

Police given new powers to tackle hostile state activity

News story

Police officers now have powers to stop, question, search and detain individuals at UK ports in relation to espionage and foreign interference.



Powers coming into effect today (Thursday 13 August) will allow specially trained police officers to stop, question, and when necessary detain and search individuals travelling through UK ports to determine whether they are involved in hostile state activity.

The new Schedule 3 powers were introduced in the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 and created in response to the 2018 Salisbury nerve-agent attack.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The threat posed to the UK from hostile state activity is growing and ever changing.

These new powers send a very clear message to those involved in it that this government has zero tolerance for those acting against British interests.

But I am clear more must be done and we are developing new legislation to bring our laws up to date and create new ones to stay ahead of the threat.

Following parliamentary approval, the powers have today come into effect and the police will now start bringing them into operation.

A code of practice setting out the processes governing how Schedule 3 will be used and overseen has been published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

It includes robust safeguards such as independent oversight by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner, and provides special protections for confidential material and journalistic sources.

The new powers are just one part of a wider effort to tackle hostile state activity.

Last year, the government announced in the [Queen's speech](#) plans to introduce new legislation to provide the security services and law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to tackle the evolving threat of hostile activity by foreign states.

This includes considering whether to follow allies in adopting a form of foreign agent registration, updating the Official Secrets Acts, as well as the case for updating treason laws.

A [fact sheet](#) explaining the powers and the codes of practice which govern their use is also available on GOV.UK.

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