

# [Update on Randox test kits](#)

News story

Notification of issue relating to test kits produced by Randox laboratories



NHS Test and Trace has been notified that some test kits produced by Randox laboratories may not meet our required safety standards for coronavirus testing. Alongside the Lighthouse Laboratories, NHS Test and Trace has a separate contractual arrangement with Randox laboratories. As a precautionary measure and while we investigate further, NHS Test and Trace are requesting that all settings pause the use of Randox test kits with immediate effect and until further notice.

The risk to safety is low and test results from Randox kits are not affected.

We will be supporting all testing settings to receive replacement kits as soon as possible.

This request only applies to unused Randox test kits, which are clearly marked with that name. Used Randox test kits can still be collected for processing as normal.

All other kits from NHS Test and Trace can continue to be used for testing.

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## [Government acts to protect jobs in every part of the UK](#)

- New plans ensure trade between each part of the UK will prosper
- Holyrood, Cardiff and Stormont will receive new powers in at least 70

policy areas including parts of employment law, land use and air quality, among many others

The UK government has today [16 July] laid out plans to deliver on its manifesto commitment to ensure businesses across the whole of the United Kingdom will continue to enjoy seamless internal trade, as they have done for centuries, when we leave the transition period at the end of the year.

From 1 January 2021, powers in at least 70 policy areas previously exercised at an EU level will flow directly to the devolved administrations in Edinburgh, Cardiff, and Belfast for the first time. This will give the devolved administrations power over more issues than they have ever had before, without removing any of their current powers.

Powers are set to return across a raft of areas, including regulations for energy efficiency of buildings, air quality and animal welfare. To ensure businesses can continue to trade seamlessly across the UK as they do now, new legislation will be brought forward to preserve access to all parts of the UK for goods and services.

Under plans now open for consultation, we will strengthen and maintain the coherence of the UK's internal market, guaranteeing the continued ability of all UK companies to trade unhindered in every part of the United Kingdom, while ensuring the continued prosperity and wellbeing of people and businesses across all 4 nations. All powers that have been devolved will remain devolved. The proposals announced today are designed to support the economy of the entire United Kingdom, avoiding unnecessary burdens and costs being placed on businesses or consumers, providing continued certainty for people and businesses to work and trade freely across the whole of the UK, and giving additional confidence to trading partners and overseas investors as we leave the transition period. Without this action to preserve the status quo of seamless domestic trade, businesses across the UK could face serious problems: a Welsh lamb producer could end up unable to sell their lamb in Scotland, or Scotch whisky producers could lose access to supply from English barley farmers. These proposals create certainty for businesses that might otherwise face a complex and increasingly fragmented regulatory environment.

Many businesses depend on trade with the home nations more than any other partner. In Scotland, for example, sales of produce to the rest of the UK are worth £52.1 billion per year, accounting for over 60% of all exports, more than all other nations which Scotland trades with combined. Similarly, about 50% of Northern Ireland's sales are to Great Britain and 75% of exports of Welsh goods are consumed in other parts of the UK.

The proposals in the White Paper include:

- the principle of mutual recognition – regulations from one part of the UK will be recognised across the country to ensure the devolved administrations can set their own rules and standards, but still welcome the trade of businesses based anywhere in the UK
- the principle of non-discrimination – so there is a level playing field

for companies trading in the UK, regardless of where in the UK the business is based

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

The UK's internal market has functioned seamlessly for centuries. When we exit the transition period at the end of the year, we want to ensure the most successful political and economic union of nations in the world continues to grow and thrive.

This plan protects jobs and livelihoods. Without these necessary reforms, the way we trade goods and services between the home nations could be seriously impacted, harming the way we do business within our own borders.

Ensuring businesses will be able to continue trading freely across all 4 corners of the UK without the burden of inconsistent regulation or additional costs will be essential as we fire up our economic engines as we recover from coronavirus.

Working closely with all 3 devolved administrations to protect the integrity of the UK's internal market to safeguard people, jobs and trade, the UK government will be able to continue to put the interests of people and businesses right across the UK first.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Michael Gove said:

This plan is a power surge to the devolved administrations – giving them powers in dozens more areas. As powers flow back from Brussels to the devolved administrations in Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff – as well as to the UK government – we want to build on the good progress we have already made. We will develop new ways of working together and learning from each other to help create more opportunities for jobs and investment for businesses and citizens across the United Kingdom.

So we will work over the coming weeks with the devolved administrations in Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh on a new structure for how we can cooperate better and share ideas, and we will be bringing proposals to the table to agree a way forward. We should be learning from one another, combining the expertise of each nation to share ideas, innovation and, where appropriate, put in place processes for voluntary cooperation.

People right across the UK want their governments and institutions to work together at every level to improve their lives, and the UK government is committed to working to do this.

A 4 week consultation has also opened today, sourcing views from businesses,

experts, civil society, and consumer groups across all 4 nations of the UK. The proposals aim to balance the principles and successes of devolution, with the need to provide regulatory clarity to businesses, ensuring that rules and standards across the UK are mutually recognised, so that trade is as easy for business as possible.

Responding to the launch of the White Paper, Carolyn Fairbairn, CBI Director-General, said:

Preserving the integrity the internal single market – the economic glue binding our 4 nations – is essential to guard against any additional costs or barriers to doing business between different parts of the UK.

Increasing prosperity, creating opportunities for all and raising living standards will be the hallmarks of success. Delivery will be the real test, requiring closer collaboration between business, Westminster and devolved administrations.

- the 4 week consultation on the UK internal market white paper launches today (16 July)
- as well as launching the consultation, UK government officials are hosting several sector-specific roundtables. Roundtables are being held with academic experts and representatives of businesses from across the UK, focusing on key UK sectors, such as advanced manufacturing, agriculture, professional and business services, technology, energy, life sciences and tourism, as well as with representatives of the devolved administrations
- in total, Northern Ireland will be receiving 157 powers, Scotland 111 powers and 70 to Wales

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## [Preventing catastrophic risks from SAFER oil tanker leak](#)

On 15 July, the Executive Director of the UN Environmental Programme Inger Andersen and Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock briefed the Security Council about the increasing environmental and humanitarian risks posed by the decaying Safer oil tanker, whose dire condition is evidenced by the leak of seawater into the tanker's engine room on 27 May. The members of the Security Council expressed deep alarm at the growing risk that the Safer oil tanker could rupture or explode, causing an environmental, economic, and humanitarian catastrophe for Yemen and its neighbours.

The members of the Security Council acknowledged the announcement of the Houthis to grant access to the Safer tanker, and called on them to convert this commitment into concrete action as soon as possible, including by agreeing to entry permits, a safe travel route to the tanker, and all other logistical arrangements, in order to facilitate unconditional access for United Nations technical experts to assess the tanker's condition, conduct any possible urgent repairs, and make recommendations for the safe extraction of the oil, ensuring close cooperation with the United Nations. They looked forward to seeing concrete action implemented without delay.

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## UK warns of “catastrophic environmental threat” from hazardous Yemeni oil tanker

The UK warned the UN Security Council today 15th July that the FSO SAFER oil tanker, which has 1.14 million barrels of crude oil on board, poses a devastating threat to the environment. Its poor condition means it is now close to leaking millions of gallons of oil into the Red Sea.

The tanker is moored in Houthi-held territory off the west coast of Yemen, and the UN is seeking access for a mission to assess the tanker's condition, conduct any possible urgent repairs, and make recommendations for the safe extraction of the oil.

The tanker has the potential to cause an oil spill four times larger than the Exxon Valdez disaster in 1989, which involved 257,000 barrels of oil and the effects of which are still being observed over 30 years later.

It would cause unprecedented damage to the surrounding Red Sea marine environment which is home to over 1200 species of fish, of which 10 per cent are only found in the Red Sea. Any spill would also devastate the livelihoods of nearly four million people, with fishing stocks taking 25 years to recover. It would close the vital port of Al Hodeidah for up to six months and cost up to £16 billion to clean up.

If there was a spill, it would make responding to the already challenging humanitarian situation in Yemen even more difficult.

Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverly, said:

The FSO SAFER oil tanker is an environmental disaster waiting to happen and unless UN experts are allowed to access it, we are facing a catastrophic environmental threat.

The Houthis cannot continue to hold the environment and people's livelihoods to ransom. It is in everyone's interests, especially the suffering people of Yemen, that this tanker is made safe immediately.

We will continue to use our seat on the UN Security Council to do all we can to stand up for and protect the Yemeni people.

Yemen is suffering from the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with 24 million people – a staggering 80% of the population – in need of humanitarian assistance. This devastating situation is now being compounded by the rapid spread of coronavirus, with UK-funded modelling estimating that Yemen has already had over one million infections.

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## **Minister for the Armed Forces James Heappey MP: The Ministry of Defence Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm delighted to speak to you today about the MOD's response to the Covid pandemic.

The beginning of the year already feels like a lifetime ago. And it's hard to remember that, back in January, Covid wasn't really in the news.

Equally, what's also, perhaps, hard to remember, is that period when Covid was very much in the news for being overseas but not yet here

With the numbers of cases rising alarmingly in Italy and horrendous pictures on our TV screens of overstretched Italian intensive care units, the nation was genuinely concerned about Covid. About how we would make up for the lack of intensive care beds. And about how would we procure and distribute the billions of items of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that would be needed.

As our plans to respond to the pandemic developed, we were confronted by the challenges of delivering millions of meals to the many vulnerable people who would be shielded.

And, as our response developed further still, we wanted to know how we would achieve the testing of hundreds of thousands of people per day.

Make no mistake. When those lines of activity and the many moving parts, both in the UK and abroad, were brought together this became a logistical and operational challenge the like of which we hadn't seen since the end of World War 2.

Now, all of these challenges, were fundamentally owned by Other Government Departments. And I am keen to say up front that the work of my colleagues in the Department for Health and Social Care, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Defra, the Treasury and elsewhere has been truly extraordinary.

That said RUSI has invited me here today to talk about Defence's contribution. So you'll forgive me if I speak with some pride over what we've achieved whilst supporting those other departments...

Whether that was creating new mechanisms for the procurement and distribution of PPE

... developing vast Nightingale hospitals from London to Manchester, Birmingham to Bristol ... so that thousands more intensive care beds were available

... providing additional clinicians from the Defence Medical Services to meet the increasing demand on the wards

... designing and establishing the structures that could test hundreds of thousands of people a day.

Or whether it was embedding planners in every local authority to co-ordinate our response at all levels.

This wasn't our fight and so, rightly, our soldier, sailors, airmen and air women were not the ones on the TV screens.

The real heroes of this crisis were our NHS and our wider public services.

But behind them over 14,000 military and civilian personnel from within the MOD have stood tall. I'm grateful for all they've done.

Today I would like to delve into the detail with five vignettes showing-off just some of this fantastic work.

Let me begin with Major Eb Mukhtar.

In his civilian job Eb leads operations for Google shopping. But in his spare-time he serves with the Reserves as a Staff Officer with National Reserve HQ attached to 16 Air Assault Brigade in Colchester. And when his nation needed him Eb really stepped up.

Realising that the shortage of PPE meant that many smaller health care providers couldn't receive the necessary equipment from their traditional

suppliers, Eb, working in conjunction with E-bay, designed an e-portal that allowed up to 45,000 different users including NHS customers and GPs to access the NHS supply chain.

Next I want to draw attention to the efforts of soldiers from 66 Works Group Royal Engineers.

They recognised a gap in testing coverage and developed the concept of the Mobile Testing Unit in just under seven days.

After adopting a 'Scrapheap Challenge' approach in a Royal Engineer workshop, they transformed crew transport vans into the specialised MTUs being used today.

From engineers to our brilliant DSTL scientists working at Porton Down.

They didn't just enhance the UK's testing capacity, they addressed another very basic challenge.

PPE face masks used by the NHS must fit properly, so a special spray helps medics determine whether the masks both fit and can resist droplets expelled by patients.

But the spray used to test those masks was unavailable in the time frame. So a new solution had to be found. Enter DSTL. They developed and manufactured sufficient spray to help tackle this challenge and protect NHS clinicians on the frontline.

Meanwhile, our colleagues over at Defence Equipment and Support were immensely active in procurement.

They established a special team that enabled the Department for Health and Social Care to approve and place an order for almost 10 billion items of PPE – many hard to source – worth £5.3 billion with suppliers across the world.

Through their Defence Logistic Hub at Donnington, they also distributed more than 10,500 different pieces of critical medical care including more than 3,700 ventilators.

Not only did they adapt Air Separation Units used by aircrew to treat COVID-19 patients, but they worked with industry and the RAF to use 3-D printing technology to improve face masks for frontline NHS staff.

Finally, there is what CDS likes to call our neural network.

By which he means the embedded expertise that we plugged into Public Health England and the NHS, and into our national, regional and local partner organisations.

Between them they helped bolster plans to delay, contain and manage the impact of the virus across different sectors.

They brought specialist assistance in everything from medical, logistics and



engineering to data analytics, problem solving and information management.

Together they ensured the national response functioned at scale and moved at pace.

But it would be wrong for me to imply our people were exclusively busy on the home front.

They also provided tireless support to local government and civil authorities in our overseas territories.

In Gibraltar, they assisted with logistics and planning as well as bringing in essential food and medicine.

In the Falkland Islands, they brought their medical expertise as well as supplies and an oxygen generation plant.

After departing earlier than planned, the crew of RFA Argus and HMS Medway have spent the last few months supporting countries in the Caribbean tackling Coronavirus. And they are still there now – ready to assist in any relief effort required during hurricane season.

In Ascension and St Helena, our people delivered vital kit and in the Turks and Caicos Islands and the Cayman Islands they provided essential security assistance.

Now we're on the road to getting Coronavirus effectively under control in the UK, the question for us is how we support other countries around the globe who are still at the peak of the pandemic.

Throughout this unprecedented crisis, our Armed Forces have continued to maintain our nation's resilience.

Our adversaries have continued to test us during this difficult time and, if anything, the global environment has become even more competitive.

But our brave Defence personnel have continued to keep our nation safe, maintaining our nuclear deterrent and protecting our sovereign airspace and territorial waters while countering the international terrorist threat from Daesh and deterring malign state and non-state actors.

Even as Coronavirus raged, our aircraft continued to police NATO airspace.

Our flagship aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, was able to remain at sea for over 10 weeks so that her crew could complete operational training with minimal risk of infection – taking us one step closer to the carrier strike capability that can project British Influence across the globe.

All the while, we have continued training and generating the forces required for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, even if the reduced tempo meant they haven't yet needed to deploy.

And we have done so in a disciplined way – respecting social distancing and

minimising the risk to our people.

All this has been a monumental effort.

And today is my opportunity to place on record our appreciation for the awesome work of our military and civilian workforce.

Those who put duty to our country ahead of spending time with their families during the pandemic.

Those who never stopped stepping up.

And – arguably even more impressively – those who quietly worked in the background keeping the Defence of our nation going whilst the nation's attention was on Covid-19.

Thank you all for keeping us safe.

But, ladies and gentlemen, RUSI is a serious academic institution and you haven't invited me to speak to you simply to express my pride in the exceptional effort of our Armed Forces.

You want me, rightly, to offer some more considered thoughts on what we can learn from this crisis.

Moreover, there will be lessons we must learn around the resilience of defence and the nation which should inform our Integrated Review of foreign, defence, security and development policy.

So now let me touch on just a few of those lessons:

First, there is the importance of mass.

As was widely reported 20,000 service personnel were placed at high readiness during the crisis. Including

...1,000 people standing by in case our prison service needed support

...1,500 drivers ready to deliver essential supplies

...and 10,000 individuals able to step in at short notice to support the police.

In the end none of those contingencies were activated and the highest number of service personnel deployed in response to Covid at any one time was 4,820 – the majority of which are involved in the testing process.

But the fact we've not used the full 20,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen who were put at readiness...shouldn't lead us to conclude that they were not important to the government's response.

On the contrary, I recall vividly from those early ministerial implementation groups the scale of the contingencies the government thought it might need.

And the ability of the MOD to step up and say “we’ve got this” offered some easy answers to an otherwise extraordinarily complicated challenge.

In Australia, the design of the force is in part driven by homeland resilience requirements. And whilst I don’t think that is the answer here, there’s no escaping the fact that the ability to generate thousands of people to do anything from the swabbing of throats to the stuffing of sandbags in a time of crisis is a reassurance to us all.

Second, beyond the simple and quick availability of mass, Covid has demonstrated that Defence has the ability to draw on a wide range of operational and technical expertise.

Although we have capabilities principally to achieve our military aims, it has been satisfying to see how transferable those skill sets have been in the civilian environment during our pandemic response.

Our logisticians, engineers, drivers and medics, scientists, planners, intelligent analysts, communication specialists, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear specialists...have all been involved and added value in surprising ways.

I think we’ve been surprised ourselves by how our contribution to this crisis has really been about brains over brawn. And it goes to show how modern Armed Forces need mass but that mass achieves nothing without battle winning technical know-how

Which leads me to my third lesson and that is that we cannot hold that breadth of expertise exclusively within the regular Armed Forces. And so we will need to ensure that we recruit and retain the eclectic skill-set that has proven so valuable...often within the Reserve.

This Integrated Review was always going to look at how we can further break down barriers between Regulars and Reserves...and how we generate a wider sort of expertise within our people...irrespective of their term of service.

The fact that some of the real heroes of the military response over the past four months have been Reservists really rams home the need to do this.

Finally, outside of times of crisis, we must maintain stronger relationships with the NHS, local authorities and other parts of the public sector.

Before my ministerial colleagues from other departments start to twitch; this is not an MOD land grab.

During the pandemic we forged strong partnerships at scale in double time.

We built up trust and mutual respect with our counterparts. We can’t afford to lose that connection.

So we must make sure the appropriate people in our organisation retain an awareness of the way our public services work so that, whenever we have to work together again in future, whatever the challenges of tomorrow might be,

we have maintained that trust, that understanding, that unity of purpose and that sense of belonging to one team.

Interestingly, this is a network that won't just be to the advantage of our homeland resilience.

As we move into a new age of great power competition it is the fusion of effort across Whitehall, allowing us to successfully compete with our adversaries and sow mutual understanding and awareness between departments, that will give us an edge away from home as well.

To conclude: Planning for sudden, fast-moving events like pandemics is the military's stock in trade.

We have tried and tested systems in place.

These were the systems we drew on when we helped co-ordinate the response to Foot and Mouth disease.

These were the systems we turned to when it came to security for the London 2012 Olympics.

These were the systems that made sure we had large numbers of military personnel at readiness during preparations for a 'no-deal' Brexit.

And these were the systems that made sure we could come to the aid of the citizens of Salisbury after the use of Novichok on British streets back in 2018.

Defence is good at this stuff! And our people have done a great job over the past few months.

In the midst of a deadly pandemic, in the middle of the greatest crisis we've faced in more than half a century...Defence has once more held firm and proven its worth.

We might now be in the 'new normal', bringing inevitable instability and insecurity

But we should draw enormous confidence from the fact that our UK Armed Forces have shown their mettle and proved that they are trained and ready to respond... wherever and whenever the country requires.

I finish, however, with a word of caution. History teaches us that crisis brings economic instability and economic instability brings insecurity. At times of insecurity Defence is at its busiest.

So it should come as no surprise to all of you that as we draw down our response to the pandemic and generate forces at readiness – just in case there is a second wave – the MOD is already recocked...and generating the military solution our country may need in the uncertain world that lies ahead.