

# 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 1 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.

Find out [more about the UK government response to the Salisbury attack](#).

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# 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

- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

## Media enquiries

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

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 reburial 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.

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## Water capacity

There is currently a consultation underway over future water resources for the Thames Valley. The main supply companies agree that we will need a new major reservoir, and have proposed a site near Abingdon. This would be a common facility for all local water companies. It could store more water for us and put it into the river system when we need it.

Demand continues to expand with a growing population. There are one off savings in volumes when people switch to water meters. The danger in not providing additional storage capacity would come if we had three low rainfall years in succession. There could also be problems in relying too much on withdrawing water from chalk natural reservoirs, and seeking to rely on too much abstraction from rivers. Both of these can have unpleasant environmental impacts.

The extreme case of Cape Town is a warning to those who think we should keep capacity close to demand. Cape Town is now suffering badly from water shortage thanks to failing to put in more storage, and has now experienced a long period of low rainfall.

Thames Water is running its desalination plant most of the time on partial capacity, though this was designed to be an expensive long stop provision for shortage periods.

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## ESMA registers SPMW Rating Sp. z o.o. as a CRA

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the EU's direct supervisor of credit rating agencies (CRAs), has registered SPMW Rating Sp. z

o.o. as a CRA under Regulation (EC) No 1060/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 September 2009 on credit rating agencies (CRA Regulation), with effect from 15 March 2018. SPMW Rating Sp. z o.o. is based in Poland, issuing sovereign and public finance ratings and corporate ratings.

The CRA Regulation seeks to ensure that credit ratings issued in the EU respect minimum standards of quality, transparency and independence by providing that only companies registered by ESMA as CRAs may lawfully issue credit ratings which can be used for regulatory purposes by credit institutions, investment firms, insurance and reinsurance undertakings, institutions for occupational retirement provision, management companies, investment companies, alternative investment fund managers and central counterparties.

In order to be registered as a CRA a company must be able to demonstrate to ESMA that it can comply with the requirements of the CRA Regulation, including, most importantly, on:

- the governance of CRAs and the management of conflicts of interest;
- the development and application of methodologies for assessing credit risk; and
- the disclosure of information to ESMA and to market participants.

Once registered, CRAs are subject to on-going supervision and monitoring by ESMA to make sure that they continue to meet the conditions for registration. ESMA will impose sanctions and/or penalties where it finds that a CRA has failed to meet its obligations under the CRA Regulation.

The SPMW Rating Sp. z o.o. registration brings the total number of CRAs registered in the EU to 27 CRAs. Amongst the 27 registered CRAs, three operate under a group structure, totalling 17 legal entities in the EU, which means that the total number of CRA entities registered in the EU is 41.