

News story: PM to visit Saudi Arabia and Jordan to 'deepen true strategic partnerships'.

Tackling the terror threat and developing new capabilities to strike at the heart of Daesh are the centrepiece of a new joint initiative between the UK and Jordan, the Prime Minister will announce today.

On her first visit to Jordan as Prime Minister, she will also confirm a plan to improve cooperation on countering violent extremism in the region.

She is expected to say that the tragic attack in Westminster showed only too starkly that terrorism is an evil facing us all and we must come together to fight it.

She will also discuss how we can build on our cooperation with Jordan to manage the fallout from the Syrian conflict.

She is expected to reiterate our commitment to providing humanitarian support to Jordan to bolster its capacity to handle the huge volumes of refugees it hosts, enabling the refugees to stay close to their homes and create meaningful long-term futures for themselves.

At the start of a joint visit to Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the Prime Minister will first visit Amman today (Monday 3 April), where she is expected to agree new support for the Royal Jordanian Air Force to improve their capability to strike Daesh targets and defeat the terrorist threat.

She will then visit Saudi Arabia tomorrow (Tuesday 4 April) and Wednesday, where she will make clear that they are a close and important ally and that we will continue to work closely in a range of areas, particularly on counter-terrorism where UK-Saudi cooperation is vital.

On trade, the Prime Minister is expected to explore ways of boosting our already very strong ties. Saudi Arabia is currently the UK's largest trading partner in the Middle East, with exports of British goods standing at £4.67 billion and services at £1.9 billion in 2015.

Speaking ahead of the visit, the Prime Minister said:

As the United Kingdom leaves the EU, we are determined to forge a bold, confident future for ourselves in the world. We must look at the challenges that we, and future generations, will face and build stronger partnerships with countries that will be vital to both our security and our prosperity.

It is clearly in the UK's security and prosperity interests to support Jordan and Saudi Arabia in tackling regional challenges to

create a more stable region, and in delivering their ambitious reform programmes to ensure their own stability. An even deeper partnership with these countries, and greater knowledge and understanding of one another, will increase our ability to address the issues that concern us, including the promotion of international standards and norms.

To tackle the threats we face from terrorism and from geopolitical instability, we must meet them at their source. Jordan is on the frontline of multiple regional crises and I'm clear that by working with them, we are helping keep British people safe.

Likewise in Saudi Arabia: we must never forget that intelligence we have received in the past from that country has saved potentially hundreds of lives in the UK. And there is so much we can do together on trade, with immense potential for Saudi investment to provide a boost to the British economy.

So I hope my visit will herald a further intensification in relations between our countries and deepen true strategic partnerships, enabling us to seize the opportunities ahead and ensure the security and prosperity of our people for decades to come.

Further information

The Prime Minister visited Jordan in 2012 in her capacity as Home Secretary. She also visited Saudi Arabia in March 2014.

The new support for the Royal Jordanian Air Force will include:

- deploying training teams to help the Jordanians better integrate their Air and Land assets on operations
- providing training in the UK and in Jordan for Joint Terminal Attack Controllers, who are the service personnel who direct combat action of aircraft in offensive operations
- increasing the number of places available to RJAF personnel on UK courses in niche areas such as Air Battle Management and Electronic Warfare
- supporting aviation safety, including through training in both the UK and Jordan

The UK will also commit to partnering with Jordan in the development and implementation of strategies to counter violent extremism, including active consultation with civil society and affected communities, particularly focussing on youth groups.

Press release: New crackdown on child groomers comes into force

- New offence of sexual communication with a child introduced today (3 April 2017)
- Groomers face up to two years in prison and will be automatically placed on the sex offenders register
- NSPCC commends Justice Secretary for doing “the right thing”

Groomers who target children through mobile phones and social media now face 2 years in prison, after a new government law came into force today.

Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss has acted decisively to bring in a new offence of sexual communication with a child to cover a gap in existing legislation and ensure children are protected. Those found guilty also face being automatically placed on the sex offenders register.

The new offence will allow authorities, including the police and Crown Prosecution Service, to intervene earlier and stamp out abhorrent grooming before sexual activity can occur.

Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss said:

In a world of mobile phones and social media, our children are ever more vulnerable to those who prey on their innocence and exploit their trust.

The best way of protecting our young people from the evils of child abuse is to stop it happening in the first place.

This new offence will give courts the powers to jail anyone who sends a sexual communication to a child – and stop the process of grooming before it starts.

NSPCC chief executive Peter Wanless said:

The Justice Secretary has done the right thing. This is a victory for the 50,000 people who supported the NSPCC’s Flaw in the Law campaign. It is a victory for common sense. Children should be as safe online as they are offline, wherever they are in the UK.

This law will give police in England and Wales the powers they need to protect children from online grooming, and to intervene sooner to stop abuse before it starts.

Victims’ Commissioner Baroness Newlove said:

We need to make sure we are doing everything possible to protect children from online grooming and predators.

The new law to prevent sexual communication with a child will help keep children safe in a digital world and prevent future victims.

The new offence came into effect today (3 April 2017), and covers both online and offline communication, including through social media, e-mail, and letters.

There are a range of offences already available to deal with sexual communication, depending on the circumstances, but many do not automatically attract sex offender registration.

The Justice Secretary made enacting this clause a priority, and has acted decisively to ensure children are protected both online and offline.

Notes to editors

1. On 3 April 2017 we brought into force section 67 of the Serious Crime Act 2015.
2. It is now a criminal offence for anyone aged 18 or over to intentionally communicate with a child under 16, where the person acts for a sexual purpose and the communication is sexual or intended to elicit a sexual response. The offence applies to online and offline communication, including social media, e-mail, texts, letters, etc.
3. For more information, call the MOJ press office on 0203 334 3536.

[News story: Taxpayer's stake in Lloyds now below 2%](#)

The government has continued to sell shares in Lloyds Banking Group, reducing its remaining shareholding to less than 2%.

The latest sales, conducted via [the trading plan](#), mean the government has now recovered over £20 billion of the £20.3 billion taxpayers injected into Lloyds during the financial crisis, once share sales and dividends received are accounted for.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Simon Kirby, said:

I welcome this further progress in returning Lloyds to the private sector. We have now recovered over £20 billion for the taxpayer and are very close to recovering all of the money taxpayers injected

into the bank during the financial crisis.

A trading plan involves gradually selling shares in the market over time, in an orderly and measured way.

The Lloyds trading plan initially ran from 17 December 2014 to 30 June 2016. The government announced on 7 October 2016 that further sales of Lloyds' shares would also be made through a trading plan.

On 9 January 2017, the government announced it [had passed a significant milestone in returning Lloyds to the private sector](#) when it confirmed it was no longer the bank's largest shareholder.

All proceeds from the sales are used to reduce the national debt.

[Press release: 28 day pre-charge bail limit comes into force](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Government introduces new pre-charge bail limit of 28 days as part of the Policing and Crime Act, which comes into effect today (Monday 3 April).

[Press release: Justice Secretary launches HM Prison and Probation Service](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]A new frontline service focused on reforming offenders and cutting crime has today been launched by Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss.