

Breaking the links between politics, business and illicit activity in the Western Balkans

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom has tasked me with strengthening the UK's relationship with the six countries of the Western Balkans – through more trade and investment, increased energy security, cultural co-operation, security and defence, and fighting organised crime together.

I am a frequent guest in the countries of the region, and have just returned from Tirana, Skopje and Podgorica, where I have heard one message loud and clear from people of all walks of life: young people are leaving, driven out by lack of opportunities, feeling they cannot succeed if they don't have political connections and frustrated by entrenched corruption. They ask us to help build a better society and to hold their leaders to account for it.

Institutions, civil society, journalists and criminal justice officials are working to build prosperous, safe democracies. Most of the real effort will be on the ground, across the Western Balkans – effort by honest prosecutors, intrepid journalists, dedicated police, visionary leaders. In Albania, with justice reform, the Special Anti-Corruption Agency (SPAK) and the National Bureau for Investigation (NBI), we have a tailwind for change.

The UK is with you in this endeavour. Progress is being made. Some people who previously felt they were immune are now in prison. But others still operate as if they have impunity for wrongdoing, as if the rule of law does not apply equally to everyone.

And so we are stepping up our efforts to disrupt links between politics, business and illicit activity, both around the world and in the Western Balkans. We have designated 27 individuals involved in serious corruption around the world under our Global Anti-Corruption sanctions regime since its launch. A new Register of Overseas Entities, requiring those behind foreign companies which own UK property to reveal their identities, will be created under the Economic Crime Act. And we have established a new 'Kleptocracy Cell' based in the National Crime Agency, to target sanctions evasion and corrupt Russian assets hidden in the UK.

This week, we took disruptive action against several Albanian individuals with well publicised and documented ties to criminality and corruption. This is the first wave of a set of actions intended to encourage accountability and end impunity. The UK has a range of tools available to disrupt individuals with ties to criminality and corruption, including immigration and economic disruption. The details of these actions may not always be public.

The support that some public figures receive from criminals in exchange for their corruption smothers the voice of the Albanian people. As the OSCE's

report on international monitoring of last year's parliamentary elections shows, vote-buying and misuse of public funds continue to be a major problem in Albanian politics. So long as politicians are able to work with criminals to buy, blackmail and intimidate voters, Albanian democracy will remain fragile and incomplete. Further change and electoral reform are needed now.

Organised crime and corruption in Albania – and the wider region – also mean that vast amounts of state funds, collected from ordinary tax-payers, never reach the schools, hospitals and roads that Albanians need to build a healthy, prosperous society.

For all of you in Albania and the region striving for reform, I also have a message: we will back you in your judicial reforms, which have helped to weed out corrupt officials and led to the prosecution of powerful figures. We will support you in reforming your elections and in all your efforts for transparency, accountability and democracy. We will help boost civic engagement in holding government to account.

We hail those brave investigative journalists who have exposed corruption and links between politics, business and crime – often in the face of violence and intimidation from criminals. They must continue to do so with the full protection of governments and law enforcement agencies and with the support of those who cherish freedom.

We are with you on your journey to build the state that your people deserve.

The United Kingdom's message to those who are involved in crime or corruption is this: promoting crime or corruption – whether in the Western Balkans or elsewhere – will not go without consequences and you will not be welcome in the UK. Those individuals who do so damage their society and their state. Whether through sanctions, immigration action or policies of non-engagement, the UK will act to root out corruption and organised crime.

Together we will make sure that no one is above the law.

[Sir Stuart Peach](#) is the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the Western Balkans.

UK to send scores of artillery guns and hundreds of drones to Ukraine

The UK will supply scores of artillery guns, hundreds of drones and hundreds more anti-tank weapons to Ukraine in the coming weeks, the Defence Secretary has revealed.

The delivery of the new equipment will significantly step up the UK's support as the country fights to repel Russia's brutal and unjustified invasion.

More than 20 M109 155mm self-propelled guns and 36 L119 105mm artillery guns will soon arrive from the UK, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace announced in an update to Parliament today. Counter-battery radar systems and more than 50,000 rounds of ammunition for Ukraine's existing Soviet era artillery will also follow, he added.

This equipment will bolster the Armed Forces of Ukraine's ability to defend itself against Russia's indiscriminate use of artillery.

The UK will also send more than 1,600 more anti-tank weapons in the coming weeks, along with drones, including hundreds of loitering aerial munitions.

So far 6,900 NLAW, Javelin, Brimstone and other anti-tank weapons, as well as 16,000 artillery rounds, six Stormer vehicles fitted with Starstreak anti-air missile launchers and hundreds of missiles have been sent to Ukraine.

The UK has also supplied maritime Brimstone missiles, [multiple launch rocket systems](#), 120 armoured fighting vehicles and large quantities of non-lethal aid including more than 82,000 helmets, 8,450 sets of body armour and over 5,000 night vision devices.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The scale and range of equipment we are providing demonstrates the strength of our resolve. Together with our international partners, we will ensure Ukraine has the tools to defend their country from Putin's illegal invasion.

The uplift comes after Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced in June that the UK would provide [another £1 billion of military support to Ukraine](#).

The funding, which brings UK military support and broader regional activity since the outbreak of war to £2.3bn, will herald a new phase in the international community's support, enabling Ukraine to go beyond their valiant defence against the illegal Russian invasion and mount offensive operations.

The next phase of military support, paid for with this additional funding, will include even more sophisticated air defence systems, uncrewed aerial vehicles and innovative new electronic warfare equipment.

It comes after the UK [launched a major training operation for Ukrainian forces](#), with the potential to train up to 10,000 soldiers.

[The Defence Secretary recently visited some of the first Ukrainian soldiers](#) taking part in the programme, which is taking place at sites across the North West, South West and South East of the UK.

Transport update: search and rescue

Following an extensive 18-month procurement process to procure the next decade of search and rescue aviation services, this process has now finished, and I wish to inform the House of the results.

I am pleased to announce that a £1.6 billion contract will be signed today (21 July 2022) to provide a search and rescue helicopter service for the whole of the UK with Bristow Helicopters Ltd. The new contract will see the UK search and rescue region benefit from advances in technology to save more lives, even more quickly.

A fleet of state-of-the-art helicopters, planes and drones will operate across the United Kingdom and far out to sea in support of the lifesaving work of HM Coastguard. These aircraft will also support the work of the other emergency services, border protection, fisheries protection and pollution prevention.

A strong competition led to this contract being signed, and a credible, data-led requirement resulted in a contract that is highly innovative and takes account of anticipated future demands such as increased tourism in certain areas.

The new contract will guarantee that there will be no base closures or job losses in this critical service. Instead, 2 new seasonal bases, operating for 6 months of the year, will be opened in areas of particular growing demand.

A new base at Fort William will meet the summertime peak tourism demand in the Ben Nevis area, while a new base in Carlisle will also meet similar demands in the Lake District area.

All helicopter bases will continue to be operational 24 hours a day, apart for Fort William and Carlisle which will operate 12 hours a day from April to September.

The transition out from the current contract will start 30 September 2024 and run through to 31 December 2026. The transition will be seamless and will follow extensive engagement with stakeholders including the thousands of rescue volunteers who rely on these arrangements.

In addition to our existing base in Doncaster, highly sophisticated surveillance planes will operate from Prestwick and Newquay. This will give the UK much more capability to search for people needing our help over large areas and prevent illegal or anticompetitive activity in UK waters.

Both Doncaster and Prestwick will be operational 24 hours a day, with Newquay operational 12 hours a day all year round. Some of these aircraft can reach the mid-Atlantic, which is the extent of the UK's search and rescue region.

The new service will comprise of:

- 18 helicopters including existing Leonardo AW189s and Sikorsky S92As augmented with the introduction of Leonardo AW139 helicopters
- 6 King Air fixed-wing planes, including the B350, B350ER and the B200
- 1 mobile deployable Schiebel S-100 drone system capable of operating anywhere in the UK

A new state-of-the-art search and rescue helicopter simulation training facility at Solent Airport next to the HM Coastguard Training Facility will house a synthetic rescue hoist and helicopter suspended over a large training pool.

This is a vital addition to training the next generation of technical winch crew. Further innovation throughout the life of the contract will involve the use of uncrewed aircraft and aircraft powered by sustainable aviation fuels.

This is a major investment by the UK government in critical national service which covers a wide range of activity. It protects the services we have come to rely on for years to come.

[Response to the findings of the Independent Review into the Serious Fraud Office's handling of the Unaoil case](#)

On 9 February 2022, the Attorney General, Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP, commissioned an [independent review](#) of the Serious Fraud Office to look at what went wrong in the Unaoil case and what changes were needed to ensure that the failings identified in the judgment do not happen again.

Sir David Calvert-Smith, a former Director of Public Prosecutions and High Court judge led the review.

Commenting on the Review, the Attorney General said:

“I wish to thank Sir David and the team for carrying out the Review. I have considered the findings carefully and discussed these with the Director of the SFO. We both accept the recommendations made by Sir David. I commissioned this Review to ensure that lessons are learned so that the failings we saw in the Unaoil case do not happen again. This remains a priority for the Director and me.

“Building on work already undertaken by the SFO a clear plan of action to

respond to the Review recommendations has been developed. I will be closely monitoring the SFO's progress and delivery of that plan and will provide an update to Parliament in November 2022 and February 2023.

"I am aware that the SFO has received recommendations made by Brian Altman QC, following the Independent Review he conducted for the SFO following the 'R v Woods and Marshall' judgment and the SFO will be publishing further details on this."

Commenting on the Review, the Director of the Serious Fraud Office said:

"Implementing the recommendations put forward by Brian Altman QC and Sir David Calvert Smith is our pressing priority.

"The reviews are a sobering read for anyone who believes in the mission and purpose of the SFO, but from the outset we wanted to establish what happened in these two cases and use the findings to improve our performance.

"The SFO of today is already not the same organisation I inherited. While the expertise and determination of our committed staff remains steadfast, a new senior leadership team has prioritised investment in technology, introduced a stringent case prioritisation system and we have embedded a change programme to overhaul the SFO's working practices and culture.

"The SFO has a crucially important mission, fighting the most serious and complex financial crime, securing justice for victims and protecting the UK's economy from criminals who commit fraud, bribery and corruption. I am determined to ensure these reviews help us to move forward with clarity and confidence."

Notes

1. Junior officials' names have been redacted from the published [review](#) in line with standard government practice. The SFO has waived legal privilege in relation to legal advice referred to in the review only for the purposes of this review.
2. Sir David was named a 'changemaker within the criminal justice system' by the National Black Crown Prosecution Association in 2019 for his work to tackle racism.
3. Sir David Calvert-Smith led the investigation for the Commission for Racial Equality into racism within the Police Service of England and Wales which reported in 2005.

Deputy Governor of the Bank of England

reappointed

A Deputy Governor of the Bank of England has been reappointed by Her Majesty the Queen.

Sir Dave Ramsden has been reappointed as Deputy Governor for Markets and Banking, where he is responsible for oversight of Markets, Banking, Payments, and Resolution directorates. He has been reappointed for a second term of five years, from 4 September 2022 to 3 September 2027.

In this role he is also a member of the Monetary Policy Committee, the Financial Policy Committee and the Prudential Regulation Committee. Sir Dave Ramsden is also the Chair of the RTGS/CHAPS Board.

The Chancellor of Exchequer, Nadhim Zahawi said:

“I am pleased that Sir Dave Ramsden has been reappointed in this role. His vast knowledge and expertise will continue to be a major asset to the Bank.”

Andrew Bailey, the Governor of the Bank of England, said:

“I am very pleased that Dave Ramsden has agreed to serve a second term as Deputy Governor, Markets and Banking. Dave has ably overseen significant developments in all the functions he is responsible for, notably the work on RTGS renewal, the launch of significant market operations around Covid and the first assessment of banks’ resolvability.

“His commitment to public policymaking is invaluable to our delivery of monetary and financial stability.”

About the appointment

The Bank of England is the central bank of the UK. It is governed by the board of directors known as the Court of Directors. Further information can be found at the [Bank of England website](#).

All members of Court are appointed by Her Majesty the Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

All appointments to the Court are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for appointees’ political activity (if any is declared) to be made public. Sir Dave Ramsden has confirmed he has not engaged in any political activity in the last five years.

About Dave Ramsden

Sir Dave Ramsden joined the Bank to become Deputy Governor for Markets and Banking on 4 September 2017. Before joining the Bank, Sir Dave Ramsden was Chief Economic Adviser to the Treasury and Head of the Government Economic

Service from 2007 – 2017.