

[E3 statement on attempted aerial attacks on Riyadh](#)

News story

The governments of France, Germany and the UK have strongly condemned the attempted aerial attacks on Riyadh, Saudi Arabia



A Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office spokesperson said:

The E3 – France, Germany and the UK – strongly condemn the attempted aerial attacks on Riyadh on 23 January 2021.

Proliferation and the use of missiles and drones undermine the security and stability of the region, to which we are strongly committed. We reiterate our firm attachment to the security and integrity of Saudi territory.

Published 25 January 2021

[£30m injection for UK's first uncrewed fighter aircraft](#)

The uncrewed combat aircraft will be designed to fly at high-speed alongside fighter jets, armed with missiles, surveillance and electronic warfare technology to provide a battle-winning advantage over hostile forces. Known as a 'loyal wingman', these aircraft will be the UK's first uncrewed platforms able to target and shoot down enemy aircraft and survive against surface to air missiles.

In a boost for Northern Ireland's defence industry, Spirit AeroSystems, Belfast, have been selected to lead Team MOSQUITO in the next phase of the Project. Utilising ground-breaking engineering techniques, the team will further develop the RAF's Lightweight Affordable Novel Combat Aircraft (LANCA) concept, with a full-scale vehicle flight-test programme expected by the end of 2023.

Northern Ireland Secretary, Brandon Lewis said:

This is fantastic news and underlines the distinct strengths in Northern Ireland's economy, through its advanced engineering and manufacturing capabilities.

This ground-breaking project will involve significant investment which will not only support local employment, but also reinforce Northern Ireland's contribution to the security of our nation.

Team MOSQUITO, which also includes Northrop Grumman UK, will mature the designs and manufacture a technology demonstrator to generate evidence for a follow-on LANCA programme. If successful, Project Mosquito's findings could lead to this revolutionary capability being deployed alongside the Typhoon and F-35 Lightning jets by the end of the decade.

Defence Minister, Jeremy Quin said:

This is a great win for the Northern Ireland defence industry and will showcase some of the most pioneering engineering work currently being undertaken in the UK.

The £30 million project will accelerate the development of the UK's future air power by delivering cutting-edge uncrewed aircraft, maintaining our position as a world leader in emerging technologies.

Working with innovative partners from across the UK, Project Mosquito is transforming traditional approaches to combat air to enable the rapid development of technology. By utilising the latest software development techniques and civilian aerospace engineering and manufacturing expertise, the project will deliver dramatic reductions in costs and development timelines, so their innovations can reach the front-line quicker than ever before.

This game changing research and development project will ensure the final aircraft design will be capable of being easily and affordably updated with the latest technology so we remain one step ahead of our adversaries. The aircraft's flexibility will provide the optimum protection, survivability and information as it flies alongside Typhoon, F-35 Lightning, and later, Tempest as part of our future combat air system.

Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston, Chief of the Air Staff said:

We're taking a revolutionary approach, looking at a game-changing mix of swarming drones and uncrewed >fighter aircraft like Mosquito, alongside piloted fighters like Tempest, that will transform the combat battlespace in >a way not seen since the advent of the jet age.

Director Future Combat Air, Richard Berthon said:

Project Mosquito is a vital element of our approach to Future Combat Air, rapidly bringing to life design, build >and test skills for next generation combat air capabilities. Autonomous 'loyal wingman' aircraft create the >opportunity to expand, diversify and rapidly upgrade Combat Air Forces in a cost-effective way, now and in the >future.

As announced by the Prime Minister in November 2020, the UK's Future Combat Air System (FCAS) programme is set to benefit from a portion of the extra £1.5 billion investment into military research and development, which will help ensure our Armed Forces are prepared to meet the threats of tomorrow.

LANCA originated in 2015 in Dstl to understand innovative Combat Air technologies and concepts that offer radical reductions in cost and development time and is a RAF Rapid Capabilities Office led project under the Future Combat Air System Technology Initiative (FCAS TI). The UK MOD's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) provides the project management and is the MOD's technical authority for LANCA and Project Mosquito on behalf of the RCO.

Community Champions to give COVID-19 vaccine advice and boost take up

- £23.75 million funding for councils and voluntary groups to expand covid communications with at risk groups
- Community Champions will share COVID-19 vaccine advice and information to boost local vaccination take-up
- Funding will support extra school programmes, helplines and phone calls

to those in at risk groups

Over £23 million funding has been allocated to 60 councils and voluntary groups across England to expand work to support those most at risk from COVID-19 and boost vaccine take up, Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick announced today (Monday 25 January).

Through the Community Champions scheme councils and voluntary organisations will deliver a wide range of measures to protect those most at risk – building trust, communicating accurate health information and ultimately helping to save lives. This will include developing new networks of trusted local champions where they don't already exist.

Today's funding is specifically targeted at areas with plans to reach groups such as older people, disabled people, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds who according to the latest evidence are more likely to suffer long-term impacts and poor outcomes from COVID-19. Each of the sixty councils have developed their own plan to improve communications with these groups including helplines, school programmes, workplace engagement, phoning those in at risk groups as well as training sessions to help people provide information and advice.

The Community Champions will tap into their local networks to provide advice about COVID-19 and the vaccines. Champions will also work with councils to identify barriers to accessing accurate information and to provide tailored support, such as phone calls for people who are digitally excluded, helplines, and linking to GP surgeries.

The funding will also support areas to tackle misinformation and encourage take-up as the vaccination programme expands across the country.

This builds on wider, cross-government measures to engage communities to tackle the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on certain groups and to provide accurate information about COVID -19 and the vaccines to everyone.

This is part of over £7.2 billion government funding provided to councils to help them support their communities during the pandemic.

Communities Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

It is vital that everyone has access to accurate and up to date information about COVID-19. False information about COVID-19 vaccines could cost lives. Today's funding will help councils and community groups expand some of the excellent work already underway and reach out to their communities to ensure they have the information they need and get their questions answered. Ultimately this funding will help save lives.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

Throughout the pandemic, our priority has been to protect the most vulnerable.

It is vital higher-risk groups are able to access the advice and information they need whether it's about testing, accessing the NHS or the benefits of a lifesaving vaccine.

I'm delighted to see further funding going to local areas to support their communities during this challenging time, and I'm thankful for the continued expertise and dedication of community leaders in spreading the word about our historic vaccination rollout programme across the country.

Vaccine Deployment Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

We want all communities to take up the offer of a free vaccine and I have been working closely with faith and community leaders to ensure those who may be at higher risk of harm from this virus know how they can benefit from a vaccine.

The expansion of the Community Champions scheme will help everyone get the advice and information they need about COVID-19 vaccines.

Community Champions are already in place across many areas of England, and in Birmingham have proved effective in helping communities understand what they need to do to stay safe.

Cllr Paulette Hamilton, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care, said:

We've seen great success in Birmingham with our community champions network with it helping us reach identified gaps and those sometimes harder to reach communities across the city. Champions are supported through regular live Q&A sessions allowing them to gain access to the latest advice and guidance that is accessible to those with various disabilities and language barriers to share amongst our communities. We also provide the opportunity for them to share their insights and concerns and encourage and welcome two-way communications to help inform local strategy and delivery.

Throughout the pandemic, the government has prioritised protecting the most vulnerable in our society and have invested more than £4 million into research on ethnic disparities in COVID-19, so that we can go further.

Many different communities will be supported, including Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, people with learning disabilities, as well as faith groups. Champions will be drawn from these groups to share accurate health information with their neighbours, networks, and wider community.

Two charities, Strengthening Faith Institutions and Near Neighbours, will be supporting councils in working with grassroots organisations and community leaders, to ensure that communities understand how the pandemic is being tackled and feel empowered to take action to keep themselves safe.

Birmingham case study

Debbie, aged 52 from Birmingham:

I became a Champion because I'm a childminder. I felt that by being a Champion I could lead by example and ensure that I pass accurate and up-to-date information to other childminders and to the families of the children I care for. I do feel that by following the proper government advice sent through the Community Champion scheme, and with the precautions my work setting put in place, the effect of COVID-19 here has been limited.

I also have two children, both in fulltime education: one at secondary school, the other at college. My husband is also in the vulnerable person category as he has Multiple Sclerosis. So, as well as working, I must support the family, looking after two boys who are studying from home.

By no means has our time been easy. My father passed away in February and my father-in-law in October. Fortunately, neither were COVID-19-related but organising funerals with restrictions was difficult.

As a Champion I send all the updates from the council to a local support group on WhatsApp, which includes everyone in our cul-de-sac. Anyone can also pop on there what they need shopping-wise and we go and get it for them. In fact, my weekly grocery delivery includes three other vulnerable households, as well as my own. So, we wipe everything down, pop it in bags, and deliver the shopping on the doorstep in what looks like a glorified version of 'knock-door-run'!

I'm a member of the Birmingham City Council Early Years COVID-19 group, where we try and support all early-years settings. Here the

council has even provided us with PPE, which I have collected to deliver to a number of locations. They have also signposted us to mobile units where we can have lateral flow tests in the hope that parents see that our childcare settings are safe.

I cannot express how great Birmingham City Council has been with latest updates, government advice and much more.

Birmingham allocation

Birmingham will receive £440,000 of funding. This will include; the commissioning of helplines through VCS groups to allow those with limited access to digital to follow guidance and have support for tests and vaccines. This will also include more materials for BSL/audio materials for people with poor literacy, and materials for those with learning disabilities. And an extension of contracts with existing VCS to accelerate engagement around vaccinations.

Further information

- This announcement builds on the work being done by the Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, to identify and tackle the disparities in health outcomes being faced by black and minority ethnic people as a result of COVID-19 as well as wider, cross-government engagement:
- **Near Neighbours** will receive £1 million funding to help bring people together in communities that are religiously and ethnically diverse, so that they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust, and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in. Near Neighbours provide grass root community organisations small grants to develop local initiatives. The surge fund they have been provided will be to further the Community Champion Scheme work.
- **Strengthening Faith Institutions** will receive £1.15 million funding to support work in communities to strengthen and professionalise faith institutions. Due to their reach into BAME and particularly marginalised communities, they will be developing community messaging and identifying influential community leaders and developing them into community champions.
- Materials and best practice from local areas will be shared with other areas of the country to ensure that the impact of the scheme and the funding being announced today is maximised, as well as enabling both central and local government to learn lessons about what works locally

or for certain communities, and why.

See a full list of [local authorities and funding allocations](#) (ODT, 8.72 KB)

[Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jonathan Van-Tam opinion piece in The Sunday Telegraph](#)

Next Saturday will mark the first anniversary of the World Health Organization's declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and next Sunday will be one year on from the first case of COVID-19 detected in the UK. It has been a terrible year as the virus has spread across the world causing misery, hardship, death and severely disrupting all of our lives.

The silver lining has been the incredible work of scientists and healthcare professionals across the world. If you had told me 12 months ago, that the UK would have discovered, in dexamethasone, the first treatment proven to reduce COVID-19 deaths, and vaccinated over 5 million people by this point, I would have been astonished. But that is the place in which we find ourselves. Hardship, but also hope.

Many people have played an important role in getting vaccines in arms, including the teams of researchers behind the development of the vaccines, the volunteers who took part in clinical trials, the Vaccines Taskforce who ensured we had supply of vaccine and the NHS staff and volunteers who are now working hard to administer them to people quickly and safely.

Their work has been incredible and we should rightly celebrate this.

Vaccines do offer the way out of the pandemic and a return to life as we knew it – having a pint before watching your local football team, multigenerational family gatherings and big weddings. These really will return! But to make that happen as quickly as possible we need to bring the number of cases down as soon as we can whilst we vaccinate our most vulnerable. To do that there are some important scientific points I want to highlight:

No vaccine has ever been 100% effective so no-one will have 100% protection from the virus. The way to reduce everyone's risk is to break the chains of transmission and really push down the number of cases.

Vaccines work by tricking your body into thinking it has to fight the virus. It trains you for this fight by making antibodies and stimulating T-cells;

then you are ready if you do come across the real thing. However, like any training, getting up to 'match fitness' takes time. Your body's response, the immune response, is only fully trained up around 2 or 3 weeks after you have each of your 2 jabs. If you are older it's better to allow at least 3 weeks. You can still get COVID in this time.

Even better and longer lasting protection then comes from the second dose so it is really important that everyone gets the second jab.

Really importantly we do not yet know the impact of the vaccine on transmission of the virus. So even after you have had both doses of the vaccine you may still give COVID to someone else and the chains of transmission will then continue. If you change your behaviour you could still be spreading the virus, keeping the number of cases high and putting others at risk who also need their vaccine but are further down the queue.

We still have a very high number of hospitalisations and deaths. A quarter of hospital admissions for COVID-19 are in people under the age of 55. Despite the speed of the rollout, these are people who will not have the vaccine for a while yet.

Some people are questioning the UK policy of trying to give as many at-risk people as possible the first dose of vaccine in the shortest possible time, inevitably extending the interval before the second dose is given. But what none of these (who ask reasonable questions) will tell me is: who on the at-risk list should suffer slower access to their first dose so that someone else who's already had one dose (and therefore most of the protection) can get a second? Everyone on the JCVI priority list is at risk from this nasty virus, and vaccines just can't be produced at an unlimited rate.

It has been a very difficult year for us all and everyone, including me, is desperate to return to seeing the people we love. The vaccine has brought considerable hope and we are in the final furlough of the pandemic but for now, vaccinated or not, we still have to follow the guidance for a bit longer.

[More employers sign up to rapid testing to protect workforce](#)

- Expansion of testing will find more positive cases, keeping key workers from unknowingly passing on the virus and protecting vital services
- Organisations signed up to workplace testing already include Royal Mail, Tate & Lyle Sugars, Primula, Moy Park, Octopus Energy, Apetito, and DVLA.

Businesses and public sector organisations are joining a government scheme to

test workers without symptoms who cannot work from home.

Around 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and may be unknowingly spreading the virus. To help stop the virus spreading, the government is making millions of rapid test kits available to NHS and care home staff, primary care workers, schools, colleges and universities, as well as to all 314 local authorities in England via the community testing offer.

To support this national effort, government departments are working in partnership with NHS Test and Trace to support businesses and public sector bodies to implement rapid testing, including organisations operating in the food, manufacturing, energy and retail sectors, and within the public sector including job centres, transport networks, and the military. An estimated 734,600 lateral flow tests have been distributed across the public and private sector so far, helping workers who need to leave home for work during lockdown to continue to do so, whilst quickly identifying those who may be carrying the virus.

Rapid testing in the workplace, using lateral flow tests, aims to help protect those at highest risk and provide vital information to help inform further rollout of the rapid testing technology in future. Organisations signed up to workplace testing already include: Royal Mail, Tate & Lyle Sugars, Primula, Moy Park, Octopus Energy, Apetito, and DVLA.

In addition to scaling up employer-led testing, targeted community testing is now being rolled out across all local authorities in England, with local authorities being encouraged to target testing to people who are unable to work from home. There are now 156 local authorities rolling out community testing programmes, with more than 7 million test kits delivered to participating local authorities.

Local authorities will have the decision on how to use the tests, prioritising those who cannot work from home during the national lockdown. For example these could include using them for council workers, bin collectors or shop workers.

Rapid asymptomatic testing programmes targeting workers are underway in many areas as part of community testing, including Essex, Milton Keynes, Brent and Darlington.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

With around 1 in 3 people not showing symptoms, testing those without symptoms is vital to breaking chains of transmission.

By offering rapid testing in the workplace, we are offering additional peace of mind to those who are unable to work from home during the current lockdown.

Lateral flow tests have already been hugely successful in finding positive cases we would not otherwise find and I encourage employers and workers to take this offer up to help protect

essential services and businesses.

Lateral flow tests used by the UK government go through a rigorous evaluation by the country's leading scientists. Tests detect cases with high levels of virus, making them effective in finding infectious individuals who aren't showing any symptoms and are the most likely to transmit the disease.

They are also being rolled out across primary care including general practice, community pharmacy, dentistry and optometry; in addition, tests have been provided to independent sector providers and community interest companies providing NHS care – around 17 million tests have been approved for this, of which 7.5 million have already been distributed.

All NHS patient facing staff in acute, mental health, ambulance and community trusts have been provided with lateral flow tests to enable them to test themselves at home twice a week. Over 25 million tests have been distributed to date.

More than 21 million PCR swab test kits and 16 million LFDs have been sent to care homes for testing all residents and asymptomatic staff.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Keeping workers safe is absolutely crucial and businesses have been working incredibly hard to prioritise the health of their staff and customers during this difficult time.

I am pleased so many businesses have taken up the opportunity of rapid workplace testing. I would encourage even more to do so and to continue to follow our COVID-secure guidance as we pull together to protect our NHS and save lives.

Dr Shaun Davis, Global Director Compliance and Sustainability at Royal Mail said:

Throughout the pandemic, the health and safety of our customers and our people has been our number one priority. We were pleased to take part in the government's pilot of rapid COVID-19 testing for workforces. Lateral flow device testing is poised to add another important tool in our drive to keep our people safe, as well as inform a mass testing strategy for the UK. Our employees and union in Sheffield have been incredibly supportive of the pilot. We could not be prouder to play our part in the government's fight against COVID-19.

Julie Lennard, DVLA Chief Executive, said:

We are very pleased to be part of this important programme to help

the fight back against the virus. Staff safety is our priority at DVLA so taking part in this scheme is a valuable addition to the changes we have already put in place to help keep our site COVID-19 secure and to reduce the risk of transmission. These include zone working, additional cleaning, one way systems, Perspex screens and the addition of a new building to give operational staff on site more space.

Gerald Mason, Senior Vice President of Tate & Lyle Sugars said:

Mass testing has really helped us get one step ahead of the virus by identifying colleagues who were infectious but showed no symptoms. This has been especially welcome over the last few weeks at our East London factories as the levels of virus in the local area have been extremely high. Our colleagues have welcomed it as it means they are much safer in our workplace, and our factories are better placed to continue to feed the nation.

Primula Managing Director, Paul Lewney, said:

I am delighted that Primula has been chosen as a pilot site for lateral flow testing. Our colleagues have worked tirelessly and we really appreciate their commitment throughout the pandemic to ensure we can continue to play our part in helping to feed the nation. By implementing this mass testing programme, they are able to continue their work in the knowledge that they are keeping both themselves and their families safe. It is vital that we do everything we can to understand more about the virus and help control the spread of COVID-19 and it is an honour that Primula can play a role in that.

Kirsty Wilkins, HR and Performance Director at Moy Park said:

We are proud to be playing our part to help tackle the spread of coronavirus by participating in the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) rapid testing programme.

Safety is a condition at Moy Park and we continue to maintain the highest level of vigilance to stop the virus coming into our facilities and help prevent its transmission. Participation in the scheme runs in tandem with the rigorous safety protocols we have in place such as thermal temperature scanning, enhanced cleaning and hygiene regimes, Perspex screens, additional PPE and social distancing measures.