

# [News story: Novichok nerve agent use in Salisbury: UK government response](#)

On Sunday 4 March Sergei and Yulia Skripal were poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia.

## **Latest update**

Prime Minister Theresa May gave a [statement to Parliament on 14 March](#). Russia has provided no explanation as to how this agent came to be used in the UK, and there is no alternative conclusion other than that the Russian State was culpable for the attempted murder of Mr Skripal and his daughter. This represents an unlawful use of force by the Russian State against the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister stated that the UK government will:

- expel 23 Russian diplomats who have been identified as undeclared intelligence officers
- develop proposals for new legislative powers to harden our defences against all forms of Hostile State Activity
- make full use of existing powers to enhance our efforts to monitor and track the intentions of those travelling to the UK who could be engaged in activity that threatens the security of the UK and of our allies

## **Earlier statements**

On 8 March the Home Secretary Amber Rudd gave an [initial statement on the investigation](#) into events in Salisbury. This followed Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson's [response to an Urgent Question](#) in Parliament on 6 March.

On 12 March [Prime Minister Theresa May gave a statement](#) in Parliament. Either this was a direct act by the Russian State against our country, or the Russian government lost control of this potentially catastrophically damaging nerve agent and allowed it to get into the hands of others. The [Foreign Secretary spoke to the BBC](#) and reiterated the Prime Minister's message.

**Find out more about Russian state aggression in the past few years**

[Pattern of Russian state aggression](#)

## **International response**

The Prime Minister spoke with world leaders about the ongoing investigation. Each expressed their solidarity with the UK:

The Foreign Secretary also [called for a united response](#) with our

international counterparts.

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office also raised this issue in international forums:

## Advice and guidance

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### [News story: DVLA opening hours: Easter 2018](#)

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### [News story: New storage facility is ready for waste](#)



The Interim Storage Facility is ready to go and help us empty the ponds.

The Interim Storage Facility is paving the way for intermediate level waste to be removed from one of the sites priority high hazard retrieval facilities.

The completion of the waste store was marked by a special event attended by

the project teams, the ISF supply chain and representatives from Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA).

Sellafield Ltd's Waste Retrievals Director John Oliver said:

We talk about moving legacy waste to a safer place; well, this is one of those safer places – a modern, fit-for-purpose storage facility which has been built using a design template already successfully proven within the NDA estate.

Along with the other stores currently under construction, the Interim Storage Facility will be a vital part of our waste retrievals mission in the future.

Duncan Thompson, NDA Sellafield Programme Director added:

The completion of the ISF project is a fantastic example of the progress Sellafield has made in developing and implementing a fit-for-purpose facility that is helping to accelerate the mission of decommissioning and reducing the hazards of the UK's civil nuclear legacy.

Developing and implementing innovative approaches to the challenges of nuclear decommissioning and clean-up is what we do and this is a great example of success at Sellafield, delivered safely, early and well below the estimated cost.

Published 14 March 2018

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## [Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Iran in April 2018](#)

Mr Rob Macaire CMG has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr Rob Macaire CMG has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran in succession to Mr Nicholas Hopton who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Macaire will take up his appointment in April 2018.

Commenting on the appointment, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Iran has an important role to play in the Middle East region, but it is essential that it does so in a constructive way – something I made clear during my visit to Tehran in December last year. The Iran deal, signed in 2015, was a huge diplomatic success. The product of years of patient and persistent diplomacy that extinguished the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran.

In that vein, I am pleased that Rob will be applying his wealth of international experience to the leading HMG's engagement in Tehran. We face challenges – including the ongoing cases of British dual-nationals detained in Iran – and areas for potential collaboration. I look forward to working with him across these areas.

Mr Macaire said:

I am honoured to be appointed the new British Ambassador to Iran. The UK's continued engagement with Iran is vital to our goal of making the Middle East region a safer and more stable place. I look forward to working with the Government of Iran and with international partners to preserve the nuclear deal and deepen our bilateral relationship, through constructive engagement on human rights, trade, and seeking political solutions to the conflicts in Yemen, Syria and elsewhere.

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Full name: Robert Macaire CMG

Married to: Alice Macaire

Children: Two

2016 – present Language Training

2011 – 2016 BG Group plc. Director of Government/Public Affairs and Political Risk

2008 – 2011 Nairobi, British High Commissioner

2006 – 2008 FCO, Director, Consular Services

2004 – 2006 New Delhi, Political Counsellor

2002 – 2004 FCO, Head, Counter Terrorism Policy Department

1998 – 2002 Washington, First Secretary, Middle East and Counter-terrorism

1998 FCO, Head of Sierra Leone Unit, Africa Directorate

1997 –1998 FCO, Head of Southern Africa Section, Africa Directorate

1996 – 1997 FCO, Head of MEPP Section, Near East and North Africa Department

1995 – 1996 FCO, Head of Levant Section, Near East and North Africa Department

1991 – 1995 Bucharest, Second Secretary (Know How Fund)

1990 FCO, Falkland Islands Department

## **Further information**

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# **News story: Consultation into strengthening teacher-examiner safeguards**

Ofqual has today (14 March 2018) set out how it intends to strengthen its regulation of awarding organisations' involvement of teachers in the development of confidential assessment materials. Today's [consultation](#) reflects detailed analysis of existing processes and extensive discussions with awarding organisations, examiners, teachers, students and parents. The new regime, if confirmed, will extend to all regulated qualifications.

The proposals include:

- explicitly setting out in our rules steps awarding organisations must take to help protect the integrity of the assessments to which teachers have contributed; and
- publishing further statutory guidance to help awarding organisations understand the factors and approaches they should consider when deciding how to comply with the rules.

Consistent with these proposals, teachers will continue to be able to write assessments and have access to confidential materials. However, awarding organisations must maintain up to date records of all conflicts of interest relating to teachers who have seen confidential assessment materials. And they must review their safeguards such that they are appropriate and proportionate to:

- effectively mitigate the risks of using teachers in the development of assessment materials, for example by making sure no teacher knows whether or when any assessments they have developed will be used;
- support teachers to do the right thing, through appropriate training and contractual obligations;
- detect malpractice, for example by sampling the work of teachers who have written exam papers to look for any unusual patterns of response.

We are also stressing that the way in which awarding organisations have regard to our guidance will be taken into account when deciding on the nature and scale of any regulatory action should a breach of confidentiality occur.

## **Timing**

The exam boards who deliver GCSEs, AS and A levels and other qualifications used as equivalents, such as the Pre-U have already written the exams for summer 2018. Safeguards for 2018 will, therefore, need to focus on deterring and detecting malpractice and on supporting teachers. These awarding organisations have published a joint statement setting out their intentions for this summer. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, and where necessary, we expect that all awarding organisations will have made significant progress in terms of the safeguards they employ by summer 2019, and have fully revised their approaches by 2020. This transition period is necessary to avoid introducing an unacceptable degree of risk to the delivery of safe qualifications.

## **Sally Collier said:**

“Almost universally, respondents to our call for evidence emphasised the importance of retaining a strong link between teaching and examining, and the benefit it brings to assessment design. Our rules on confidentiality and malpractice are already demanding. The proposals we have put forward today build on them and provide greater clarity about our expectations and the implications for awarding organisations if information about an assessment is disclosed by a teacher who has been involved in its development. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the challenge of maintaining confidentiality. However, the events of summer 2017 showed how public confidence in assessments and, in turn, qualifications, can be damaged if confidential information is wrongly used. It is essential that those who take or otherwise rely on qualifications have upmost confidence in the outcomes.”

## **Background**

- In September 2017 we announced we would review:
- the risks and benefits of the long-established practice whereby some teachers who write or contribute to exam papers also teach the qualification; and
- the effectiveness of the safeguards used to reduce the risk of a teacher who has this dual role disclosing or otherwise misusing information about confidential assessments.

We are publishing a suite of research and analysis today that provides context and support to our consultation proposals.

## **They include:**

- a summary of our call for evidence into the benefits and risks of teachers being involved in the development of qualifications that they teach
- interviews with teacher-examiners about the risks and benefits of their

involvement in developing assessment materials

- a review of safeguards used to prevent disclosure of confidential material in countries outside England
- a review of safeguards used to prevent disclosure of confidential material in countries outside England
- interviews with students studying for AS/A levels, and parents of secondary school aged children, to understand their views on teacher involvement in writing exams
- research into the sources of, and ways of identifying anomalous responses in test scores.

ENDS