

Speech: Foreign Secretary's remarks on the use of a nerve agent in Salisbury: 13 March 2018

The first thing is to get over to our friends and partners exactly what has happened, and that's what we've been doing today. As the Prime Minister explained yesterday, this is a brazen attempt to murder people – innocent people – on UK soil. The policeman is still in hospital.

It's overwhelmingly likely, or highly likely that the Russian state was involved. And the use of this nerve agent would represent the first use of nerve agents on the continent of Europe since the Second World War.

Clearly what we're doing today is giving Russia until midnight tonight to explain how it came to be that Novichok was used on the streets of Wiltshire. If they can come up with a convincing explanation then obviously we will want to see full disclosure of that to the [Organisations for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](#) in The Hague.

If not, then clearly we will want to be announcing the UK response, and that would come tomorrow. In the meantime, what we've been doing is talking to friends and partners, explaining what we see as the high likelihood of Russian State agency.

I've been very encouraged so far by the strength of the support that we are getting. I think in particular from President Macron of France, Sigmar Gabriel, my German counterpart, and from Washington, where Rex Tillerson last night made it very clear that he sees this as part of a pack of increasingly disruptive behaviour by Russia – the reckless use of chemical weapons that stretches from Syria to the streets of Salisbury. I've been encouraged by the willingness of our friends to show support and solidarity.

It's important that we wait until the deadline has passed. You've got to do this correctly. We've given the Russians until midnight to explain how the Novichok could have come to be on the streets of Britain. We cannot exclude that they have an explanation and we will want a full disclosure to the chemical weapons watchdog in the Hague. If not, there is a package of measures that we would use.

It is very important that people understand the gravity of what has happened and the outrage that the British government feels about the use of nerve agents, use of chemical weapons, against innocent members of the public, against an innocent police officer, on UK soil. We will make sure that our response is, as I told the House last week, commensurate but robust.