

UK dispatches war crimes experts to help Ukraine with investigations

Press release

Foreign Secretary announces that the UK will deploy a team of war crimes experts to support Ukraine with investigations into Russian atrocities



- UK experts will deploy to support the Ukrainian Government in gathering evidence and prosecuting war crimes.
- This follows reports of sexual violence by Russian forces in Ukraine.
- Comes as the Foreign Secretary meets President of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague for talks today.

The UK will deploy a team of war crimes experts to support Ukraine with investigations into Russian atrocities, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has announced.

The specialist team will assist the Ukrainian Government as they gather evidence and prosecute war crimes and will include experts in conflict-related sexual violence.

They will arrive in Poland in early May and meet international partners, NGOs, refugees and the Ukrainian government to scope out the assistance they can provide.

It comes as the Foreign Secretary travels to The Hague today for talks with ICC Court President, Judge Piotr Hofmanski, at the International Criminal Court, where she will reaffirm the UK's full support for the investigation and prosecution of war crimes and the use of sexual violence not just in the conflict in Ukraine but around the world.

The visit follows Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab's visit to The Hague last month to offer practical support to the court for investigating and prosecuting and the report produced under the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) Moscow Mechanism, which found credible evidence of torture, rape, the killing of civilians and the forced deportation of more than half a million people in Ukraine.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

Russia has brought barbarity to Ukraine and committed vile atrocities, including against women. British expertise will help uncover the truth and hold Putin's regime to account for its actions. Justice will be done.

While in The Hague, the Foreign Secretary will see her Dutch counterpart Wopke Hoekstra for talks on working together with the Netherlands on holding Russia to account, including their work through the Joint Expeditionary Force and NATO.

Background

- The UK is a leading country donor to the crisis, committing nearly £400 million (£394 million) of aid for urgent economic and humanitarian support since the invasion.
- This includes a £220 million package for aid agencies on the ground to provide medical supplies and basic necessities, saving lives and protecting vulnerable people. So far the UK has sent a rapid donation of food supplies following a request from the government, committed to donating up to 42 ambulances to help bring vital lifesaving care, sent more than 5 million medical items and supported UK-Med to carry out vital lifesaving work in Ukraine.
- The UK supports the work of the International Criminal Court and is providing £1 million of additional funding to help the ICC to have an improved system to store evidence submitted in relation to the OTP's investigations.
- The UK was part of the coalition that created of the Commission of Inquiry at the Human Rights Council, to ensure all allegations of atrocity crimes are thoroughly investigated. We help support such work through our £3m annual funding to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- The UK has launched a £10 million Civil Society Fund to support organisations in Ukraine, including those helping people affected by conflict-related sexual violence. This follows the launch of the Murad Code earlier this month that provides guidelines for how to properly interview survivors of sexual violence.
- The UK will host an international conference 28 – 30 November 2022 to drive global action to tackle sexual violence around the world and mark 10 years since the launch of the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.

Published 29 April 2022

CMA finds competition concerns in merger of emergency service software suppliers

Press release

NEC Software Solutions' purchase of SSS raises competition concerns in the supply of vital software to emergency services and transport customers.



NEC and SSS are 2 of a small number of suppliers that supply essential software solutions to emergency service providers (including police forces, fire and rescue services and ambulance trusts) as well as transport service providers (such as TfL and rail operators).

These include:

- 'integrated communication and control services' (ICCS) used by control room personnel in day-to-day duties such as receiving and making urgent phone calls to communicate with emergency response staff.
- specialised software (referred to as 'Duties') to police forces to enable the planning and scheduling of shifts. Supply of this software requires significant expertise and experience.
- records management systems (RMS) which enable the police to record and manage case-related information such as the processing of people in custody and case file management for prosecutions.

The CMA found that for each of these 3 services, the market is relatively concentrated, with NEC and SSS generally being 2 of only 3 suppliers with a large established customer base.

The CMA considered the impact of the merger on these services and found that

the deal gives rise to competition concerns with regard to all 3 software products.

David Stewart, Executive Director, Mergers and Markets, said:

We all rely on our emergency services, and they rely in turn on essential services such as those provided by these 2 companies. The CMA's role is to ensure this deal does not undermine competition in this market, so police, fire and ambulance services across the UK have a choice of supplier and can secure the most reliable and innovative services available.

Ultimately the software NEC and SSS provide is paid for by the taxpayer and we can't risk higher prices or a lower standard of service.

It is now up to NEC to provide us with undertakings to address our concerns.

To address these concerns, the CMA has given NEC until 9 May 2022 to offer an undertaking that might be accepted.

If no undertaking is offered that addresses the CMA's concerns, then the deal will be referred to a more in-depth investigation.

More information is on the [NEC/Capita case page](#).

1. SSS refers to SSS Public Safety Limited (formerly Capita (SSS) Limited) and Secure Solutions USA LLC (formerly Capita Software (US) LLC).
2. In the ICCS market, the third established player is Frequentis. In the Duties market, the third player is Crown and, to a lesser extent, Totalmobile also competes with NEC and SSS. In the RMS market, the third established player is Niche.
3. All media enquiries should be directed to the CMA press office by email on press@cma.gov.uk, or by phone on 020 3738 6460.

Published 29 April 2022

Four Malawians off to the UK for Chevening Media Freedom Fellowship

Four successful candidates of the Chevening Africa Media Freedom Fellowship will depart for the UK on 30th April to embark on their seven-week fellowship at University of Westminster under the theme 'New Media for a New Africa: Freedom of Speech, Economic Prosperity and Good Governance'.

The fellowship was supposed to commence in 2020 but was postponed due to COVID 19 disruptions.

The four scholars are Mallick Mnela, Hilda Ngomano, Sangwani Mwafulirwa and Yvonne Akonda Sundu. They will join their colleagues from Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Gambia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

The UK Government is committed to the promotion of media freedom and freedom of expression in Malawi as essential components of any functioning democracy. For example, the UK is a founding member of the Media Freedom Coalition. Formed in July 2019 at the Global Conference for Media Freedom, we publicly committed alongside key partners to advocate for media freedom and the safety of journalists. Chevening was established in 1983, and many of those selected for an award have gone on to become respected leaders across a range of sectors, including in broadcast, journalism, and media.

Deputy High Commissioner Pert said at the send-off ceremony:

The media plays a central role in strengthening governance and nurturing a transparent and accountable system. It has a vibrant history here in Malawi, and has made a hugely positive impact in raising the profile of the serious issues that matter to us all, including the fight against corruption. However, it is clear that we need to keep defending media freedoms. Training up journalists is one way to do so.

The fellowship coordinator at the University of Westminster, Peter Cunliffe-Jones said:

After all the delays caused by Covid, we are looking forward to welcoming the Fellows to London, and to the University of Westminster next week. We seek, through this course, to engage the Fellows in a rich conversation – with us, with key players in the UK media, media regulators and other institutions, and with other fellows from 10 countries across the continent, to explore the complex issues of media freedom and trust in the media – in the UK and in Africa – in an age of misinformation.

Mallick Mnela, media entrepreneur and practitioner who runs iHubOnline said:

I am very sure meeting the experts at the University of Westminster will help inform my vision as a media entrepreneur much better,

Yvonne Sundu, a journalist and communication practitioner said

I am glad that after two years of waiting, finally I get to undertake this fellowship. I look forward to learning more about the best practises communicators can employ to thwart the spread of disinformation which is rampant with the coming of new media. I am also yearning to understand the international positions including appreciation of UK approaches to different matters including the media.

Sangwani Mwafulirwa, Director for Media and Public Relations with the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) said:

This Chevening fellowship is a great opportunity for me and others to share knowledge and skills more especially as we prepare for the next elections in September 2025. We need to set a solid foundation on how to counter spread of fake news and disinformation and one route is to empower with knowledge all stakeholders especially those that hold the information like me.

Hilda Ngomano, Chief News Producer at the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation said:

My impression about media freedom in Malawi is that the legal framework provides for it. However, sometimes State organs such as the police interfere with provisions of the sections. Most citizens do not know how to claim and defend these rights. This affects negatively enjoyment of these rights. I expect to learn how the media and society in the UK have managed to entrench transparency and accountability in public affairs through free media.

About the Chevening Africa Media Freedom Fellowship (MAMFF)

- The Chevening Africa Media Freedom Fellowship (CAMFF) is aimed at mid-senior level African professionals with demonstrable leadership skills in their fields, which may include public servants working in areas of media policy and regulatory frameworks, or media professionals such as journalists.
- The fellowship is hosted by the University of Westminster.
- This fellowship is funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

- For more information about the programme, benefits and eligibility visit [Chevening Africa Media Freedom Fellowship](#)
-

[British Army exercises boost presence across Europe](#)

The exercises will see 72 Challenger 2 tanks, 12 AS90 tracked artillery guns and 120 Warrior armoured fighting vehicles deploy to countries from Finland to North Macedonia, demonstrating the Army's modernisation into a lethal, agile and global force.

Tens of thousands of troops from NATO and Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) allies and partners are involved in the exercises. The high readiness forces from the Lead Armoured Task Force and Air Manoeuvre Task Force will take part.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The security of Europe has never been more important. These exercises will see our troops join forces with allies and partners across NATO and the Joint Expeditionary Force in a show of solidarity and strength in one of the largest shared deployments since the Cold War.

Operating across Europe, the British Army will stand alongside partners, combining our capabilities and shared values, promoting peace and security.

The programme follows the Defence Secretary's 'Future Soldier' announcement last November, setting out how the British Army is evolving into a more lethal, agile, and global force in line with the UK Government's Integrated Review. These exercises showcase the Army's capabilities and readiness, demonstrating the central role it plays in NATO deterrence.

Troops from B Squadron of the Queen's Royal Hussars have deployed to Finland this week to take part in Exercise Arrow. They will be embedded into a Finnish Armoured Brigade, with participation from other partners including the US, Latvia and Estonia. The exercise will improve the ability of UK and Finnish troops to work alongside each other as part of the JEF, deterring Russian aggression in Scandinavia and the Baltic states.

In May, Exercise Hedgehog will see the Royal Welsh Battlegroup and the Royal Tank Regiment exercising on the Estonia-Latvia border alongside 18,000 NATO troops, including French and Danish, who are part of the British-led NATO

enhanced Forward Presence. Hedgehog is the biggest military exercise in Estonia and takes place every four years.

Commander Field Army Lieutenant General Ralph Wooddisse said:

The UK makes a significant contribution to the defence of Europe and the deterrence of Russian aggression. The British Army's series of exercises is fundamental to both. We continue to deploy across Europe, from the Baltic to the Aegean, to train and fight alongside our allies and partners, providing powerful, capable and ready forces to support NATO and show the UK's commitment to peace and security.

A wide range of units from the Field Army will be involved, from light and airborne forces, to helicopters and armoured forces, supported by artillery, electronic warfare, air defence, surveillance drones, engineers and logisticians. The scale of the deployment, coupled with the professionalism, training and agility of the British Army, will deter aggression at a scale not seen in Europe this century.

Alongside Exercise Hedgehog, Exercise Defender in Poland is ongoing until late May, with 1,000 soldiers from the King's Royal Hussars Battlegroup and C Squadron of the Light Dragoons deployed alongside troops from 11 partner nations including Poland, Denmark and the United States. This exercise involves Challenger 2 tanks and other armoured vehicles deploying from the NATO Forward Holding Base in Sennelager, Germany. The deployment is supported by 104 Theatre Sustainment Brigade operating from the UK and in bases in Europe.

Exercise Swift Response, which also began this week, sees elements of 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team and 1 Aviation Brigade Combat Team operate alongside French, American, Italian, and Albanian counterparts in North Macedonia. There are 4,500 personnel on the exercise including 2,500 British troops. The exercise involves parachute drops, helicopter-borne air assaults and sees a company of French paratroopers integrated into the 2 Parachute Regiment Battlegroup and an Italian battlegroup working to a British chain of command.

These exercises showcase the scale and significance of the British Army's contribution to the defence of Europe and highlight the continued importance of the leadership role which UK plays as a member of NATO and the JEF.

In addition to the Army's programme, the UK will deploy a major headquarters to the Baltic region, in support of the JEF. The Standing Joint Force HQ (SJFHQ) will establish three linked nodes – in Latvia, Lithuania and the third at their home base at Northwood HQ in London, the first operational deployment for the headquarters. The UK is the framework nation for the JEF, a coalition of like-minded partners, able to respond rapidly to crises in the High North, North Atlantic, Baltic Sea region and further afield. Over 200

military personnel are involved in the operation, including specialists in cyber, space and information operations.

Vaccine Taskforce Director General will harness lessons from pandemic to address HRT supply chain issues

- Successful Vaccine Taskforce approach to be applied to Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) supply.
- Madelaine McTernan CB, current head of the Vaccine Taskforce, will lead new HRT Taskforce leveraging lessons learned from the successes in vaccine supply to this critical challenge.
- Ms McTernan will work closely with industry and stakeholders.

Vaccine Taskforce Director General Madelaine McTernan has been appointed to spearhead a new HRT Supply Taskforce to identify ways to support the HRT supply chain and address shortages some women face on a limited number of products.

Bringing key learnings from the success of the Vaccine Taskforce, Ms McTernan will prioritise HRT over the coming weeks, working closely with suppliers to understand constraints and develop plans for what can be done to ensure both short and long term supply meet rising demand.

Additional members of the Vaccine Taskforce will also be redeployed to support the HRT taskforce as the government doubles down its efforts to ensure women can access high quality menopause treatment, including HRT, which can be a lifeline for women who are experiencing severe symptoms including hot flushes, night sweats, low mood or anxiety and difficulty sleeping.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

I understand how much women rely on HRT which is why we will leave no stone unturned to help make sure women can get the HRT they need.

That is why I have taken decisive action to appoint Madelaine McTernan to Head of the HRT Taskforce who will use her excellent skills and expertise to build on the success of the Vaccine Taskforce to bolster supply of vital medicines to women across the country.

Demand for HRT has dramatically risen with a 38% increase in the number of

prescription items over the last seven years as there is greater awareness around the menopause and GPs are more confident in prescribing. There are over 70 HRT products available in the UK and while most remain in good supply, a range of factors including an increase in demand has led to shortages of a limited number of products including Oestrogels.

The HRT taskforce will be responsible for:

- Engaging with HRT suppliers to ensure there is a good understanding of supply constraints, what is being or can be done to address them in the short and long term.
- Working with NHS Business Service Authority to secure access to real time HRT dispensing data in order to improve understanding of supply, demand and what is driving shortages.
- Engaging with professional bodies including Royal college of GPs, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee to support pharmacists and prescribers to ensure they respond appropriately to increased demand.

Vaccine Taskforce Director General Madelaine McTernan said:

We will apply the key learnings from the successful way the Vaccine Taskforce have procured life saving vaccines during the pandemic to help ensure women have reliable ongoing access to these critical medicines.

Minister for Women's Health Maria Caulfield said:

It's great we've seen demand for HRT rise so much over the last year as it means women are accessing the right support. HRT can help women manage severe, sometimes debilitating, symptoms of the menopause, allowing them to stay in workplaces and live more normal lives.

I want all women to feel empowered to speak to their GP about whether HRT would be appropriate for them, and for GPs to feel confident in prescribing.

The new Taskforce will play a vital role engaging with suppliers, stakeholders and across government to make sure every avenue is explored to ensure all women who want HRT can access it.

This forms part of the wider government agenda to reduce the gender health gap and increase support for menopausal and peri-menopausal women. In the recent call for evidence to inform the upcoming Women's Health Strategy, menopause was the third most selected topic that respondents picked for inclusion in the plan, with 48% of respondents selecting this as a priority. This is in line with the governments commitment to tackle health disparities and support everyone to live healthier, happier lives.

We are taking action to increase access and reduce the cost of HRT meaning women can pay a one-off charge equivalent to two single prescription charges, currently £18.70, for all their HRT prescriptions for a year.

This prepayment certificate will mean women can access HRT on a month by month basis if need be, easing pressure on supply, while keeping the cost of HRT low. This system will be implemented from April 2023.

As set out in our women's health vision document, the menopause will be a key priority in the first government-led Women's Health Strategy for England. The UK wide Menopause Taskforce will also consider the role of education and training, workplace policies and peer groups for menopausal women can play in supporting women through what can be a mentally and physically challenging time.

Background

- Ms McTernan will remain Director General for the Vaccine Taskforce but will be primarily focused on HRT supply for the short term.
- Responsibility for HRT policy and delivery will remain with DHSC.