

Speech: Foreign Secretary's remarks on the use of a nerve agent in Salisbury: 13 March 2018

The first thing is to get over to our friends and partners exactly what has happened, and that's what we've been doing today. As the Prime Minister explained yesterday, this is a brazen attempt to murder people – innocent people – on UK soil. The policeman is still in hospital.

It's overwhelmingly likely, or highly likely that the Russian state was involved. And the use of this nerve agent would represent the first use of nerve agents on the continent of Europe since the Second World War.

Clearly what we're doing today is giving Russia until midnight tonight to explain how it came to be that Novichok was used on the streets of Wiltshire. If they can come up with a convincing explanation then obviously we will want to see full disclosure of that to the [Organisations for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](#) in The Hague.

If not, then clearly we will want to be announcing the UK response, and that would come tomorrow. In the meantime, what we've been doing is talking to friends and partners, explaining what we see as the high likelihood of Russian State agency.

I've been very encouraged so far by the strength of the support that we are getting. I think in particular from President Macron of France, Sigmar Gabriel, my German counterpart, and from Washington, where Rex Tillerson last night made it very clear that he sees this as part of a pack of increasingly disruptive behaviour by Russia – the reckless use of chemical weapons that stretches from Syria to the streets of Salisbury. I've been encouraged by the willingness of our friends to show support and solidarity.

It's important that we wait until the deadline has passed. You've got to do this correctly. We've given the Russians until midnight to explain how the Novichok could have come to be on the streets of Britain. We cannot exclude that they have an explanation and we will want a full disclosure to the chemical weapons watchdog in the Hague. If not, there is a package of measures that we would use.

It is very important that people understand the gravity of what has happened and the outrage that the British government feels about the use of nerve agents, use of chemical weapons, against innocent members of the public, against an innocent police officer, on UK soil. We will make sure that our response is, as I told the House last week, commensurate but robust.

News story: New offshore patrol vessel named HMS Trent

HMS Trent has been formally named in Glasgow. Crown copyright.

Within the next few days the 90-metre warship, which is the third to be named following HMS Forth and HMS Medway, will take to the water for the first time and make the short journey across the Clyde from Govan to Scotstoun where she will be fitted out for sea trials.

The ship's sponsor, Mrs Pamela Potts, officially named the ship by pressing a button to smash a bottle of gin, which was distilled close to the River Trent, against the hull. Trent's lady sponsor Mrs Potts is the wife of Vice Admiral Duncan Potts, Director General of the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom.

HMS Trent will, alongside her sister ships Forth, Medway, Tamar and Spey, make a significant contribution to the defence of the UK by performing vital counter-terrorism, anti-smuggling and other maritime security operations to secure the UK's borders.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Guto Bebb, said:

As the third of five Offshore Patrol Vessels being built in Scotland, HMS Trent will soon be part of a fleet of highly capable ships. These new vessels will keep the UK safe by conducting counter-terrorism, anti-piracy, anti-smuggling and other vital maritime operations. UK Defence has invested in an unprecedented ship-building production line in Glasgow and the city's shipyards with their 1,700 highly skilled engineers and technicians, benefiting from full order books for the next two decades.

The sixth Royal Navy vessel to bear the name, HMS Trent will be armed with a medium-calibre gun and a flight deck capable of accommodating a Merlin helicopter.

DE&S Chief of Materiel (Ships), Sir Simon Bollom, said:

This is another welcome milestone in the delivery of the Royal Navy's new Offshore Patrol Vessel fleet – one which we are celebrating alongside our partners in the Royal Navy and industry.

We look forward to the delivery of the remaining OPVs and good progress in the Type 26 build programme.

The work to build the new OPV fleet is sustaining jobs and the shipbuilding skills vital to the construction of the new Type 26 Frigate fleet. The first Type 26, HMS Glasgow, is currently under construction in Govan.

Following a period of rigorous sea trials, HMS Trent is expected to be delivered to the Royal Navy in the second half of 2018.

[News story: Spring Statement 2018: what you need to know](#)

The Spring Statement gives people and businesses certainty and stability to plan for the future

Major tax or spending changes will now be made once a year at the Budget in the Autumn.

The Spring Statement:

- gives an update on the overall health of the economy and the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts
- gives an update on progress made since [Autumn Budget 2017](#)
- invites people and businesses to give views on changes the government is considering

Economy and fiscal forecasts

The economy continues to grow, continues to create jobs and continues to beat expectations

The economy has grown for five consecutive years, and exceeded expectations in 2017.

The OBR has increased their forecast for growth this year.

Year GDP growth forecast

2018 1.5%
2019 1.3%
2020 1.3%
2021 1.4%
2022 1.5%

Manufacturing has had the longest period of expansion in 50 years.

Employment has increased by 3 million since 2010, which is the equivalent of

1,000 people finding work every day. The unemployment rate is close to a 40-year low. There is also a joint record number of women in work – 15.1 million. The OBR predict there will be over 500,000 more people in work by 2022.

The OBR expect inflation to fall over the next 12 months, and wages to rise faster than prices over the next five years.

The UK's public finances have reached a turning point, with borrowing down and the first sustained fall in debt for 17 years

Borrowing has fallen by three-quarters since 2010. In 2009-10 the UK borrowed £1 in every £4 that was spent. The OBR expect that we will borrow £1 in every £18 this year.

Debt will start falling as a share of GDP next year.

Year	UK debt (% of GDP)
2017-18	85.6%
2018-19	85.5%
2019-20	85.1%
2020-21	82.1%
2021-22	78.3%
2021-23	77.9%

Even so, the UK's debt remains too high, equal to around £65,000 per household. This makes the economy vulnerable to future shocks. It also imposes a significant burden on future generations.

The cost of debt interest payments is around £50 billion each year – more than the amount spent on the police and armed forces combined.

The government has a balanced approach to get debt falling while funding our vital public services, keeping taxes low, and investing in Britain's future.

Progress since Autumn Budget 2017

Over £1.5 billion allocated to departments and devolved administrations to prepare for Brexit in 2018-19

It is part of the £3 billion to be spent over two years announced at [Autumn Budget 2017](#).

An ambitious plan to tackle the UK's housing challenge and build the homes the country needs

An investment programme of at least £44 billion over the next five years was announced at Autumn Budget 2017, putting us on track to raise the supply of homes to 300,000 a year on average by the mid-2020s.

Spring Statement confirms that we are getting on with the job:

- we are working with 44 areas on their bids into the £4.1 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund to help build the homes that the country needs
- the Housing Growth Partnership, which provides financial support for small housebuilders, will be more than doubled to £220 million
- London will receive £1.67 billion to start building a further 27,000 affordable homes by the end of 2021-22

To help people getting onto the housing ladder, stamp duty for first-time buyers of homes under £300,000 was abolished at Autumn Budget 2017, with buyers of properties up to £500,000 benefitting from the change. An estimated 60,000 first-time buyers have benefitted so far.

Helping households with the cost of living

In April 2018 the National Living Wage will rise to £7.83, worth £600 extra a year for a full-time worker. National Minimum Wage rates for under 25s and apprentices will also rise – the largest increase in youth rates in 10 years. Over 2 million people are expected to benefit from April's increases.

The tax-free personal allowance – the amount you earn before you start paying income tax – will rise to £11,850 from April 2018. This means that in 2018-19, a typical taxpayer will pay £1,075 less income tax than in 2010-11.

Helping businesses by bringing forward the next business rates revaluation to 2021

At Autumn Budget 2017 it was announced that business rates revaluations will take place every three years, rather than every five years, following the next revaluation. This makes bills more accurately reflect the current rental value of properties.

Spring Statement 2018 [announces](#) that the next revaluation, currently due in 2022, will be brought forward to 2021. This will mean businesses can benefit from the change to three-year revaluations earlier, with the first taking place in 2024.

Improving transport in English cities

£1.7 billion was announced at Autumn Budget 2017 for improving transport in English cities. Half of this was given to Combined Authorities with mayors. The government is now inviting bids from cities across England for the remaining £840 million.

Improving the UK's digital connectivity

Autumn Budget 2017 launched a £190 million Challenge Fund to help roll out full-fibre to local areas – providing the fastest, most reliable broadband to more homes and businesses. Spring Statement 2018 allocates the first wave of funding, providing over £95 million for 13 areas across the UK.

Inviting views on future changes to the tax system

Reducing single-use plastic waste through the tax system

Disposable plastics like coffee cups, plastic cutlery and foam trays damage our environment. The government is determined to take further action, and is [seeking views](#) on how best to use the tax system to encourage the responsible use of plastic.

Some of the money raised from any tax changes will be used to encourage the creation of new, greener products and services. In addition, £20 million from existing budgets will be given to businesses and universities to research ways to reduce the impact of plastics on the environment.

Making sure multinational digital businesses pay a fair share of tax

Digital businesses create value in a unique way, relying on the participation and engagement of their users. This is not always reflected in where such multinational businesses pay tax on their profits.

The government has [set out its thinking](#) on how the tax system can change to give a fair result for digital businesses.

Seeking views on the role of cash in the new economy

Digital technology has changed the way people shop, sell, and save. While cash will continue to be an important method of payment, more people are moving towards digital payments every year.

The government is [seeking views](#) on what more it can do to:

- support people and businesses who use digital payments
- ensure that those who need to are able to pay with cash
- prevent the use of cash to evade tax and launder money

Supporting people to get the skills they need

Improving people's skills benefits both individuals and the wider economy. To support upskilling and retraining, the government is [seeking views](#) on extending the current tax relief to support self-employed people and employees when they fund their own training.

[Press release: Queen approves](#)

appointment of Suffragan See of Lancaster

The Queen has approved the nomination of the Reverend Dr Jillian Louise Calland Duff, MA, Director of Mellitus College, North West, to the Suffragan See of Lancaster, in the Diocese of Blackburn. Dr Jillian Duff succeeds the Right Reverend Geoffrey Seagrove Pearson, BA, on his resignation of 31 July 2017.

Dr Jillian Duff (aged 45) was born and brought up in Bolton, Lancashire. She was educated at Christ College, Cambridge and Worcester College, Oxford. After working in the oil industry, she trained for the ministry at Wycliffe Hall Oxford. Dr Duff served her title at St Philip's, Litherland, in the Diocese of Liverpool from 2003 to 2005. From 2005 Dr Duff took up the role of Pioneer Minister, church planting in Liverpool City Centre till 2011. In 2009 Dr Duff was appointed Chaplain to Liverpool College. In 2011 she worked as IME tutor and Vocations Development Advisor in the Diocese of Liverpool. From 2012 she worked to build a partnership between the North West Bishops and St Mellitus College, London and in 2013 became the founding Director of St Mellitus College, North West, based at Liverpool Cathedral, while serving at St Paul's Widnes.

News story: Pioneering treatment could save limbs on the battlefield

Biomedical engineers are pioneering a new technique for treating injured limbs which could reduce amputations after battlefield injuries.

The technique has been developed by researchers at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow and funded by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) through the Defence and Security Accelerator.

Created in response to the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan, where improvised explosive devices caused traumatic injury, the three-stage approach is a brand-new technique that brings together kit that can be used in the field, with highly specialised solutions once the patient is evacuated to a hospital.

A novel tourniquet is applied to the limb, which applies pressure at different points, reducing pressure and damage to specific areas. A cooling 'sock' is then wrapped around the tissue, to preserve it from further damage until the casualty can be evacuated to a care facility. Once at a hospital, the limb is placed inside a protective 'box', which can sustain the area

while doctors attempt repairs. The box has specially decontaminated air to reduce infection, and continually supplies the affected area with blood.

Weighing only five kilogrammes, the technology is specially designed for deployment on operations, and used by combat medics. The system could also be used in a non-military setting, for example natural disasters or remote locations.

Following successful trials, the system is set to be available commercially, and could one day form part of the medical kit in every frontline unit.

Dr Neal Smith, Capability Adviser, Medical Sciences, from Dstl, said:

While this technique may not be right for every injury, it is a hugely important innovation that could save the limbs of many more of those affected. It's a fantastic example of where we work with academics to fund life-changing research which has been turned into a product to improve the quality of life of those injured in service.

Professor Terry Gourlay, Head of the Department of Biomedical Engineering at Strathclyde University, said:

We looked at every stage of the journey an injured soldier follows after injury to ensure our solution was designed specifically for them.

The system we have developed is essentially a life-support system for the limb which gives doctors precious time to attempt to repair damage while ensuring the safety of the patient.

Professor Gourlay's team also pioneered the blood salvaging technique known as HemoSep, which allows blood lost in surgery to be transfused directly back to the patient, reducing the need to donate blood. A military version of the HemoSep project was also funded by Dstl.

Find out more about our [Protecting Our People Programme](#).