

Press release: Home Secretary to launch Serious Violence Strategy

Commissioned by the Home Secretary and backed with £40m of Home Office funding, it marks a major shift in the government's response to knife crime and gun crime.

It strikes a balance between prevention and robust law enforcement with a new £11m Early Intervention Youth Fund for community projects to help young people live lives free from violence.

The strategy identifies the changing drugs market – in particular the devastating impact of crack cocaine – as a key driver of the violence harming our communities and announces a range of powerful actions to tackle the issue of “county lines” and its implications for drugs, violence and exploitation of vulnerable people.

That includes £3.6m to establish a new National County Lines Coordination Centre.

The Home Secretary will launch the Serious Violence Strategy at an event in London today to an audience of community groups, public sector partners and industry representatives, including organisations and charities she has met in recent weeks.

She will also announce that she will lead a new Serious Violence Taskforce which will bring together the voluntary sector, local Government, police and other key sectors to ensure the strategy is delivered effectively.

In her speech she is expected to say:

This strategy represents a real step-change in the way we think about and respond to these personal tragedies, these gruesome violent crimes which dominate the front pages of our newspapers with seemingly depressing regularity.

A crucial part of our approach will be focusing on and investing more in prevention and early intervention.

We need to engage with our young people early and to provide the incentives and credible alternatives that will prevent them from being drawn into crime in the first place. This in my view is the best long-term solution.

Because what better way to stop knife crime than by stopping young people from picking up knives in the first place?

The strategy stresses the importance of early intervention to tackle the root causes of serious violence and steer young people away from crime in the first place, whilst ensuring the police continue to have the tools and support they need to tackle violent crime.

It states that about half the rise in robbery, knife and gun crime is due to improvements in police recording. For the remainder, drug-related cases seem to be an important driver. Between 2014-15 and 2016-17, homicides where either the victim or suspect were known to be involved in using or dealing illicit drugs increased from 50% to 57%. Crack cocaine markets have strong links to serious violence and evidence suggests crack use is rising in England and Wales due to a mix of supply and demand factors.

The strategy sets out how drug-market violence may also be facilitated and spread by social media, with a small minority of people using social media to glamorise gang or drug-selling life, taunt rivals and normalise weapons-carrying.

The Home Secretary will go on to say:

We will take the comprehensive approach necessary to make sure that our sons and daughters are protected and our streets are safe.

As a government we will never stand by while acid is thrown or knives wielded.

I am clear that we must do whatever it takes to tackle this so that no parent has to bury their child.

In addition to the £40m of Home Office funding to deliver the strategy in the next two years, it references:

- The Home Office's £13m Trusted Relationships Fund, through which the Home Office is providing £13 million over the next four years to pilot approaches which provide support to young people at risk of sexual exploitation, gang exploitation and peer abuse in England. The Fund will support work to help young people to build positive and trusted relationships with adults who are there to support them, which may help prevent not only their risk of abuse but also involvement in violent offences, for example through child criminal exploitation.
- The £40m Youth Investment Fund, launched in September 2017 by DCMS, DfE

and the Big Lottery Fund to boost local 'open access' youth provision in six targeted disadvantaged areas in England. Over 300,000 young people are expected to benefit from increased access to a range of activities that help them develop their skills and build positive relationships. This will include young people affected by violence.

- £90m of "dormant accounts" money, which will support disadvantaged and disengaged young people with their transition to work;
- The Troubled Families Programme, which has £920m for local authorities to work with 400,000 families between 2015 and 2020.

[Speech: Only Russia could have committed this crime: article by Boris Johnson](#)

Sometimes it seems as if running a good cover-up is the main job of the Kremlin. No other government devotes as much time and effort to the business of trying to sabotage or discredit international inquiries.

It says much about the Russian state's appetite for high crime and misdemeanour that it has found this ability so indispensable. And Moscow's well-honed techniques have been on full display since Sergei and Yulia Skripal were poisoned in Salisbury on 4 March.

The essence of a Kremlin cover-up is a cynical attempt to bury awkward facts beneath an avalanche of lies and disinformation.

So far, the Russian Government and state-owned media have invented 29 separate theories about the Salisbury poisonings, including the novel suggestion that the Skripals' ordeal was revenge for Britain's alleged poisoning of Ivan the Terrible in 1584 (before Britain as a state actually existed).

This time, the torrent of absurdity has availed the Kremlin little: 28 countries and NATO delivered their emphatic answer by siding with Britain and evicting more than 150 Russian diplomats, the largest collective expulsion in history.

[political content removed]

So let me repeat the facts. Our experts at Porton Down have identified the substance used against the Skripals as a "military grade" Novichok, a class

of nerve agents developed by Russia.

In addition, the British Government has information that within the last decade Russia has investigated ways of delivering nerve agents likely for assassination and as part of this programme has produced and stockpiled small quantities of Novichoks.

Moreover, Russia has an obvious motive for targeting Sergei Skripal. In the year that Skripal moved to Britain, President Putin made a televised threat that “traitors” would “kick the bucket” and “choke”.

The fate of Alexander Litvinenko, murdered in London in 2006, demonstrates the Kremlin’s willingness to kill someone in this country. The Russian Duma has actually passed a law that allows the assassination of “extremists” overseas.

Put the facts together and there is one conclusion: only the Russian state has the means, the motive and the record to carry out this crime. As the Prime Minister told the Commons on 14th March, there is “no alternative conclusion other than that the Russian state was culpable for the attempted murder”.

[political content removed]

The next moment will come when the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) releases its analysis of the nerve agent used in Salisbury. In accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, Porton Down provided samples to the OPCW so that its experts could independently verify the analysis.

Like the Porton Down scientists the OPCW’s job is to identify what substance was used, not who attempted the assassination.

Yet the Russian state has already begun a pre-emptive campaign to discredit the OPCW’s verdict. Last week, Russia asked to join the OPCW investigation, which is rather like a suspected drunk driver demanding the right to use his own breathalyser. The OPCW executive council resoundingly defeated this ploy, with only six out of 41 countries siding with Russia.

This raises an obvious question: will the Kremlin accept the finding of the OPCW when it comes? Sergei Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, gave an answer which I will paraphrase as a flat no – unless, of course, the Kremlin was allowed to breathalyse itself. Russia “cannot support in advance the results of an investigation it is not a part of”, he declared, rather as a drunk driver might insist on the right to join the police investigation into himself.

[political content removed]

[Press release: Foreign Secretary responds to reports of chemical weapons attack in Douma, Syria](#)

Reports of a large scale chemical weapons attack in Douma on Saturday causing high numbers of casualties are deeply disturbing. It is truly horrific to think that many of the victims were reportedly families seeking refuge from airstrikes in underground shelters.

Despite Russia's promise in 2013 to ensure Syria would abandon all of its chemical weapons, international investigators mandated by the UN Security Council have found the Asad regime responsible for using poison gas in at least four separate attacks since 2014. These latest reports must urgently be investigated and the international community must respond. Investigators from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons looking into reports of chemical weapons use in Syria have our full support. Russia must not yet again try to obstruct these investigations.

Should it be confirmed that the regime has used chemical weapons again, it would be yet another appalling example of the Asad regime's brutality and blatant disregard for both the Syrian people and its legal obligations not to use chemical weapons.

We condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere. We are in close touch with our allies following these latest reports. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons have lost all moral integrity and must be held to account.

[Press release: FCO statement on reports of a chemical weapons attack in Syria](#)

These are very concerning reports of a chemical weapons attack with significant number of casualties, which if correct, are further proof of Assad's brutality against innocent civilians and his backers' callous disregard for international norms.

An urgent investigation is needed and the international community must respond. We call on the Assad regime and its backers, Russia and Iran, to stop the violence against innocent civilians.

Press release: FCO statement on reports of a chemical weapons attack in Syria

These are very concerning reports of a chemical weapons attack with significant number of casualties, which if correct, are further proof of Assad's brutality against innocent civilians and his backers' callous disregard for international norms.

An urgent investigation is needed and the international community must respond. We call on the Assad regime and its backers, Russia and Iran, to stop the violence against innocent civilians.