

## Seeking cooperation in order to achieve a two-state solution

Thank you, Mr President, and thank you to Special Coordinator Mladenov for his briefing. As others have done, I'd like to pay tribute to his tireless work in this role to de-escalate tension and advance peace between the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I look forward to continuing to work with Nikolay Mladenov in his new role and to welcoming his successor.

Mr President, let me first express the UK's sadness at the death of the Palestinian child, Ali Ayman Abu Alaya, following clashes between the Israel Defense Forces and Palestinian civilians. We have urged Israel to ensure that its investigation is swift and comprehensive. Unfortunately, the death of Abu Alaya is not an exceptional occurrence. He is the most recent of 23 Palestinian civilians to have been killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank this year. The toll is unacceptable, and the UK continues to urge restraint in the use of live fire and potentially lethal force by Israeli forces. We also condemn the killing of an Israeli civilian by a Palestinian in the same period.

As the Secretary-General's report notes, throughout this year, we have seen further settlement advancement, including in highly sensitive areas around East Jerusalem. We have seen the highest level of demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures since 2016 and ongoing evictions of Palestinians from their homes. In East Jerusalem hundreds are at risk, including those eight families facing imminent eviction in Silwan. The United Kingdom's position on these issues is clear and well known. Settlements are illegal under international law. They are an obstacle to peace and they undermine the physical viability of the two-state solution. Demolitions and evictions in all but the most exceptional of circumstances are illegal under international law and cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians. We urge the government of Israel to cease these policies in order to build confidence with the Palestinians and encourage the pursuit of dialogue.

However, as resolution 2334 recognises, settlements are not the only obstacle to peace. The people of Israel deserve to live free from the scourge of terrorism and anti-Semitic incitement, which gravely undermine the prospects for a two-state solution. It is critical that the Palestinian leadership continue their efforts to tackle them. We also condemn violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians. The Israeli security forces must provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

Mr President, I would like to raise the Commissioner General's urgent call for additional funding for UNWRA. The UK has contributed £51 million, or approximately \$69 million, to UNWRA in 2020 and engaged closely with the Commissioner General. We call on states who have cut their funding in recent years to support UNWRA now. We must do what we can to deal with the immediate needs of refugees throughout the region, to preserve stability and to ensure that those in need do not suffer. We are clear that we must work with UNWRA

in the longer term to help them to reach a secure and sustainable financial footing.

Mr President, recent Arab-Israeli agreements have shown that dialogue triumphs over hostility. We as the international community must now work with the parties alongside the incoming US administration to ensure that the closer ties and benefits of these normalisation agreements are also extended to the Palestinians. We urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to also enter into a political dialogue, with the goal of ending the occupation and delivering a two-state solution.

To conclude, Mr President, unilateral steps will not deliver peace, a settlement to the conflict must be negotiated directly and reflect the religious and national interests of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Compromise will be needed on both sides. The U.K. continues to believe that a two-state solution is the only viable long term solution. It is the only way to end permanently the Arab-Israeli conflict and preserve Israel's Jewish and democratic identity. As we move into a new year and a new era for the region, the international community must redouble its efforts to support the Israeli and Palestinian leadership in delivering this peace for both their peoples.

Thank you.

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## [Operation Brock to be deployed in Kent tonight](#)

The company said any HGVs which arrive in Kent tonight will be diverted to Manston Airport to park.

Operation Brock is being set up tonight on the M20 motorway in Kent as part of a plan to keep traffic moving on the M20 during periods of cross-Channel disruption. It involves using a contraflow road layout on the M20 London-bound carriageway between junctions 9 and 8 (from Ashford to Maidstone) and directing lorries heading for mainland Europe onto the coastbound carriageway, where they can be queued if necessary.

A long concrete moveable barrier is put in place to allow the contraflow to happen safely.

Operation Brock will replace Operation Stack, which was activated overnight on Sunday as an initial response after the French government's announcement that it would not accept any passengers or hauliers arriving from the UK for a period, and the subsequent closures of the Port of Dover and Channel Tunnel.

Operation Brock opens up more of the road network in Kent because it means

traffic can continue to move in both directions on the M20, whereas Stack effectively closes it to coastbound traffic.

Hauliers are advised to avoid travelling to Kent as disruption could last for several days.

The moveable barrier will be installed on the M20 tonight and will create a new layout with a contraflow system reopening the M20 in both directions. Once deployed, this will allow traffic to continue travelling in both directions on the motorway at the same time as port bound HGVs are queued, if necessary, on the coastbound carriageway until they can travel through to the Port of Dover or Eurotunnel.

The barrier was recently successfully tested and is part of a series of measures – known as Operation Brock – aimed at keeping the M20 open in both directions during periods of cross-Channel disruption.

To make sure the barrier is deployed and removed safely, the M20 will be closed coastbound between junction 7 (for Maidstone) and junction 9 (Ashford), and London-bound between junctions 9 and 8 (Maidstone East), overnight tonight (8pm to 8am). The M20 will reopen by 8am Tuesday morning with the new road layout in place. Whenever the M20 is closed, signed diversions will be in place.

### **What will the M20 look like from Tuesday morning?**

- The M20 will close in both directions overnight between junctions 7 and 9 (coastbound) and junctions 9 and 8 (London-bound) tonight (Monday 21 December) for the installation of the moveable barrier.
- Depending on traffic levels, the M20 should reopen by 8am on Tuesday 22 December, with the contraflow in place. Drivers will need to follow the different layout on the M20 from just north of Junction 8 (for Hollingbourne/Leeds) to Junction 9 (Ashford). Lorries heading for mainland Europe could be routed down the coastbound carriageway, with a 30mph speed limit in place. All other traffic will be directed onto the contraflow, with two lanes in each direction operating at 50mph.
- Operation Brock will remain in place until further notice

### **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

### **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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# Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 21 December 2020

Good afternoon,

I want to update everyone on one thing and that's what's happening at our borders and especially at Dover.

Last night at 11pm the French Government imposed restrictions on UK freight crossing to France when accompanied by a driver.

And so today I chaired a meeting of the Government's emergency, COBR committee

in order to co-ordinate a UK-wide response.

And it is vital first to stress that these delays

– which are only occurring at Dover –

only affect human-handled freight,

and that is only 20 per cent of the total arriving from or departing to the European continent,

which means the vast majority of food, medicines and other supplies are coming and going as normal.

You may also be aware – in fact I'd be amazed if you weren't –

that the government has been preparing for a long time for this exactly kind of event.

So working with the Kent Resilience Forum, Kent County Council and Highways England,

we've activated our long-prepared plans,

with the result that we have already been able to reduce the number of lorries waiting on the M20 from 500 to 170.

The site at Manston Airfield is ready to cope with any overflow.

And, of course, we are working with our friends across the Channel to unblock the flow of trade as fast as possible.

The Government at all levels is communicating with our friends in Paris

I have just spoken to President Macron – we had a very good call – we both

understand each other's positions and want to resolve these problems as fast as possible.

I know that Grant is also speaking to his counterpart and we are working to a solution, as I say, as fast as we can

to allow freight traffic to resume between the UK and France,

and ensure that lorries can travel in both directions in a Covid-secure way.

I want to stress that we in the UK fully understand the anxieties of our friends about Covid, their anxieties about the new variant,

but it is also true that we believe the risks of transmission by a solitary driver sitting alone in the cab are really very low.

And so we hope to make progress as fast as we possibly can.

I want to repeat that these delays only apply to a very small percentage of food entering the UK,

and as British supermarkets have said, their supply chains are strong and robust,

so everyone can continue to shop normally.

And to our international friends and partners I want to say very frankly:

We understand your concerns,

And I hope that everybody can see that as soon as we were briefed as a government of the fast transmissibility of this new strain at about 3.15pm on Friday afternoon,

We lodged all the necessary information with the World Health Organisation

And we took prompt and decisive action the very next day to curb the spread of the variant within the UK.

And we want to work with our colleagues, with our friends around the world, as we have from the beginning to develop new treatments and new vaccines.

And today I can announce that half a million people in the UK have now received their first dose.

As we've seen throughout this pandemic, this virus alas can move all too swiftly from one nation to another,

But it is steadily being defeated by an international response

An international response that is bringing the hope of vaccines to the entire world,

And in that the UK will continue to play our full part.

I'll now handover to our Secretary of State, Grant.

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## [New trade barriers service launched to help British businesses export internationally](#)

### News story

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has today (Monday 21st December) launched a new service to help British businesses identify new trade opportunities overseas.



The 'Check for barriers to trading and investing abroad' digital service will allow users to search for information on trade barriers imposed by other countries, which could restrict businesses in trading and investing there.

Whilst not all barriers are necessarily resolvable, businesses will be able to see where barriers have been removed and the new service will highlight potential areas of growth and opportunity for their products or services.

This service is the latest tool made available by DIT in supporting British businesses with market access issues. It sits alongside the existing 'Report a trade barrier' and 'Check how to export goods' as a suite of services. It has been specifically created to help make it easier for British businesses to seize new opportunities.

Tackling trade barriers is one of the Department's key priorities. It is integral to Britain's independent trade policy and could add billions into the British economy through increased trade flows.

"I have spent much of the past year speaking to British businesses of all sizes – hearing of their determination to bounce back bigger, better and bolder out of COVID-19.

"This new service will help businesses across Britain to identify potential new markets and seize the new opportunities that come with becoming an independent trading nation, boosting jobs and growth in every corner of the country.

"I am committed to doubling down on tackling trade barriers, so that we can add to the 175 barriers across 61 countries we have already removed and make it easier for our great British businesses to trade globally."

The new database will be regularly updated to reflect the latest information on trade barriers.

Published 21 December 2020

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## Wales to play part in delivering new British Army vehicle

Press release

A Cardiff-based business has been awarded a £20m contract to provide components for a new armoured fighting vehicle.



A company in South Wales will play an integral part in delivering the British Army's next-generation armoured fighting vehicle, the UK Government has announced.

MilDef, which is based in Cardiff, will provide electronics such as Crewstation PCs, servers and ethernet switches for the Boxer armoured fighting vehicles under a £20m subcontract awarded to them by RBSL and Rheinmetall.

The contract is expected to sustain and create around a dozen Welsh jobs and will secure further development of MilDef's manufacturing facilities in the city over the next 10 years.

**Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:**

Thousands of jobs in Wales are supported by UK defence expenditure and this latest £20m investment shows our continued commitment to invest in Welsh suppliers – cementing Wales’ place as a defence industry hub.

I welcome this investment which comes at a time when the UK’s armed forces are providing crucial support to the NHS, Ambulance Service and Covid-19 testing effort across Wales.

**Director Land Equipment for Defence Equipment and Support, Major General Darren Crook, said:**

The British Boxer programme has continued at pace this year despite the significant challenges that 2020 has set us. I am delighted that we are now beginning to see real term benefits to the UK from the investment in the programme and proud that we will be delivering a state-of-the art future capability to our British Armed Forces.

**Duncan Skinner, Chief Sales Officer at MilDef Group, said:**

We are delighted to supply high-performance products together with RBSL into one of the UK MoD’s strategic vehicle programmes. MilDef Ltd continues its expansion in the UK defence industry and this contract is an example of the exciting times ahead for the company.

The UK decided to re-join the Boxer programme in 2018 and since then has committed £2.8bn to deliver over 500 vehicles to the British Army. They will be made up of four variants: an Infantry Carrier; a Specialist Carrier; a Command Vehicle; and an Ambulance.

Much of the fleet is planned to be built in Telford and Stockport by main contractors RBSL and WFEL, supported by a nationwide supply chain that will secure around 1000 jobs nationwide and create an ambitious UK apprenticeship scheme. The aim is to have the first vehicles in service in 2023.

**ENDS**

Published 21 December 2020