

# Speech: Britain needs its allies to stand with us against Russia: article by Boris Johnson

We have a tradition in Britain that any town with a cathedral becomes a city. Salisbury won that title nearly 800 years ago, thanks to the magnificent cathedral that still dominates its streets.

So you can imagine Britain's sense of revulsion – indeed of violation – over the fact that a tranquil medieval city has witnessed the first offensive use of a nerve agent in Europe since World War II.

As I write, the principal target, Sergei Skripal, and his daughter, Yulia, are both in critical condition. A police officer who went to their aid is also in the hospital. About three dozen others required medical treatment simply because they were nearby when the substance was released.

It was only down to chance that more people are not lying stricken today; the perpetrators clearly did not care how many innocents were endangered. What sticks in my mind is the cavalier indifference – and sheer brazenness – of this attack.

Our experts have identified the weapon used in Salisbury on March 4 as a fourth-generation nerve agent known as Novichok, designed to play havoc with the central nervous system and inflict a lingering death.

Russian scientists developed Novichok starting in the 1970s. Today, only Russia combines a record of state-sponsored assassinations with a publicly avowed motive for trying to kill Sergei Skripal and stockpiles of Novichok agents.

On Monday, I summoned the Russian ambassador and gave his government 36 hours to inform us if any of these stocks had somehow gone missing.

I regret to say that the deadline passed without a response from the Kremlin. The British government has drawn the only plausible conclusion: that the Russian state attempted murder in a British city, employing a lethal nerve agent banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

On Wednesday, [Theresa May, the Prime Minister, announced](#) the biggest expulsion of Russian diplomats from Britain for more than 30 years, evicting 23 undeclared intelligence officers. The government will now take a range of measures to protect Britain from hostile states and dismantle the Russian espionage network in our country.

## UK's actions

But this matter goes far beyond a bilateral dispute. If the Russian state is prepared to deploy a banned weapon in a British city – amounting to the

unlawful use of force against the United Kingdom – then the Kremlin is clearly willing to act without restraint. The bleak truth is that what happened in Salisbury could have happened anywhere.

I interpret this incident as part of a pattern of reckless behavior by President Vladimir Putin. The common thread that joins the poisonings in Salisbury with the [annexation of Crimea](#), the cyberattacks in Ukraine, the hacking of Germany's Parliament and Russian interference in foreign elections is the Kremlin's reckless defiance of essential international rules.

Most tellingly of all, Russia has made immense efforts to conceal the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime in Syria. In October, an international investigation concluded that Bashar al-Assad's forces had [used the nerve agent sarin](#) against the town of Khan Sheikhoun in April 2017.

Yet instead of condemning Assad, Russia covered up for him by vetoing the renewal of the international inquiry and, in effect, forcing it to shut down.

How much easier does it become for a state to deploy chemical weapons when its government has already tolerated and sought to hide their use by others? I would draw a connection between Putin's indulgence of Assad's atrocities in Syria and the Russian state's evident willingness to employ a chemical weapon on British soil.

There is a reason for choosing Novichok. In its blatant Russian-ness, the nerve agent sends a signal to all who may be thinking of dissent in the intensifying repression of Putin's Russia. The message is clear: We will find you, we will catch you, we will kill you – and though we will deny it with lip-curling scorn, the world will know beyond doubt that Russia did it.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia has a special obligation to uphold the rules of good international conduct. When it does the opposite and tramples upon these rules, the Kremlin threatens the very architecture of global security.

All responsible nations share an obligation to take a principled stance against this behavior. The countermeasures announced by the Prime Minister are not solely about the attack in Salisbury. Britain is striving to uphold the rules on which the safety of every country depends. I hope and believe that our friends will stand alongside us.

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**[News story: jHub: what we do](#)**



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This introductory video explains how the jHub model works to successfully deliver capability into the hands of the military user at pace.

[jHub Defence Innovation](#)

## **We connect world class technology and talent to military users**

We look for market ready or near market technology. We don't conduct scientific and technical research. We are specifically interested in building 'MilTech', this is cutting edge digital technology that can be adapted for military use.

Our 5 focus areas are:

- artificial intelligence
- autonomy
- data analytics
- simulation
- behavioural sciences
- blockchain

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## **We fund and accelerate their pilots**

If there is a good balance between user need, technological feasibility and business viability, then our target time to pilot is 30 working days.

The length of the pilot is determined by the user and supplier; the critical component is that the partnership is agile.

## **We take successful pilots to the JFC Innovation Board for decisions on prioritisation and funding**

We have privileged access to the JFC Innovation Board, chaired by Commander JFC. For successful pilots, we ask the board to make significant delivery and funding decisions

The board meets every 3 months but can be activated out of session as required. Ultimately, an innovation will be judged a success when it delivers capability into the hands of users.

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1. 27 February 2019 Added: YouTube video link
2. 15 March 2018 First published.

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## [News story: Medical serge open call](#)

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## [News story: UK Sport Appoints New Board Member](#)

Sally Bolton OBE

Sally is Strategic Planning and Operations Director at the All England Lawn Tennis Club, having joined the Club as Head of Corporate Affairs in 2016. Prior to this Sally spent two years as Managing Director of the Organising Committee for the London double header of World Athletics Championships in 2017.

Sally assumed this role having led the team that delivered a highly successfully Rugby League World Cup in 2013, a role for which she was recognised with the award of an OBE.

Prior to this Sally was the Rugby Football League's Director of Projects & Planning and played an integral part in the Rugby Football League team that won the rights to stage the 2013 tournament. Prior to joining the RFL, Sally held a number of other roles in sports administration at club and Governing

Body level including a period as Chief Executive of Wigan RLFC and Orrell RUFC. In addition, Sally has worked in the highly regarded sports consulting group at Deloitte and run her own sports consulting business. Sally has been a member of the UK Sport Major Events Panel since 2013.

The role is remunerated at £218 per day. This appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments. The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Sally has declared no such political activity.

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## **Press release: HMRC levels the playing field by tackling online VAT fraud**

World-leading powers to ensure online sellers pay the right tax, and don't leave law-abiding high street and online businesses at a disadvantage, have come into force today (15 March 2018). These were first announced by the Chancellor at Autumn Budget 2017.

The internet has revolutionised the way people shop and helped many businesses to sell their products across the UK. Online marketplaces can help those who sell through their platforms to understand the tax rules and therefore avoid fines from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). And, indeed, they have the responsibility to make sure that fraud does not happen on their watch.

These new rules strengthen powers to make online marketplaces accountable for VAT fraud committed by online sellers on their platforms.

These powers are known by the term joint-and-several liability (JSL) for online marketplaces.

If sellers based in the UK or overseas are not paying the correct VAT when selling in the UK, and are not removed from the site following the issue of a notice by HMRC to the marketplace, HMRC will pursue the marketplaces themselves for any future unpaid tax by those sellers.

For any sales made from today onwards, the rules also make online marketplaces liable for VAT where they knew or should have known that an overseas online seller should have been VAT-registered, but was not.

This sends a clear message that businesses in the UK and overseas, online and on the high street, must all play by the same rules, protecting traditional high street and legitimate online sellers who pay what they owe.

If someone is committing VAT fraud, you can report them anonymously either [online](#) or phoning the HMRC fraud hotline on 0800 788 887.

Marketplaces must now also make sure sellers using their platforms display a valid VAT number on the site, when they are given one. This will help buyers make an informed choice about buying goods from a VAT-registered businesses with confidence.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mel Stride, said:

Whilst the honest majority pay what they owe, some businesses that sell goods online to UK shoppers are failing to pay the correct amount of VAT.

This behaviour unfairly undercuts businesses trading in the UK that play by the rules, abuses the trust of buyers, and deprives the government of significant revenue that funds vital public services.

We are clear that everyone must pay their fair share of tax, and tackling tax evasion in all its forms is a top priority for the government.

The UK has led the way in tackling this type of fraud and, in September 2016, was the first country to introduce tough powers to tackle VAT evasion by overseas sellers – these have already gone a long way to remove over a thousand non-compliant overseas businesses from selling goods online in the UK and to motivate tens of thousands of overseas sellers to register for VAT.

The new rules go further to strengthen and develop our operational response to online VAT fraud and error from both UK and overseas businesses.

As well as this, businesses can apply to register for the Fulfilment House Due Diligence Scheme from 1 April 2018. This scheme, which was first announced at Budget 2016, will require businesses that store imported goods for, or on behalf of, overseas sellers from outside the EU to keep certain records and perform certain checks on the goods they are storing.

Taken together, the respective packages of measures announced at Budget 2016 and Autumn Budget 2017 will help protect around £1 billion of tax revenue by 2023, and further enhance HMRC's ability to ensure everyone is paying their fair share.

For more detail, read:

- [guidance](#) on VAT: online marketplace seller checks
- [guidance](#) on VAT: businesses that sell goods in the UK using online marketplaces
- [measures](#) announced in Autumn Budget 2017
- [measures](#) announced in Budget 2016
- [guidance](#) on the Fulfilment House Due Diligence Scheme