session.