

Speech: Salisbury Nerve Agent Attack: UK OSCE Permanent Council Statement

Mr. Chairman,

It is with great regret that I take the floor today to inform the Permanent Council of deeply concerning events that have taken place in the UK over the past days.

On the afternoon of Sunday 4 March, in the beautiful cathedral city of Salisbury in Wiltshire, a father and his daughter, Sergey and Julia Skripal, were taken gravely ill whilst walking through the city centre. Both remain critically ill. A British police officer who was among members of the emergency services responding to the incident also fell seriously ill and has spent the past days in hospital in intensive care. More than 30 other people have also sought medical treatment. As the nature of the Skripals' illness became clear, a major police-led operation sought to identify the poison, locate its source and decontaminate the affected locations and ensure the safety of the public. That operation, and those investigations are ongoing.

As the Prime Minister told the British Parliament, it is clear that Mr. Skripal and his daughter had been poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent. I repeat, a military-grade nerve agent.

This agent has been identified by our experts at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, Porton Down, as a type developed in Russia, part of a group of agents known as Novichok. On Monday, my Prime Minister told Parliament that it was highly likely that Russia, a participating State of the OSCE, was responsible.

Either as a direct act – or because Russia had lost control of a catastrophically damaging military-grade nerve agent.

This assessment was based not only on the positive identification of the nerve agent and our knowledge that the Russian Federation has previously produced this agent and still has the capability to do so, but also on the Russian state's record of state sponsored assassinations, and indeed, public statements indicating that defectors may be seen as legitimate targets.

The British Government sought an urgent explanation from Russia, asking Moscow for immediate and full disclosure of the Novichok programme to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Russia's response so far has demonstrated complete disdain for the gravity of these events. There has been no explanation of how this nerve agent came to be used in the UK. And no explanation as to why Russia, a participating State of the OSCE, has an undeclared Chemical Weapon programme – in clear contravention of international law. There is no alternative conclusion other than that the Russian state was culpable for this heinous act. This represents an unlawful use of force by the Russian Federation in the UK.

Mr. Chairman, I need hardly remind the Permanent Council that no state party which has committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention should in any way be linked to, or responsible for, the use of Chemical Weapons. Indeed, only one week ago, Russia reported in the FSC the destruction of historic Chemical Weapon stocks. Events of the last week cast significant doubt on that statement.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is not the only international commitment brought into question by this attack, the first offensive use of nerve agent of any sort on European Territory since the Second World War.

This was a grotesque crime, that not only targeted individuals in a particularly barbaric way, but which was perpetrated without regard to the safety of the British emergency services or indeed to local residents and visitors going about their ordinary lives on a Sunday afternoon. I repeat Mr. Chairman, this was an unlawful use of force against the UK.

But it is not simply a bilateral matter. This crime violates the letter and spirit of the Helsinki Final Act. It damages the concept of confidence building this organisation strives to develop. And it undermines the principles on which this organisation is founded.

No participating State of the OSCE should feel comfortable with what happened on the streets of Salisbury. No participating State.

Mr. Chairman, police investigations are ongoing, decontamination operations are ongoing and medical care for the victims of this attack is ongoing.

For now, allow me to express my thanks for the many messages of support from friends, allies and partners around this table and for the strong expressions of solidarity from many capitals represented here.

I will close echoing the words of my Prime Minister. This is an affront to the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons. And an affront to the rules-based system on which we depend. We will work with our allies and partners to confront such actions wherever they threaten our security, at home and abroad.

Mr. Chairman, please attach this statement to the journal of the day.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

[Press release: Celeb-led travel trends prompt FCO warning this Easter](#)

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is warning young Brits following in

the footsteps of globe-trotting celebs not to fall foul of lesser-known local laws and customs, which could land them in serious trouble.

New research from the FCO shows that one third of 18 – 24 year olds (33%) will be influenced by celebrities when preparing for their holiday this Easter, with nearly one in three (30%) saying stars inspire their travel destination.

However, many of these destinations have more unusual and surprising rules than UK travellers are used to.

As most young Brits don't have A-listers' concierge support when planning trips abroad, the FCO is urging British people to be aware of local laws and customs in the destinations they are travelling to by reading up on Travel Advice – something that fewer than two fifths of young people (38%) currently do – if they want to avoid getting into trouble abroad.

FCO analysis of ONS data has found a significant increase in Brits travelling further afield than the traditional European trips, often to popular celebrity destinations that have stricter laws and customs than the UK. Visits to Sri Lanka are up more than a fifth (22%) and the UAE up more than a sixth (17%).

Jack White, celeb content director at Now magazine said:

We've all felt the pang of envy that comes from scrolling through a celebrity's luxury holiday snaps on social media, but if you're ever lucky enough to end up in Dubai or St Lucia it's worth remembering different countries have different rules – and sometimes even the stars seem unaware of this.

It's easy to get caught up the moment on holiday, so it's worth researching the local laws beforehand to make sure your dream trip doesn't end in disaster. After all, there's definitely nothing glamorous about ending up behind bars!

The FCO recommends Brits making trips abroad this Easter join the 16 million people a year who check its Travel Advice before they travel. All sorts of local laws and customs are covered in the travel advice, including the 10 listed below:

1. UAE: Swearing and making rude gestures (including online) are considered obscene acts and offenders can be jailed or deported.
2. Thailand: You can't bring vaporisers, such as e-cigarettes, e-baraku or refills into Thailand. These items are likely to be confiscated and you could be fined or sent to prison for up to ten years if convicted.

3. Greece: Indecent behaviour, including mooning, isn't tolerated and could result in arrest and a fine or a prison sentence.
4. Sri Lanka: The mistreatment of Buddhist images and artefacts is a serious offence and tourists have been convicted for this. British nationals have been refused entry to Sri Lanka or faced deportation for having visible tattoos of Buddha. Don't pose for photographs standing in front of a statue of Buddha.
5. Japan: The use or possession of some medicines like Vicks Inhalers or painkillers containing Codeine is banned in Japan and can result in detention and deportation
6. Turkey: It is an offence to insult the Turkish nation or the national flag, or to deface or tear up currency. If you are convicted of any of these offences, you could face a prison sentence of between six months and three years.
7. Caribbean: Many Caribbean countries, such as Barbados, St. Vincent, and St. Lucia ban the wearing of camouflage clothing, including by children.
8. Spain: Causing a forest fire is treated as a criminal offence in Spain even if unintentional.
9. Australia: Australia has strict quarantine rules to keep out pests and diseases that could affect plant, animal and human health. Breaches of quarantine regulations can result in large fines.
10. Ukraine: Smoking and drinking alcoholic drinks in public places (including transport, bus stops, underground crossings, sports and government establishments, playgrounds and parks) is officially banned.

Julia Longbottom, FCO Consular Director said:

It's great to see the British people being inspired to travel to new and exciting places. This makes it all the more important to follow our Travel Advice and respect local laws and customs to avoid unnecessary trouble. For instance, e-cigarettes are banned in Thailand and can result in a prison sentence of up to ten years.

Even in places closer to home, disrespecting local laws can have serious consequences – in Greece indecent behaviour, such as mooning, can be punishable with a fine or even a prison sentence.

We see many cases each year of people breaking local laws and customs.

It is important that our travellers understand that the UK Government can't give legal advice or get them out of prison. Instead, we want to do all we can to help British people stay safe when they are travelling, and avoid ending up in these difficult situations.

For more information and to find out about local laws and customs in destinations around the world, visit the [FCO's travel advice pages](#).

Further information

[News story: Durham Light Infantry and Bedfordshire Regiment Soldiers who fought in world war 1 are laid to rest a century later](#)

Captain Matt Tovey, Senior Officer representing Royal Anglians (left) Rob Thompson, Defence Attaché, British Embassy salute in front of the Royal Anglians, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The remains of 2 unknown British soldiers were given a dignified burial service earlier today (Thursday 15 March), over 100 years after their deaths. The service, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, was conducted by The Reverend John Swanston CF, Chaplain to the 1st Battalion The Rifles.

The Reverend John Swanston CF, 1st Battalion, The Rifles, leads the service for the two unknown British soldiers, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Both of these men were laid to rest today in a ceremonial burial with full military honours at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Orchard Dump Cemetery in France.

Members of the 3 Rifles Regiment standing by the coffin of the unknown Durham Light Infantry soldier, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Louise Dorr, JCCC said:

It is always a source of great personal sadness when we have to accept that we have been unable to identify a soldier who made the greatest sacrifice and paid the ultimate price.

We might not know who they are, but they were loved by somebody. It is fitting that members of their military family from the Royal Anglian Regiment and The Rifles are here today to pay tribute and to see them laid to rest with honour and dignity.

Members of the 3 Rifles Regiment prepare to lower the coffin of the unknown Durham Light Infantry soldier, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The 2 soldiers were both found at Gavrelle near Arras. The first was found in July 2016. Based on the artefacts also found at the time which included a Durham Light Infantry shoulder title and cap badge, plus a T7 (7th Battalion) badge, it was thought that he died in September 1918 from when only 2 soldiers from the 7th Battalion are still missing. DNA testing has proved that it is neither of these soldiers.

Members of the 3 Rifles Regiment lower the coffin of the unknown Durham Light Infantry soldier, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The second soldier was found in September 2016. In his uniform pocket was a Bedfordshire Regiment cap badge. It is thought that he died in the Battle of Gavrelle in April 1917, but there are still too many Bedfordshire soldiers missing from that time for an identification to be made.

Royal Anglians Regiment folding the flag for the unknown Bedfordshire soldier, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Brigadier Rob Thomson, Defence Attaché, Paris said:

It is a privilege as both a serving Rifleman and UK Defence Attaché to France to participate in this solemn ceremony, as we rebury with full honours these courageous men who paid the ultimate price whilst serving their country alongside their comrades in arms to protect the liberty of Europe 100 years ago.

Mel Donnelly, CWGC said:

Today these soldiers, unknown but not forgotten, will be laid to rest alongside their comrades at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Orchard Dump Cemetery. They have been buried with the honour and dignity their sacrifice deserves and the CWGC will care for their grave, and the graves and memorials to all those who died, with that same honour and dignity forever. We will remember them all.

Captain Patrick Keating, Adjutant 3 Rifles, successor regiment to the Durham Light Infantry, said:

It is an immense honour for Riflemen of 3 RIFLES to be involved in the burial of this unknown soldier of the Durham Light, who faithfully served his country over 100 years ago. It is humbling to think of this sacrifice and the debt which the country owes him and we are proud that we in the RIFLES carry on the traditions of the Durham Light Infantry and our other antecedents to this day.

Headstones for the unknown soldiers have been provided by the CWGC, who will now care for their final resting place in perpetuity.

Press release: Government updates takeover rules in line with technology developments

- applies to businesses developing military technology, computing hardware and quantum technology to ensure the rules keep pace with innovation
- reforms strike balance between keeping the country safe and maintaining our global standing as an open and liberal trading nation
- the new measures follow a review of the government's powers in relation to foreign investment and national security

Updated rules to strengthen the government's powers to scrutinise takeovers that may raise national security concerns in specific areas of the economy will be introduced to Parliament today (15 March 2018).

Under current rules, the government can only intervene in mergers when they meet certain tests related to the target company's turnover or where the merger causes an increase in the parties' overall share of supply of goods or services.

However, these rules do not properly recognise the growing importance of small British businesses in developing cutting edge technology products which can have national security applications.

In order to address this change in the market, the government will amend the tests for businesses in the military, dual-use, computing hardware and quantum technology sectors that are most likely to have implications for our security.

Today's rule change will remove the requirement for a merger to lead to an

increase in the share of supply. In the coming weeks the government will introduce complementary measures to lower the test for ministerial intervention in relation to the target business's turnover to over £1 million, down from £70 million under current rules. Both are subject to Parliament's approval.

Business Minister Richard Harrington said:

Around 75,000 new jobs were created in the UK last year thanks to foreign investment. However, our economy can only thrive if our national security is protected, so it is right that we keep our powers of intervention under review to ensure the rules keep pace with innovation.

These new measures will allow us to ensure that takeovers in key areas of the economy cannot risk the UK's national security whilst maintaining our position as one of the most open and modern economies in the world.

The changes follow a consultation launched last year to amend the Enterprise Act to reform and strengthen the government's powers. Today's rule changes are the first step in its plans – broader changes will be announced in a white paper later this year.

The government has also published draft guidance for businesses so they can easily identify and adapt to the changes to legislation.

1. The National Security and Infrastructure Investment Review green paper, published on 17 October 2017, outlined the government's plans to take a staged approach through short and long term measures to reform how it scrutinises national security implications of business transactions. Today's measures are a response to this consultation on amending the Enterprise Act through secondary legislation.

[National security and infrastructure investment review with Part 1 government response and draft guidance](#)

2. The consultation on longer term proposals closed on 9 January. The government will publish a response to this consultation in due course.
3. Under the current Enterprise Act 2002 ministers can intervene in mergers (foreign or domestic) that give rise to specific public interest concerns of national security, financial stability or media plurality. However, for ministers to be able to intervene, the transaction has to meet certain thresholds. These are that the target company has a UK turnover of over £70 million, or that the merger takes the merging parties' combined share of supply to 25% or more (or increases an existing share of supply of 25% or more). There are limited exceptions to this related to some defence and media transactions.

4. The affirmative statutory instrument introduced today amends the share of supply test to allow the scrutiny of more mergers in three areas: (a) the military and dual-use sector, (b) 2 parts of the advanced technology sector, encompassing computing hardware and quantum technologies. For these areas alone, this instrument amends the share of supply test so that it is met where a merger or takeover involves a target with 25% or more share of supply in the UK, as well as where the deal leads to an increase in the share of supply to, or above, this threshold, which is the current requirement.
 5. Subject to Parliamentary approval being obtained for this affirmative instrument, a second, negative statutory instrument will be laid to amend the turnover test to allow the scrutiny of more mergers in the same 3 areas of the economy. The second instrument will lower the threshold over which the target business's UK turnover must be, from over £70 million to £1 million. We intend that both instruments would come into force at the same time, subject to scrutiny of the House.
 6. The changes, whilst made for national security-related reasons, will also amend the thresholds that allow the independent Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to scrutinise merger for competition concerns. However, neither the government or the CMA expect that the changes will bring about a material change in the CMA's approach to the assessment of mergers on competition grounds.
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[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.