

Press release: Citizen scientists look to the skies to help Dstl study

Known as Project Argus, enthusiastic members from the Basingstoke Astronomical Society will look for and catalogue satellites and other objects orbiting the Earth.

They will be paying particular attention to a new device being deployed from the International Space Station which will send out a 'net' to catch old or unused satellites. The increasing problem of space junk means scientists across the world are looking for new solutions to bring down, or de-orbit, used satellites.

The project will gather a range of data which will be used to advise the Ministry of Defence on what equipment capabilities they need to effectively monitor the population of satellites and junk in the earth's orbit.

Andrew Ash, from the space team at Dstl, said:

Previously, we have used information shared by our US colleagues. Space is so crowded now, with more universities and other non-traditional partners launching satellites, that we may well need our own capability.

If we can harness information which some very good amateur astronomers are collecting, we can assess whether we can use an off-the-shelf solution. This has the potential to save a huge amount of money for the MOD. We're hoping that the astronomers will all be contributing to some valuable work and a research paper at the end of the trial.

For more information contact the Dstl press office on 01980 956845 or 07384 210107.

Email: press@dstl.gov.uk

Press release: New measures to beat plague of nuisance calls

Bosses of companies which plague people with unsolicited nuisance calls could be fined as much as half a million pounds under new proposals to make them

personally liable if their firm breaks the law.

The UK data protection watchdog revealed last week it had recovered just over half (54 per cent) of the £17.8 million in fines issued for nuisance calls since 2010, as companies go into liquidation to avoid big penalties.

This follows latest estimates by Ofcom showing British consumers were bombarded with 3.9 billion nuisance phone calls and texts last year.

As it stands, only the businesses themselves are liable for fines of up to £500,000, and some directors try to escape paying penalties by declaring bankruptcy – only to open up again under a different name. The Insolvency Service can also disqualify people from boardroom positions and failure to adhere to this ruling could lead to a prison sentence.

But new Government proposals being consulted on will provide the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) with the powers it needs to hold company directors directly responsible with further fines of up to £500,000.

Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries Margot James said:

Nuisance calls are a blight on society and we are determined to stamp them out.

For too long a minority of company directors have escaped justice by liquidating their firms and opening up again under a different name.

We want to make sure the Information Commissioner has the powers she needs to hold rogue bosses to account and put an end to these unwanted calls.

Steve Wood, Deputy Commissioner (Executive Director- Policy), Information Commissioner's Office, said:

We welcome these proposals from the Government to make directors themselves responsible for nuisance marketing.

We have been calling for a change to the law for a while to deter those who deliberately set out to disrupt people with troublesome calls, texts and emails. These proposed changes will increase the tools we have to protect the public.

The Government has already made it easier for regulators to fine those breaching direct marketing rules, forced companies to display their number when calling customers and increased fines for wrongdoers.

Ofcom data suggests this action is working. The total complaints made to the

ICO and Ofcom about nuisance calls have fallen for the second year in a row.

The Government has also:

- Introduced a measure in the Digital Economy Act 2017 to make it a requirement for the Information Commissioner to issue a statutory code of practice on direct marketing;
- Amended the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR) to require all direct marketing callers to provide Caller Line Identification;
- Lowered the legal threshold at which the ICO may impose a monetary penalty on organisations breaching PECR (a previous requirement to prove that the call caused alarm or distress was removed);
- Made it easier for the ICO to more effectively share information with Ofcom in relation to nuisance calls through an amendment to the Communications Act 2003;
- Given the ICO the power to issue monetary penalty notices up to £500,000 for serious breaches of PECR;
- Introduced a ban on cold calling in relation to claims management services through the Financial Claims and Guidance Act 2018, except where the receiver has consented to such calls being made to them. The 2018 Act also includes powers to ban cold calls from pension providers; and
- Given £500,000 to Trading Standards to help install call blocking devices installed in the homes of vulnerable people.

Notes to editors

- For more info call DCMS press office on 020 7211 2210.
- The consultation closes in August.
- Government would amend the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations legislation to make directors liable for nuisance call fines.
- ICO will consider the level of fine based on evidence – (whether it applies to a company, director, or both).
- If a firm has multiple directors, each could be liable for a fine.
- In 2016/17, the Information Commissioner issued 23 companies more than £1.9m of fines for nuisance marketing.

Speech: Delivering Long-Term Peace in Ukraine

Thank you very much indeed, Mr President. And can I join other colleagues in welcoming our three Ministers at this important session today. I'd also like to thank the briefers from the UN and also the OSCE for their account, and also for the work that they and their teams do on the ground. The United Kingdom joins others in welcoming the opportunity for the Security Council to receive an update on the situation in eastern Ukraine. And as other speakers have said, Mr President, we stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

Since 2014, the fighting in eastern Ukraine has continued unabated. The Under Secretary-General set out some compelling facts of what is happening on the ground. But I think for me, Mr President, one of the most shocking was that there have been over 100,000 violations of the ceasefire. That's 100,000 too many, but 100,000 is a very, very large number. And we should just think about what that really means for the people on the ground. Not only the conflict, but also the resulting humanitarian situation as the Assistant Secretary-General said, and also the potential for long-term environmental damage. These are the many reasons why the topic of Ukraine needs to be on the Council's agenda and to be repeatedly discussed here.

It's not just about Ukraine, Mr President, though that is the subject of today's meeting. I want to just express my agreement with what my Swedish colleague said about Ukraine, Georgia, and the rules-based international order. The situation on the ground remains highly volatile as we heard. The deterioration in the security situation along the lines of contact in Donetsk underlines the total failure of the latest recommitment to the ceasefire. I join others in repeating the appeals for respect of the laws of war. Despite being agreed by the Trilateral Contact Group on 26 March, it was only 10 minutes before Russian-led forces shelled Avdiivka. And they did so with weapons proscribed under the Minsk Peace Agreements. I think this demonstrates the complete disregard that the Russian-backed separatists have for the ceasefire and for attempts to grant some relief to the civilian population of eastern Ukraine. Can I once again, Mr President, urge all those involved to recommit to the ceasefire at the Trilateral Contact Group meeting which will take place on 30 May.

The United Kingdom also remains extremely concerned by the threats posed to civilian infrastructure and the potential for long-term environmental damage. Very many speakers have today highlighted the Donetsk water filtration station and I would just like to add our voices to that. We are also concerned by the threats from the separatists to turn off the points at the Yukon mine. Flooding the mine risk contaminating the water tables with radiological waste. More generally, Mr President, I would like to urge Russia to intervene with the separatists to avoid actions that would cause

environmental damage and which could have a huge humanitarian impact on the civilian population for years to come. Support and respect for the safe zones around key civilian infrastructure is crucial if we are to prevent further humanitarian suffering. And let us not see a repeat of the past winter where, despite international humanitarian assistance, as the Assistant Secretary-General said, food insecurity doubled from 600,000 to 1.2 million people.

A number of speakers, Mr President, have cited Crimea. We share the view that the annexation of Crimea four years ago by Russia is illegal and it is in violation of the first principle of international law. General Assembly Resolutions 68-262, 71-205 and 72-190 reaffirm the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and the absence of any legal basis to change the status of Crimea. These resolutions characterized Russia as an occupying power. They noted the primary responsibility of states to promote and protect human rights. And they called on Russia to uphold all of its obligations under applicable international law. Despite this, Russia continues to ignore calls in the General Assembly for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Crimea, most recently in December last year.

We have heard from the OSCE and from the UN how millions of Crimeans remain outside the monitoring mechanisms of the UN, which means there is no one who can easily help them. We call on Russia, as a permanent member of the Security Council, to uphold the international rules-based system and to respond positively to the General Assembly's calls.

I'd like now Mr President to turn to MH17. I thank the Dutch Minister for his statement and for the important role the Dutch are playing along with other members of the Joint Investigative Team in pursuing justice for the victims and their families. Of the 298 victims, there were 10 British nationals. We commend the Joint Investigative Team for its professional, impartial and independent investigation.

Mr President, my Foreign Secretary, like other colleagues, is on record as saying we now have clear evidence that the missile that brought down MH17 belonged to the Russian army. The United Kingdom fully supports the Netherlands and Australia in their request to the Russian Federation to accept state responsibility for its part in bringing down Flight MH17 and to engage with them in bilateral negotiations. All member states, and this includes Russia, need to fulfil their obligations under Security Council Resolution 2166 to provide any requested assistance to the investigation.

Mr President, since 2014, over 10,300 people have been killed, and 25,000 injured in Ukraine. 3.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, particularly along the lines of contact. And there are real risks of an environmental disaster. If Russia truly cares about the people of the Donbas, she should end the fighting that she started, withdraw her military personnel and weapons, and cease support for the separatists in line with her obligations under Minsk. And she should show political commitment, as Ambassador Apakan highlighted, through engaging constructively and in good faith in negotiations to deliver long-term peace.

Thank you Mr President.

Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on release of Andargachew Tsege

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

I am pleased Andargachew Tsege is now able to reunite with his loved ones after being separated from them for so long.

His case has been a priority for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and our staff have worked tirelessly to support him and his family throughout his detention.

Recent moves by the Ethiopian Government send a positive signal that they remain serious about following through with promised reforms to increase political space.

Further information

- Follow the Foreign Secretary on Twitter [@BorisJohnson](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
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News story: Lord Duncan participates in RAF100 Baton Relay in Edinburgh

Marking 100 years of the Royal Air Force (RAF), the RAF100 Baton Relay made its way to Edinburgh on Monday (28 May 2018) as part of its procession across 100 sites in 100 days. Lord Duncan was joined by serving RAF personnel, veterans and the Lord Provost in carrying the specially-created commemorative baton, following a Legion Scotland piper from Parliament to Edinburgh Castle.

UK Government minister for Scotland Lord Duncan said:

The RAF100 Baton Relay is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the rich history of the RAF and reflect on all it has achieved over the past 100 years. It was an honour to be part of the Edinburgh leg of this adventure and to join people from across Edinburgh and the whole of Scotland commemorating and celebrating the service of those who have selflessly defended the Nation's interests – at home and overseas – over the past century.

Group Captain Clive Coombes, Chief of Staff and Assistant Air Officer Scotland, said:

The RAF is deeply proud of its Scottish heritage, and it's fitting that Edinburgh's own 603 Squadron will receive the high honour of the Freedom of the City in the RAF's 100th year. Today was also a chance for the RAF to thank the people of Scotland, who have fully embraced our 100th anniversary celebrations over the last few weeks.

The RAF100 Baton Relay is part of a wider programme of centenary events to celebrate this milestone of the Nation's military history. The centre-piece takes place on 10 July 2018 with a service in Westminster Abbey, a parade along The Mall and a mass flypast.

The RAF100 Campaign also supports the UK Government's Plan for Britain, a Global Britain, a Stronger Economy, a Fairer Society and a United Nation.

Also taking place in Edinburgh, the RAF will take the lead at this year's Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in August.