

# News story: British diplomats have won the battle to name chemical weapons culprits: article by Boris Johnson

Within hours of the gas attack on the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun, the conspiracy mongers were out in force.

They claimed that nothing had happened and the whole incident had been a stunt, or perhaps the town had gassed itself in a bizarre act of self-immolation, or someone – anyone – was responsible for the atrocity other than Bashar al-Assad's regime.

This episode last April showed the convergence of two scourges of our age: the use of chemical weapons and the proliferation of fake news designed to hide the guilty.

There is only one rightful response to this pernicious combination. The international community must be able to uncover the truth by means of independent inquiry, empowered not only to say whether chemical weapons were employed but by whom.

And it is that vital power to attribute responsibility for chemical attacks in Syria that British diplomacy has just helped to restore.

Our efforts became necessary because of what followed the Khan Sheikhoun attack. In October 2017, a joint investigation by the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) found that one of Assad's military aircraft had dropped a bomb laden with sarin nerve gas on Khan Sheikhoun (contrary to the energetic outpourings of the conspiracy theorists).

This was the fourth time this joint investigation had named the Assad regime as responsible for chemical weapon attacks in Syria. The terrorists of Daesh were held culpable for two other incidents.

But Russia chose to respond by protecting Assad and vetoing the renewal of this investigation in the Security Council last November. We then entered a period when the OPCW's experts were able to investigate chemical attacks in Syria, provided they did not say who was responsible.

They were effectively asked to indulge a fiction whereby chemical weapons might descend from the sky of their own volition, without any agent or perpetrator. It was as if a vow of omerta had to surround the identity of the guilty party.

The OPCW reported that chemical weapons had been used twice more in Syria – in the towns of Lataminah in March 2017 and Saraqib in February this year. But they did not identify the perpetrator.

I sensed that a new and profoundly damaging taboo was slowly emerging, a taboo that applied not to the use of chemical weapons but to naming whoever was responsible. It was as if the real offence was not killing people with poison gas, but daring to identify the perpetrator of such wickedness.

Hence the importance of the change that was achieved this week. On Wednesday, a special conference of states parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention adopted a British-drafted "Decision" to allow the OPCW to make full use of its powers to attribute responsibility for chemical attacks in Syria.

If you had joined me in The Hague, you would have shared my pride in the British diplomats who were lobbying scores of countries, convincing the waverers and countering the frantic efforts of Russia and Iran to scupper the plan.

Our network of embassies threw itself into this campaign, working alongside countries across the world. I spent much of the day meeting or calling dozens of my counterparts. In the end, our proposal carried the day by 82 votes to 24 – a better result than we had dared hope.

Thanks in no small measure to British diplomacy, the OPCW will be able to answer all the vital questions about any future incident: what happened when and where – and who was responsible.

We are placing the taboo back where it belongs: over the singular horror of using chemical weapons. If any such attacks happen again, there will once more be international investigators empowered to discover the culprit. You can be proud of the British diplomats who did so much to bring this about.

Find out more about the international community coming together to [strengthen the global ban against chemical weapons use](#).

## Further information

- Follow the Foreign Secretary on Twitter [@BorisJohnson](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
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## **Press release: Media advisory notice – Hillsborough proceedings**

Criminal proceedings against six individuals arising out of the investigations into the tragic events at Hillsborough on the 15th of April 1989 and its aftermath are currently active. The first of three criminal trials is due to start in 10 weeks' time.

The Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP wishes to draw attention to the requirement not to publish material, including online, which could create a substantial risk that the course of justice in these proceedings may be seriously impeded or prejudiced, thereby jeopardising the defendants' right to a fair trial.

In particular, the Attorney General draws attention to the requirement not to publish material that asserts or assumes, expressly or implicitly, the guilt of any of those who face trial, whether in relation to the events of the 15th of April 1989 or to subsequent events. That is an issue to be determined solely by the three juries on the evidence that they hear in court.

The risks may also arise by commentary which prejudices issues that witnesses may give evidence about or which asserts or assumes wrongdoing on the part of organisations by whom the defendants were employed.

The Attorney General's Office will be monitoring the coverage of these proceedings.

Editors, publishers and social media users should take legal advice to ensure they are in a position to fully comply with the obligations they are subject to under the Contempt of Court Act.

They are also reminded of the terms of the order made under section 4(2) of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 by Sir Peter Openshaw DL on 29th June 2018.

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## **News story: UK exports at record high**

Exports grew faster to Canada (up 12.7 per cent), India (31.8 per cent) and China (15.3 per cent) than to the EU (10 per cent).

Goods exports were up 10 per cent, driven by a demand for manufactured goods, while services exports rose 4.2 per cent due to strong global interest in the UK's prestigious financial and travel services.

Non-EU countries remain the main destination for UK services (£167.4 billion), making up 60.4 per cent of all services exports.

The figures also reveal the trade deficit continuing to narrow over the last year by £7.7 billion to £23.1 billion.

Over the same period, the UK's current account deficit also narrowed to £80.3 billion, down by £12.2 billion from twelve months earlier. This is the narrowest deficit as a percentage of GDP since 2012.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox said:

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of UK businesses up and down the country, exports of goods and services rose to a record high of £620 billion. Demand for high quality British products remained strong from countries outside the EU including China, India and Canada and we are putting companies in position to benefit from growing global opportunities.

Far from the negative forecasts after the EU referendum, there is every reason to be optimistic. Our trade deficit narrowed and UK business is delivering for Britain and succeeding on the world stage. As an international economic department we are banging the drum for the growing demand for our goods and services.

The country also remains a strong destination for investment with nearly 76,000 new jobs created as a result of inward investment from foreign direct investment projects in 2017/18, more than the previous year.

Figures from the Department for International Trade published this week show 2,072 new projects recorded, creating 75,968 new jobs and safeguarding 15,063, amounting to nearly 1,500 new jobs per week across the country.

Through GREAT.gov.uk, the department gives UK businesses access to millions of pounds' worth of potential overseas business. It also puts firms in touch with global buyers and since its launch it has promoted 17,500 export opportunities, and helped around 3.6 million users either begin or grow their exporting journeys (from November 2016 – May 2018).

Research from Barclays Corporate Banking found that 64 per cent of consumers in India, 57 per cent in China, and 48 per cent in the UAE were prepared to pay more for goods made in the UK, because they perceive the quality as higher. [Brand Britain – Export opportunities for UK businesses, February 2018]

Working to promote the UK as a great trading nation, DIT has set up 14 trade working groups covering 21 countries to scope our future trade deals and strengthen commercial ties with key trading partners.

## Background:

- [Figures from the ONS Balance of Payments 29 June](#)
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## [News story: Best of East Midlands business lauded by Robert Jenrick](#)

Treasury Minister Robert Jenrick has embarked on a UK tour to lift the lid on the innovation of Great British businesses and learn how they are tackling the productivity gap.

His first stop is Leicester, in the heart of the Midlands Engine, to see for himself businesses that are playing a vital role in driving the new economy.

This will include meeting a local entrepreneur whose company – Micro-Fresh – has helped stop the spread of bacteria in everyday products like towels and bedding. Micro-Fresh has received government funding to support its expansion into the housing sector.

The Minister will also meet a construction company that is sharing its know-how with others to improve efficiency and productivity, as well as textile factory workers to hear how harnessing new technology is ensuring this traditional Leicester industry continues to thrive.

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Robert Jenrick, said:

There are some incredible businesses here in the East Midlands whose great innovations have helped boost this region's productivity beyond others, including London. But too often their contributions go under the radar.

That's why I have chosen the Midlands to kick-start my tour of the UK to lift the lid on those playing a vital role in delivering growth, skills and jobs for local people. It's vital that we learn from these trailblazing innovators so we can help others follow suit and boost productivity across the country.

The East Midlands contributes £100 billion a year to the UK economy. Since 2010, the region has seen the creation of 68,000 businesses and 344,000 apprenticeships, with record-high levels of employment (2.3 million) and unemployment down by nearly half (42 per cent).

## Notes to Editors

The Exchequer Secretary will meet:

- Local Leicester entrepreneur Byron Dixon OBE, CEO and Founder of Micro-Fresh International – the company, which is growing 25% every year, provides anti-bacterial treatment for products like bedding, towels and footwear and are available in John Lewis, Sainsbury's and M&S. A recent £120,000 grant from the Government helped the company conduct research which will allow the product to be used in social housing to combat damp and mould.
- Caterpillar's Logistic Services – the construction company is sharing its expertise with other businesses to fuel innovation in the sector.
- East Midlands Chamber of Commerce – the Minister will host a meeting to hear first-hand what can be done to further support growth and innovation in the region.
- Factory workers and managers in the textile industry – the traditional business is seizing opportunities in the new economy and ensuring this long-established industry remains a key part of the Leicester identity.

#### East Midlands economy facts:

- The East Midlands contributes £100 billion of gross value added per year to the UK economy.
- Manufacturing accounts for 12.4% of all jobs in the East Midlands – higher than any other UK region.
- Since 2010, unemployment has fallen faster in the East Midlands than in London (-42.8%).
- Employment in the East Midlands is at a record high level (2.3 million).
- Since early 2010, 204,000 (+10%) more people are in employment in the East Midlands. Unemployment has fallen by 72,000 (-43%) over the same period.
- Productivity growth since 2010 has been faster than London (12.1%).

The Chancellor Philip Hammond highlighted the role of innovators in the new economy in his Autumn Budget and set out the Government's plans to support those who deliver growth, create higher paying jobs and make sure everyone has the skills they need.

[Autumn Budget 2017: building the new economy](#)

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## **Press release: Biometrics Commissioner's response to the Home Office Biometrics Strategy**

The long awaited Home Office Biometrics Strategy published today is to be welcomed as the basis for a more informed public debate on the future use of biometrics by the Home Office and its partners.

The strategy lays out the current uses of biometric data and the development of new multi-user data platforms. Unfortunately the strategy says little about what future plans the Home Office has for the use of biometrics and the sharing of biometric data. A debate is needed given the rapid improvements in biometric matching technologies and the increasing ability to hold and analyse large biometric databases.

While the use of biometric data may well be in the public interest for law enforcement purposes and to support other government functions the public benefit must be balanced against loss of privacy. Biometric data is especially sensitive because it is most intrusive of our individual privacy and for that reason who decides the balance is as important as what is decided. Legislation carries the legitimacy that Parliament decides that crucial question.

It is disappointing that the Home Office document is not forward looking as one would expect from a strategy. In particular it does not propose legislation to provide rules for the use and oversight of new biometrics, including facial images.

This is in contrast to Scotland where such legislation has been proposed. Given that new biometrics are being rapidly deployed or trialled this failure to set out more definitively what the future landscape will look like in terms of the use and governance of biometrics appears short sighted at best.

What the strategy does propose is an oversight and advisory board to make recommendations about governance just short of legislation. If that results in the development of a set of principles to inform future legislation then it is also welcome. However, the advisory board is mainly described as concerned with the use of facial images by the police.

What is actually required is a governance framework that will cover all future biometrics rather than a series of ad hoc responses to problems as they emerge. I hope that the Home Office will re-consider and clearly extend the advisory board's remit to properly consider all future biometrics and will name the board accordingly.