

Speech: Future security in Europe

Good afternoon.

Estoy encantado de estar hoy aquí en Madrid! (Translation – I am delighted to be in Madrid today.) I'd like to thank the organisers, EFE, for hosting this event.

I've been lucky enough to hold various posts within the British government.

But one similarity between them all is that I spend a lot of time trying to convince people to have a warm, open and productive relationship with Britain.

But I'm pleased to say that with Spain, the UK already has a strong and valuable relationship.

We have a proud history of working together...

And I'm not just talking about Gareth Bale helping Real Madrid win the Champions League and David Silva helping Manchester City win the Premier League!

There are strong ties between our nations.

More than 180,000 Spaniards live in the UK, and 2 million visit every year.

19 million Brits holiday in Spain each year and around 300,000 have made their homes here.

We have 5,000 Spanish people working in our National Health Service...

...and another 5,000 working in scientific research, including trying to find cures for illnesses like Alzheimer's and cancer.

There are also 12,000 Spaniards studying in UK universities and 55,000 students are in British schools in Spain.

That means that British schools have more of a footprint here in Spain than anywhere else in Europe.

We are also allies in business.

Spain is now the UK's seventh largest trading partner and our total bilateral trade was up 5% last year.

The UK is Spain's top destination for foreign direct investment.

But perhaps it is our security relationship that is the real jewel in the crown.

Whether it be against Daesh, drugs runners, or human traffickers, we could

not ask for more from Spanish law enforcement and intelligence agencies in terms of commitment and collaboration.

Our 2 countries regularly work together to protect our people.

We share tools to crack terror cells.

We stop murderers and rapists slipping over our borders.

We end exploitation by organised crime gangs.

And we bring these monsters to justice.

It's a sad fact that our countries share many of the same security threats and challenges.

We have a shared history of fighting terrorism – be that in the form of the IRA or ETA.

Our countries have both also been victims of terrorist attacks in recent years.

Last year, the UK was rocked by terror attacks in Manchester and in London.

In Spain, innocent people were mown down on Las Ramblas.

Our countries shared the pain of these attacks.

During the London Bridge attack, it was a Spanish national – Ignacio Echeverría – who sadly lost his life when he confronted terrorists with only his skateboard to try to save others.

He was posthumously awarded Britain's highest honour – the George Medal last year...

...and I'm pleased to say that his father will collect his posthumous George Medal in Buckingham Palace next month.

In Barcelona, one of the victims was a 7 year old boy with dual British-Australian nationality.

I will pay tribute to all victims of this mindless terrorism later today in the Bosque del Recuerdo.

Both our countries face an enduring threat from Islamist terrorism, which we work together to combat on a daily basis, wherever it manifests itself – be that on our streets or online.

There are other threats which our countries face together too.

For instance, the threat from large scale cybercrime is growing as digital technologies advance.

Cybercrime does not respect borders and this was shown with devastating

effect when the WannaCry ransomware attack impacted more than 100 countries around the globe.

We also both face the threat of hostile state activity.

We both have a watchful eye on Russia following on from the despicable nerve agent attack in Salisbury, which left 4 people fighting for their lives and one innocent woman dead.

Following this attack, many European countries stood with the UK to take decisive action, with Spain expelling 2 Russian diplomats in response. We are grateful to Spain for standing with us.

When it comes to our security, we know that when we collaborate we are at our strongest.

We know that sharing tools, sharing data and expertise keeps people safe in Spain, in Britain – and across Europe too.

And that's exactly what we're doing.

We're working together through the EU, through NATO and bilaterally in all sorts of different ways.

For example, in March this year, 39 women were freed from sexual exploitation at the hands of an organised criminal gang here in Spain...

...as a result of a joint operation between the UK's National Crime Agency and Spanish and Nigerian law enforcement.

In April, the National Crime Agency again worked with Spanish law enforcement to seize nearly 9 tonnes of cocaine in Algeciras ... the largest ever haul from a single container in Europe.

And, of course, nowhere is Anglo-Spanish co-operation stronger or more visible than in the joint operation called the Captura campaign ... which has seen 81 dangerous British fugitives successfully tracked down and arrested.

Without cooperation between our agencies, these dangerous fugitives, these 81, could still be at large...

...these people traffickers could still be lurking in our communities...

...and these drugs still flooding our streets.

This co-operation is often underpinned by EU law enforcement and criminal justice measures, which we both make use of to our mutual benefit.

In particular, I welcome the strong co-operation and leadership that the UK and Spain have shown within Europol to drive forward the EU's efforts to tackle illicit firearms trafficking.

We make extensive mutual use of European Arrest Warrants to arrest criminals, helping to fight trafficking and so much else.

For example, in the last 5 years, the UK arrested over 200 people on behalf of Spain, and the Spanish authorities have arrested over 180 on our behalf.

We are also both a part of the Schengen Information System, which enables the sharing of real-time automated alerts on missing and wanted people with law enforcement agencies across Europe.

We're working together to tackle child sexual abuse.

Just last year, our Spanish partners assisted in the arrest of one of the UK's most wanted sex offenders.

This twisted paedophile had been hiding in Spain for nearly 2 years and if he hadn't been caught, he may well be preying today on more children.

The European Arrest Warrant enabled Spanish authorities to locate him and return him to face justice in the UK where he is now behind bars.

These are just some examples of the collaborative security work that is going on every single day.

In all areas – from counter-terrorism to serious and organised crime, we are working together to keep our citizens safe.

That's in both our interests.

The nature of the current threat from serious organised crime, cybercrime, terrorism and hostile state activity is truly global.

And it constantly changes, as geopolitics and technology evolve.

To keep pace with this and to ensure we are able to respond effectively, we must continue to work together.

Criminals who seek to harm our citizens, exploit vulnerable people, damage our economies, and challenge our values, are finding new ways to do so – regardless of borders or geography.

We must continue to find new ways to fight back.

That means having seamless operational co-operation, real-time sharing of data, and state of the art technology.

It means ensuring those who would cause us harm know that they cannot escape justice by crossing from the UK into Spain or vice versa.

It means sharing our expertise, experience and intelligence, so we can stay one step ahead.

The UK Prime Minister said earlier this year that the UK is unconditionally committed to European security.

And I want to reiterate that message today – that deal or no deal – we remain committed to ensuring the security of Europe.

I'm pleased that Minister Grande-Marlaska has taken the time today to discuss with me the future of our security co-operation.

Because the benefits of our security cooperation – and its importance – are clear.

And this co-operation is facilitated and enhanced by access to EU tools and measures to the benefit of citizens in both our countries and across Europe.

We want an ambitious security relationship going forward after Brexit, which we have clearly set out.

We accept that outside the EU, our relationship must of course be quite different. But it does not have to be weaker.

We accept that things will need to change.

We will not be carrying on as if we were a member state.

We will be leaving all the various EU institutions.

We will no longer be involved in EU decision-making.

But the point is, we can make these changes and others without undermining the day-to-day operational co-operation which plays such an important role in keeping European citizens safe.

We want our security relationship with Spain – indeed with all our European partners – to be as strong and effective as ever once we have left the European Union.

That's why the UK government has proposed a comprehensive treaty between the EU and the UK which will allow security co-operation to continue and lives to be saved.

And I will keep putting forward the case for this continued co-operation.

The kind of model we are proposing is one the EU is familiar with.

It's relatively simple.

But we need the political will to make this happen.

The alternative – abandoning EU co-operation tools – would lead to a damaging reduction in our ability to work together, despite our best efforts.

While we have had some initial conversations with the Commission, we now need to go further and faster to help make sure that all our citizens stay safe and that crooks can't prosper.

I've spoken a lot today about the importance of working together.

Working together in all sorts of different areas.

Indeed, it's something our 2 countries have been very good at for a great many years.

In fact, UK and Spanish diplomatic ties go back 500 years.

Commercial ties go back even further.

As I've said, the security links between the UK and Spain have been going from strength to strength.

But we are now facing an intensive period of negotiations which will define the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

That will of course have implications for our security co-operation in the future.

I very much hope that the negotiations will reach a conclusion which ensures we are able to continue to co-operate effectively with our European partners to keep our people safe.

We have made the UK's commitment to Europe's security very clear.

Setting out what we think is the best way to guarantee it.

Today I want to promise you this.

That I will continue to do all I can to make sure that the relationship between our two great nations remains strong...

...that our citizens are kept safe...

...and that we continue to face our common threats and challenges together, long into the future.