

[News story: Novichok nerve agent use in Salisbury: UK government response](#)

Updated: Statement to the OPCW Executive Council added

On Sunday 4 March Sergei and Yulia Skripal were poisoned in Salisbury with a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia.

G7 foreign ministers' statement

The [G7 foreign ministers issued a statement](#) condemning the nerve agent attack and agreeing with the UK's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation was responsible.

Letter to NATO

On 13 April UK National Security Adviser Sir Mark Sedwill sent a [letter to Jens Stoltenberg NATO Secretary General](#) setting out further information on how Russia has the technical means, operational experience and the motive for the Salisbury attack. The UK Ambassador to Russia gave a [briefing to the international diplomatic community](#).

OPCW report

On 12 April the [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\) published their report](#). It confirmed the UK findings: the toxic chemical used in the attempted assassination of Sergei and Yulia Skripal was a military grade nerve agent – a Novichok.

The [Foreign Secretary gave a statement on the OPCW report](#) and the [Head of UK Delegation updated the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#).

On 18 April Peter Wilson, UK Permanent Representative to the OPCW gave a [statement to the Executive Council](#).

[OPCW findings](#)

Read the [Foreign Secretary's statement](#).

UN Security Council and OPCW meetings

On 5 April the UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Karen Pierce, gave a [statement at the UN Security Council emergency meeting](#) called by Russia. Writing in the Sunday Times on 8 April, the Foreign Secretary said that [only Russia could have committed this crime](#).

At the request of Russia, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council met on 4 April. The [Acting UK Permanent Representative to the OPCW responded](#) on the UK's actions, in line with the Chemical Weapons Convention. Following the defeat of Russia's proposals, the [Foreign Secretary gave a statement](#).

Prime Minister's 26 March statement on collective diplomatic expulsions

Speaking in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister said that 18 countries have announced their intention to expel more than 100 Russian intelligence officers. This includes 15 EU member states as well as the US, Canada and the Ukraine, and is the largest collective expulsion of Russian intelligence officers in history. Find out more in the Prime Minister's [Commons statement on national security and Russia](#).

The Prime Minister also spoke about this in her [Commons statement on the March European Council](#).

On 27 March the Foreign Secretary wrote in The Times that [our allies will expel Russian officials because they share our view of the threat posed by the Kremlin](#) to their values and security.



View our [Twitter Moment about our allies and partners expelling Russian intelligence officers](#).

In his 28 March [Mansion House speech](#), the Foreign Secretary thanked the 27 countries and NATO for expelling Russian officials whose presence they deem to be no longer conducive to the public good.

[Russian disinformation: 6 points](#)

The Russian government's response has demonstrated disdain for the gravity of the Salisbury attack.

Prime Minister's 14 March statement: immediate actions including diplomatic expulsions

In her [statement to Parliament on 14 March](#) the Prime Minister said that Russia provided no explanation as to how this agent came to be used in the UK. There is no alternative conclusion other than that the Russian State was culpable for the attempted murder of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, which was an unlawful use of force by the Russian State against the UK. The UK government would:

- expel 23 Russian diplomats identified as undeclared intelligence officers
- propose new legislative powers to harden defences against Hostile State Activity and ensure those seeking to carry out such activity cannot enter the UK
- suspend all planned high-level contacts between the UK and Russia

On 17 March the Foreign & Commonwealth Office issued [a statement in response to the Russian government's decision to expel UK diplomats](#), following the British Ambassador's meeting with the Russian government.

On 22 March British Ambassador to Russia, Laurie Bristow, gave a [briefing to the international diplomatic community](#)

Russian State disinformation

Writing for the Telegraph on 20 March, the Foreign Secretary looks at the [Russian State's disruptive behaviour in Russian elections and the Salisbury attack](#).

[Russian disinformation](#)

Russia's impact on global security

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson wrote an [article in the Washington Post](#) setting out Russia's threat to global security.

[The Kremlin has positioned Russia in direct opposition to the West](#)

Prime Minister's 12 March statement: seeking explanation from Russia

On 12 March [Prime Minister Theresa May gave a statement](#) in Parliament. Either this was a direct act by the Russian State against our country, or the Russian government lost control of this potentially catastrophically damaging nerve agent and allowed it to get into the hands of others. The [Foreign Secretary spoke to the BBC](#) and reiterated the Prime Minister's message.

Russian state aggression in the past few years

[Pattern of Russian state aggression](#)

Home Secretary's initial statement

On 8 March the Home Secretary Amber Rudd gave an [initial statement on the investigation](#) into events in Salisbury. This followed Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson's [response to an Urgent Question](#) in Parliament on 6 March.

International response

World leaders

On 22 March the [Prime Minister met with President Macron and Chancellor Merkel](#) where the 3 leaders agreed on the importance of sending a strong European message in response to Russia's actions. The [European Council also issued a press release](#) on its conclusions about the Salisbury attack

On 15 March the leaders of France, Germany, the US and the UK have issued a [joint statement on the Salisbury attack](#).

The Prime Minister has spoken with world leaders about the ongoing investigation. Each expressed their solidarity with the UK:

- [call with Japanese Prime Minister Abe on 20 March](#)
- [call with Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki on 18 March](#)
- [call with Italian Prime Minister Gentiloni on 16 March](#)
- [call with Australian Prime Minister Turnbull on 16 March](#)
- [call with French President Macron on 15 March](#) and on [12 March](#)
- [call with Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau on 14 March](#)
- [call with Prime Minister Xavier Bettel of Luxembourg on 14 March](#)
- [call with US President Trump on 13 March](#)
- [call with German Chancellor Merkel on 13 March](#)

On 13 March the Foreign Secretary also [called for a united response](#) with our international counterparts. Find out more about the international response in our [14 March Twitter Moment](#).

European Foreign Ministers express their solidarity

The [Foreign Secretary spoke to the media](#) before the Foreign Affairs Council

on 19 March and the [Foreign Affairs Council issued a statement](#).

[Foreign Ministers express solidarity](#)

On 21 March [UK National Security Advisor Sir Mark Sedwill gave a statement](#) on his meeting with the EU High Representative, senior EU officials and representatives of member states.

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Peter Wilson, UK Permanent Representative gave an [update to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#). This follows his [statement to the OPCW on 13 March](#).

[Independent technical experts from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#) arrive in the UK on 19 March to begin their investigation into the nerve agent used in the attempted assassinations in Salisbury.

[Independent OPCW investigation](#)

NATO

The Foreign Secretary and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg held a [joint press conference on 19 March](#).

On 15 March National Security Advisor Sir Mark Sedwill [briefed the NATO North Atlantic Council](#)

Other international organisations

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office also raised this issue in other international forums:

- Head of UK Delegation Sian MacLeod gave a [statement to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#) on 15 March
- Ambassador Jonathan Allen gave a [briefing to the United Nations Security Council](#) on 14 March
- in the 37th Human Rights Council session Julian Braithwaite, the UK Permanent Representative, gave a [statement to the United Nations in Geneva](#) on 14 March

Related government announcements

On 17 April the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs gave an update on [decontamination work in Salisbury](#).

On 15 March Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson announced a [£48 million investment in a new Chemical Weapons Defence Centre](#) to maintain our cutting-edge in chemical analysis and defence.

Advice and guidance

- latest Foreign & Commonwealth Office [travel advice for Russia](#)
 - Public Health England [advice for people in Salisbury](#)
-

[Green MEP secures animal protections in European Brexit resolution](#)



Green Party

14 March 2018

“As the Green Party’s animals spokesperson, I am delighted to have helped secure protections in the resolution for the environment, climate change, food safety and animal health and welfare safeguards” – Keith Taylor MEP

The European Parliament has today overwhelmingly approved a Resolution on the framework of the future relationship between the EU and UK, post-Brexit (544-110-51). This comes ahead of the negotiations on the long-term relationship, where the Parliament will have a final say.

The Resolution [1] clearly sets out the conditions that the Parliament needs to see in any final deal in order for MEPs to grant their approval. Crucially, thanks to the efforts of Keith Taylor MEP, Members of the European Parliament’s Animal Welfare Intergroup, and the Eurogroup for Animals, the Resolution contains strong provisions on animal welfare, namely:

- A requirement for the UK to adhere to animal health and welfare rules (as a minimum) in order to create a level playing field;
- that access to the EU market on agricultural products will be conditional on compliance with EU animal welfare standards, and;
- that there should be adequate preparedness for agricultural products – ensuring that even in the event of ‘no deal’, there will be sufficient plans in place to ensure tractability and guarantee the origin of animal-based products to ensure compliance with animal welfare rules.

Welcoming the measures contained in the European Parliament’s Resolution

today, Keith Taylor MEP, Vice President of the Animal Welfare Intergroup and the Green Party's animals spokesperson, said:

"The resolution supported by the overwhelming majority of MEPs today will ensure that any future EU-UK relationship will provide a level playing field on issues such as workers' rights, consumer protection, public health, the fight against tax evasion and avoidance, data protection and privacy and animal welfare standards."

"As the Green Party's animals spokesperson, I am delighted to have helped secure protections in the resolution for the environment, climate change, food safety, and animal health and welfare safeguards."

The senior Green politician, who published an ['Animals and Brexit' impact assessment report](#) earlier this month [2], added:

"The health and welfare of farmed animals in the UK is under threat, as my new 'Animals and Brexit' report makes crystal clear. Shockingly, Ministers have indicated a [readiness to sacrifice farmed animals on the altar of free trade](#) post-Brexit. A move which is [opposed by farmers, animal welfare advocates](#) and the [93% of UK consumers](#) who want to see vital EU safeguards maintained."

"The clamour for the maintenance and strengthening of EU welfare protections in UK, however, appears to have had little effect on a Tory Government. The International Trade Secretary Liam Fox, in particular, has been keen to brandish its willingness to make trade agreements with countries around the world that have [far lower standards of animal welfare](#), and that threaten to undercut higher welfare producers in the UK."

"At the same time, EU citizens, who support higher animal welfare protections across the board, are clear they do not want European standards to be endangered or undermined in any way post-Brexit. This is why animal advocates from across Europe should welcome today's resolution, which at the very least seeks to ensure that the EU standards will act as a basis for the future relationship'."

Mr Taylor concluded:

"Compassion for animals is deep within the Green Party's DNA. As an MEP, I have fought hard to include protecting animal welfare standards in today's Brexit resolution. As the Greens animals spokesperson, I pledge to continue standing side by side with animal advocates and campaigners in the fight to protect animals post-Brexit."

[1] www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B8-2018-0135&language=EN

[2] <https://www.scribd.com/document/372830758/Animals-and-Brexit-Keith-Taylor-MEP>

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[Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Iran in April 2018](#)

Mr Rob Macaire CMG has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran in succession to Mr Nicholas Hopton who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Macaire will take up his appointment in April 2018.

Commenting on the appointment, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Iran has an important role to play in the Middle East region, but it is essential that it does so in a constructive way – something I made clear during my visit to Tehran in December last year. The Iran deal, signed in 2015, was a huge diplomatic success. The product of years of patient and persistent diplomacy that extinguished the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran.

In that vein, I am pleased that Rob will be applying his wealth of international experience to the leading HMG's engagement in Tehran. We face challenges – including the ongoing cases of British dual-nationals detained in Iran – and areas for potential collaboration. I look forward to working with him across these areas.

Mr Macaire said:

I am honoured to be appointed the new British Ambassador to Iran. The UK's continued engagement with Iran is vital to our goal of making the Middle East region a safer and more stable place. I look forward to working with the Government of Iran and with international partners to preserve the nuclear deal and deepen our bilateral relationship, through constructive engagement on human rights, trade, and seeking political solutions to the conflicts in Yemen, Syria and elsewhere.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Robert Macaire CMG

Married to: Alice Macaire

Children: Two

2016 – present Language Training

2011 – 2016 BG Group plc. Director of Government/Public Affairs and Political Risk

2008 – 2011 Nairobi, British High Commissioner

2006 – 2008 FC0, Director, Consular Services

2004 – 2006 New Delhi, Political Counsellor

2002 – 2004 FC0, Head, Counter Terrorism Policy Department

1998 – 2002 Washington, First Secretary, Middle East and Counter-terrorism

1998 FC0, Head of Sierra Leone Unit, Africa Directorate

1997 –1998 FC0, Head of Southern Africa Section, Africa Directorate

1996 – 1997 FC0, Head of MEPP Section, Near East and North Africa Department

1995 – 1996 FC0, Head of Levant Section, Near East and North Africa Department

1991 – 1995 Bucharest, Second Secretary (Know How Fund)

1990 FC0, Falkland Islands Department

Further information

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

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News story: Consultation into strengthening teacher-examiner safeguards

Ofqual has today (14 March 2018) set out how it intends to strengthen its regulation of awarding organisations' involvement of teachers in the development of confidential assessment materials. Today's [consultation](#) reflects detailed analysis of existing processes and extensive discussions with awarding organisations, examiners, teachers, students and parents. The new regime, if confirmed, will extend to all regulated qualifications.

The proposals include:

- explicitly setting out in our rules steps awarding organisations must take to help protect the integrity of the assessments to which teachers have contributed; and
- publishing further statutory guidance to help awarding organisations understand the factors and approaches they should consider when deciding how to comply with the rules.

Consistent with these proposals, teachers will continue to be able to write assessments and have access to confidential materials. However, awarding organisations must maintain up to date records of all conflicts of interest relating to teachers who have seen confidential assessment materials. And they must review their safeguards such that they are appropriate and proportionate to:

- effectively mitigate the risks of using teachers in the development of assessment materials, for example by making sure no teacher knows whether or when any assessments they have developed will be used;
- support teachers to do the right thing, through appropriate training and contractual obligations;
- detect malpractice, for example by sampling the work of teachers who have written

exam papers to look for any unusual patterns of response.

We are also stressing that the way in which awarding organisations have regard to our guidance will be taken into account when deciding on the nature and scale of any regulatory action should a breach of confidentiality occur.

Timing

The exam boards who deliver GCSEs, AS and A levels and other qualifications used as equivalents, such as the Pre-U have already written the exams for summer 2018.

Safeguards for 2018 will, therefore, need to focus on deterring and detecting malpractice

and on supporting teachers. These awarding organisations have published a joint statement

setting out their intentions for this summer.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation, and where necessary, we expect that all

awarding organisations will have made significant progress in terms of the safeguards they

employ by summer 2019, and have fully revised their approaches by 2020. This transition

period is necessary to avoid introducing an unacceptable degree of risk to the delivery of

safe qualifications.

Sally Collier said:

“Almost universally, respondents to our call for evidence emphasised the importance of

retaining a strong link between teaching and examining, and the benefit it brings to

assessment design. Our rules on confidentiality and malpractice are already demanding.

The proposals we have put forward today build on them and provide greater clarity about our

expectations and the implications for awarding organisations if information about an

assessment is disclosed by a teacher who has been involved in its development. There is no

one-size-fits-all solution to the challenge of maintaining confidentiality. However, the events

of summer 2017 showed how public confidence in assessments and, in turn, qualifications,

can be damaged if confidential information is wrongly used. It is essential that those who

take or otherwise rely on qualifications have upmost confidence in the outcomes.”

Background

- In September 2017 we announced we would review:
- the risks and benefits of the long-established practice whereby some teachers who write or contribute to exam papers also teach the qualification; and
- the effectiveness of the safeguards used to reduce the risk of a teacher who has this dual role disclosing or otherwise misusing information about confidential assessments.

We are publishing a suite of research and analysis today that provides context and support to our consultation proposals.

They include:

- a summary of our call for evidence into the benefits and risks of teachers being involved in the development of qualifications that they teach
- interviews with teacher-examiners about the risks and benefits of their involvement in developing assessment materials
- a review of safeguards used to prevent disclosure of confidential material in countries outside England
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- interviews with students studying for AS/A levels, and parents of secondary school aged children, to understand their views on teacher involvement in writing exams
- research into the sources of, and ways of identifying anomalous responses in test scores.

ENDS

[Press release: Highways England wants to hear your views](#)

The organisation is using the mobile visitor centre for the second year following 2017's successful trial to engage with the public, and will give road users and local residents the chance to speak to staff that will be

coming to their area, starting with Essex and Suffolk throughout March.

The minibus facility will open out into a larger exhibition, which will feature displays and presentations about road works in the area and road safety.

Highways England Capital Delivery Team Leader, Aran Nugent, said:

We are aware that the work we do has an impact on our road users, and so Highways England is eager to better engage with drivers and local residents so we can hear their comments, allay their concerns and answer any questions they may come to us with.

This mobile exhibition offers us an excellent opportunity to better get into those communities we will be working alongside, so we can speak with people to explain the work we are doing and the benefits it will bring for them, their town and this region. Last year we had a good response with people coming along to learn about roadworks and share their views, so we hope that interest will continue and grow further in 2018.

In the last financial year (2017/18), Highways England spent £61.4 million on essential maintenance across the East, including £3.5 million on new noise barriers on the M40 in Buckinghamshire, £3.1 million for a new roundabout with Harwich Road and the A120 near Wix, and a £3.5 million repair to the accident damaged Saddlebow Interchange on the A47 near King's Lynn.

This essential maintenance work is in addition to the longer term investment work, including new dual carriageways on several sections of the A47, widening the A12 in Essex, the £1.5 billion Cambridge to Huntingdon A14 upgrade, and the £4.4 – £6.2 billion Lower Thames Crossing.

Now drivers will be able to speak to Highways England staff about this whole range of road works that are happening soon and further in the future, with £34.4 million committed to maintaining the East's roads over the next year.

In the next financial year (2018/19), Highways England's maintenance work will include £2.75 million on resurfacing the A14 between Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds, £2.5 million on bridge repairs on the M1, A14 and A1, £2.25 million on resurfacing the A12, and a further £2.24 million on replacing digital message signs on the same road. Our work in the next year will include laying enough tarmac to fill 20 football pitches, enough white lining to fill an Olympic swimming pool, and enough cats' eyes to reflect enough light collectively to be seen from space.

In March, the exhibition is set to visit:

- Boreham House on Thursday 15 and the town's Springfield Sainsbury's on Friday 16
- Chelmsford city centre (outside Barclays) on Monday 19 and Tuesday 20
- Lion Walk, Colchester town centre on Wednesday 21, Thursday 22

- Braintree Freeport on Friday 23
- Great Bromley Village Hall on Monday 26
- Bricklayer's Arms, Little Bentley on Tuesday 27
- Bypass Nurseries, Capel St Mary, on Wednesday 28
- Ipswich County Council (Russell Road) on Thursday 29

The exhibition will then head to Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire in April, before covering the A47 with Norfolk and Peterborough in May.

These dates may be subject to change, and interested visitors are asked to stay up to date with the latest information by following @HighwaysEast on Twitter.

Members of the public are invited to attend the mobile visitor centre to speak with Highways England staff, which will include traffic officers at some of the exhibitions.

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.