

Morrisons / McColl's merger only raises concerns in a small number of local areas

However, overall, the deal would not harm the vast majority of shoppers or other businesses.

On 13 July 2022, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) [launched its investigation](#) after the companies submitted the reported £190 million deal for review.

McColl's operates convenience newsagent shops, with over 1,100 stores across England, Scotland, and Wales, while Morrisons (owned by parent company Clayton, Dubilier & Rice 'CD&R') has around 500 grocery stores in the UK. CD&R is also the parent company of the Motor Fuel Group (MFG). MFG owns over 800 convenience stores, the vast majority of which are attached to its petrol stations.

Following its Phase 1 investigation, the CMA has found that the merger between Morrisons and McColl's raises competition concerns in 35 areas, where McColl's or MFG convenience stores will face reduced competition if the deal is allowed to go ahead as planned. Weaker competition could lead to higher prices or a lower quality service for the customers in these areas who rely on their local shops for groceries.

During the investigation, the retailers accepted that the merger would raise concerns in some areas and asked the CMA to move straight to a discussion of remedies to address these concerns.

Morrisons now has 5 working days to offer proposals to the CMA to address the competition concerns identified. The CMA would then have a further 5 working days to consider whether to accept these in principle instead of referring the case to a Phase 2 investigation.

Sorcha O'Carroll, CMA Senior Director of Mergers, said:

As the cost of living soars, it's particularly important that shops are facing proper competition so that customers get the best prices possible when picking up essentials or doing the weekly shop.

While the vast majority of shoppers and other businesses won't lose out, we're concerned that the deal could lead to higher prices for people in some areas. If Morrisons and McColl's can address these concerns, then we won't need to move on to an in-depth investigation.

In the meantime, we're working closely with Morrisons to ensure that it can provide the support that McColl's needs to continue to

operate during our investigation.

For more information, visit the [Morrison's / McColl's merger inquiry page](#).

1. The CMA's competition concerns relate to 35 local areas
2. The CMA [previously investigated CD&R's purchase of Morrison's](#) and approved the deal subject to the divestment of 87 MFG petrol stations to address competition concerns. This process is ongoing
3. All enquiries from journalists should be directed to the CMA press office by email on press@cma.gov.uk or by phone on 020 3738 6460
4. All enquiries from the general public should be directed to the CMA's General Enquiries team on general.enquiries@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6000

Emerging evidence of further potential Russian violations and abuses of international law in Ukraine: UK statement at UN Security Council

Thank you President. I thank the previous speakers for their briefings, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo, Assistant Secretary-General Kehris and Ms Oleksandra Drik for their briefings.

As we've discussed, today we meet to discuss emerging evidence of further potential Russian violations and abuses of international law.

We are deeply concerned by reporting by the UN, the OSCE and civil society organisations that Russia is systematically detaining, processing and deporting Ukrainian men, women and children, with chilling echoes from European history.

As we have heard, civilians reportedly face interrogation, body searches, stripping, invasive data collection, ill-treatment and torture while passing through 'filtration'.

Those who are deemed most threatening are reportedly held indefinitely in detention centres, while others, including unaccompanied children, are forcibly deported to Russia. Some simply disappear.

So we call on the Russian Federation to allow the UN and other relevant international organisations immediate, full and unhindered access to those held in filtration camps and detention centres. And for these reports to be fully investigated to ensure those responsible can be held to account.

We are concerned, too, that Russia may in fact be using forced deportations

and displacement in an attempt, forcibly, to change the demographic makeup of parts of Ukraine.

What does this tell us about Russia's war?

First, it tells us about their method and their disregard for the rules that we agreed and observe here at the UN – the collective rules that bind us together. They act as if the Charter and international humanitarian law do not apply to them.

Second, it confirms this is not just an attempt to destroy Ukraine's democracy, but also Ukrainian identity and culture. Alleged 'Denazification' is a cover for 'de-Ukrainian-isation' and annexation. Mass movements of Ukrainian people give the game away.

Finally, it confirms what has been abundantly clear over the last six months: Russia's army is not being welcomed as it enters Ukrainian territory. This is a war of conquest, a war of occupation, a war of oppression, and a war to eliminate Ukraine.

So once again we call on the Russian Federation to observe fully its obligations under international law and to bring an end to its illegal invasion of Ukraine.

[Prime Minister Liz Truss's call with Chancellor Olaf Scholz: 7 September 2022](#)

Press release

The Prime Minister spoke to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.



The Prime Minister spoke to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz this evening.

The leaders discussed the energy challenges faced by the UK and its European partners as a result of Putin's illegal war. Both agreed on the importance of energy resilience and independence.

The Prime Minister underlined the importance of ensuring democracy and freedom were upheld in Europe, and of protecting countries made vulnerable by Russia's economic blackmail.

The UK and Germany were important economic partners, and the Prime Minister said she was keen to expand defence cooperation between the two countries.

Discussing the Northern Ireland Protocol, the Prime Minister was clear that her priority is protecting peace and stability in Northern Ireland and upholding the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. She stressed the importance of finding a solution to the fundamental problems with the text of the Protocol as it stands.

The Prime Minister said she looked forward to working closely with Chancellor Scholz in the coming months.

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[UK condemns Iran for reckless cyber attack against Albania](#)

Press release

The UK has condemned the Iranian state for a cyber attack against Albania's government that destroyed data and disrupted essential government services.



The UK has today (Wednesday 7 September) condemned the Iranian state for a cyber attack against Albania's government that destroyed data and disrupted essential government services, including paying utilities, booking medical appointments and enrolling schoolchildren.

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) assesses that Iranian state-linked cyber actors are almost certainly responsible for the series of cyber attacks against Albanian government infrastructure from 15 July, which caused significant impact to online public services and other government websites.

The websites of the Albanian Parliament and the Prime Minister's office, as well as 'e-Albania', a portal that Albanians use to access a number of public services, were attacked and subject to a shut down. The attackers also leaked Albanian government data, including details of emails from the Prime Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said:

Iran's reckless actions showed a blatant disregard for the Albanian people, severely restricting their ability to access essential public services.

The UK is supporting our valuable partner and NATO ally. We join Albania and other allies in exposing Iran's unacceptable actions.

NCSC assesses that Iran is an aggressive and capable cyber actor. Cyber operations are likely conducted by a complex and fluid network of groups, with differing degrees of association to the Iranian state, the workforces of which are highly likely a mix of departmental and contractual staff.

These cyber attacks are the latest in an increasingly reckless pattern of behaviour by Iran. Iranian-linked cyber actors have a number of powerful disruptive and destructive tools at their disposal. The UK has previously attributed and advised on a number of cyber incidents by Iranian actors:

- 22 March 2018: The UK's National Cyber Security Centre assessed with high confidence that the MABNA Institute were almost certainly responsible for a multi-year Computer Network Exploitation (CNE) campaign targeting universities in the UK, the US, as well as other Western nations, primarily for the purposes of intellectual property (IP) theft
- 24 February 2022: CISA, FBI, CNMF, NCSC and NSA released a joint Cybersecurity Advisory highlighting a group of Iranian government-sponsored advanced persistent threat (APT) actors, known as MuddyWater, conducting cyber espionage and other malicious cyber operations targeting a range of government and private-sector organisations across sectors in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America
- 17 November 2021: CISA, FBI, ACSC and NCSC released a joint Cyber Security Advisory on Iranian government-sponsored APT actors exploiting Microsoft Exchange and Fortinet vulnerabilities to gain initial access in advance of follow-on operations. The Iranian government-sponsored APT actors are actively targeting a broad range of multiple US critical infrastructure sectors as well as Australian organisations

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention Article 5 Formal Consultative Meeting, September 2022: UK statement

Mr Chair, this process, as instigated by the Russian Federation, concerns issues at the very heart of this Convention. I'd like to start by reaffirming the United Kingdom's longstanding and deeply-held commitment to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, to actively strengthening this Convention, and to safeguarding against efforts to undermine it. We are committed to following the process for this Formal Consultative Meeting under Article V, fully and in good faith.

We must look at the wider context to Russia's request. On 24 February Russia invaded Ukraine, an act of aggression in violation of international law, which the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to deplore in the strongest terms. Since then the Russian Federation has repeatedly spread false narratives and disinformation to try and justify its illegal aggression, including wild and inconsistent claims involving dirty bombs, chemical weapons, and offensive biological research. It is against that backdrop that the credibility of Russia's claims must be evaluated.

Mr Chair, Russia's allegations refer to Articles I and IV of the BTWC. Many delegations have recalled precisely what these Articles require. But it is also worth recalling the first few lines of Article X: that "the States Parties to this Convention undertake to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technical information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes."

The United Kingdom's experts have analysed the supporting evidence Russia has provided. I will share some key points from our assessment.

Firstly, Russia claims the culture collections held by Ukraine at the Mechnikov Anti-Plague Research Institute are inconsistent with peaceful, protective or prophylactic purposes, and are therefore evidence of a breach of Article I. This allegation is based on specific reference to 422 cholera 'storage units' and 32 anthrax 'storage units' and a lack of mass outbreaks of these diseases in Ukraine in recent years. The term 'storage unit' is ambiguous and misleading. These numbers of samples are to be expected given the presence of these pathogens in Ukraine and the surrounding region. Open source scientific research shows 32 incidents of anthrax infections in Ukraine between 1997 and 2022, and a cholera epidemic in Ukraine between 1994 and 1995. Such strain collections are relevant for research aimed at

understanding outbreaks and combatting infectious diseases, not only for the benefit of Ukraine but also for global preparedness and response. Most importantly, the endemic status and previous outbreak history are not the only reason determining whether a research programme on a particular biological agent should take place. Other reasons could include responses to global health security, international research collaboration, infectious disease preparedness, prevention and response, and disease surveillance and monitoring.

All of these are relevant to the provisions of the BTWC, particularly Article X. The evidence that Russia has presented is not indicative of offensive biological warfare activities. Irrespective of the size of the cholera and anthrax culture collections at the Mechnikov Institute, their retention is justifiable and we assess that research in Ukraine in fact, supports the provisions of the BTWC, including Article X.

Secondly, Russia claims a scientific pre-proposal from the Kharkov Institute of Veterinary Medicine, to investigate the potential transmission of avian influenza in wild birds in Europe, and a presentation slide titled 'Risk of Emerging Infections from Insectivorous Bats in Ukraine and Georgia' are evidence that the United States and Ukraine were studying the spread of dangerous infections as a means of biological weapons agent delivery. These documents provide no evidence supporting those claims. The proposed projects are consistent with investigations, for peaceful purposes, of wildlife that transmit pathogens. These documents relate to scientific research designed to better understand disease transmission and contribute ultimately to mitigating these pathogens. There are many examples of these types of studies being conducted internationally, including by Russia. We assess this shows Ukraine and the United States upholding the provisions of the BTWC, including Article X.

Thirdly, Russia claims to have recovered drones with 30-litre reservoirs within Ukrainian territory that they allege can be used to spray 'bioagents'. The only evidence Russia has provided is a letter from Baykar, a Turkish equipment manufacturer, in relation to export control regulations. The Russian claim that the drones have 'the ability to be equipped with aerosol generating systems with a 20+ litre capacity' is not actually supported by the documents provided. In fact, on the document, the manufacturer has explicitly written that the drones do not have this capacity. The drones referred to in the Russian documents appear to be of the type used for agriculture, manufactured by Chinese company DJI, supplied under the Chinese 'Belt-and-Road' initiative in collaboration with the Ukrainian government. Yet again, no evidence has been presented that demonstrates any non-compliance with the Convention by Ukraine.

Mr Chair, Russia has asked that we take their allegations seriously. It is hard to do so, when their presentation yesterday, delivered by a parade of nameless individuals, contains no more than misrepresentations of assorted public documents quoted incorrectly or out of context, and copy-pasted images from Wikipedia. This is not only an abuse of the time and resources States Parties have devoted to this meeting, in respect for the provisions of the Convention. It is a dangerous attempt to exploit the Convention for

aggressive political purposes.

Nevertheless, we, along with all the delegations represented here, have listened carefully to the allegations presented by Russia, and to the exhaustive response given by the United States and Ukraine. We consider that Russia's allegations have been duly heard, and that on considering their evidence no cause for ongoing concern about compliance with the Convention remains. In our view this process has served its proper purpose and should be concluded.