

[News story: Joint Concert by British and Armenian Military Bands in Yerevan](#)

On June 23, The Salamanca Band and the Bugles of The Rifles of the UK Ministry of Defence performed a joint concert with the Honour Guard Unit and the Military Band of the General Staff of the Armenia Ministry of Defence at Freedom Square in Yerevan, Armenia.

The UK and Armenia Ministries of Defence organised the concert as part of the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia Vigen Sargsyan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Relations Garen Nazarian and Her Majesty's Ambassador to Armenia Judith Farnworth attended the event.

Ambassador Farnworth mentioned in her opening remarks:

Over the last 25 years the United Kingdom and the Republic of Armenia have developed strong partnerships in a range of areas – political, economic, commercial, cultural, and, of course, defence. The UK is committed to building on these strong foundations by further developing our cooperation for the benefit of Armenia and the United Kingdom.

The Deputy Foreign Minister Garen Nazarian said:

Not incidentally, we are commencing the celebrations with a cultural event. These type of events are aimed at promoting mutual understanding and increasing contacts between our societies.

Mr Nazarian also underlined that the two countries cooperate successfully in the bilateral and multilateral formats, focusing on the challenges threatening the international community and the issues related to addressing them. He expressed hope that the positive dynamics of close cooperation will be maintained through joint efforts and the interstate dialogue will be raised to a qualitatively new level.

The sight of the two military bands drew large crowds of appreciative onlookers who enjoyed the performance of classic and popular British and Armenian tunes.

Besides this concert, the British military band also performed at the Yerevan State Conservatory and during the Queen's Birthday Party in Armenia.

Visit the [British Embassy Yerevan's Facebook page](#) for more photos of the Salamanca's performances in Armenia.

Press release: PM calls with Arlene Foster and Michelle O'Neill: 30 June 2017

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister spoke on the phone to the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party Arlene Foster this evening about the UK government's priority to restore devolved Government to Northern Ireland as soon as possible and our commitment to doing everything we can to work with the parties to reach a successful conclusion.

On the ongoing talks, the Prime Minister said it was encouraging to see discussions continuing and it was important that momentum is maintained so an Executive can be restored and they both agreed that this was in the interest of everyone in Northern Ireland.

In a separate call, the Prime Minister also spoke to Michelle O'Neill this evening:

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister also spoke separately to Sinn Fein leader in Northern Ireland Michelle O'Neill this evening about the importance of re-establishing a power-sharing Executive as soon as possible and how the UK government remains steadfast in our commitment to making sure Northern Ireland has the political stability it requires.

They both agreed on the need for the Executive to be restored for the benefit of everyone in Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister recognised that constructive discussions had taken place between the parties and urged them both to come together reach a collective agreement so that devolved Government could be restored in Northern Ireland.

[Press release: Foreign Office call for investigation into murder of Boris Nemtsov to continue](#)

5 men have been convicted for the murder of Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov. The investigation has not gone as far as identifying those who ordered the assassination.

The family of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov are still seeking justice for his callous murder. The investigation must continue in order to ensure that all responsible, including those who ordered the assassination, are brought to justice.

Foreign Office spokesperson:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office supports Boris Nemtsov's family in their call for a fuller investigation into who ordered his murder. Responsibility for his murder goes further than those already convicted, and we call on the Russian government to bring the perpetrators to account.

Further information

[Press release: Change of Governor of the Falkland Islands](#)

2016 – present Ministry of Defence (MOD), UK Permanent Representation to the European Union, Brussels, Deputy Military Representative 2014 – 2016 MOD, Head, Russian Strategic Studies/Wider Europe Policy 2013 – 2014 Member of Royal College of Defence Studies 2012 – 2013 Language training (Russian), Defence Academy 2010 – 2012 Warsaw, British Embassy, Defence Attaché 2007 – 2009 Defence College Communications Information Systems, Deputy Commandant and Garrison Commander 2003 – 2007 Stockholm, British Embassy, Defence Attaché 2001 – 2003 Defence Communications Services Agency, Senior Staff Officer Communication Operations Planning 2000 – 2001 Defence Academy, Advanced Command and Staff Course, Student 1984 – 2000 Member of the Royal Air Force (RAF), various appointments

Press release: Expert panel on safety meets for the first time

The new Grenfell Tower expert advisory panel on safety has used their first meeting to set out the scope of vital work to ensure people living in high rise buildings are safe.

The expert panel will provide independent advice to the Secretary of State on any immediate measures that may need to be put in place to make buildings safe for residents following the Grenfell Tower fire.

The panel agreed the most immediate issues they will address and confirmed they will call upon other experts from a wide range of professions and services as required to ensure a responsive and dynamic approach, as developments arise.

The panel also recognised the importance of this work being carried out without duplicating or prejudging the outcomes of the public inquiry and police investigation.

To provide advice to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government the panel will:

- Focus on providing advice relating to fire and building safety, and in particular how to ensure the public are safe in high rise buildings.
- Consider whether there are any immediate additional actions that should be taken to ensure the safety of existing high rise buildings.
- Consider whether there are any changes or clarifications required to existing regulations, and provide advice on possible changes, including making recommendations on the use of specific materials.
- Consider whether the current processes for checking building safety are fit for purpose, and whether any changes are required.

The Expert Advisory Panel has said:

The tests that are currently being conducted are a screening test to identify which Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) panels are of concern. It tests the filler – the core of the panel – to check if it is of limited combustibility (category 1) or not (category 2 or 3). This is in line with the requirement of the Building Regulations guidance. The filler is one element of the overall cladding system.

If the panel core fails the test we would expect the landlord to take the recommended interim fire safety measures issued on [22 June 2017](#).

The Panel will engage with experts across the country to consider whether these panels can be used safely as part of a wider building external wall system, and therefore could remain on a building under certain approved circumstances. If, in the meantime, the responsible person for the building chooses to take down and replace cladding, care should be taken to consider the impact that removal may have on the other wall elements, especially insulation, and therefore on the overall fire integrity of the building as well as other Building Regulation requirements. The advice of a competent professional who specialises in the fire performance of cladding assemblies should be sought to assist in these considerations.

Initially the expert advisory panel is established for 3 months after which it will be reviewed.

The appointment of the [Expert Panel](#) was announced on 27 June 2017.

The panel of building and fire safety experts is chaired by Sir Ken Knight. The other core members of the panel are:

- Dr Peter Bonfield, Chief Executive of the Building Research Establishment
- Amanda Clack, President of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and a Partner at EY
- Roy Wilsher, Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council