

# [Foreign Secretary statement on protests in Nigeria](#)

Government response

Following the protests in Nigeria against police brutality and the allegations of the deaths of protesters, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has made the below statement.



Following the protests in Nigeria against police brutality and the allegations of the deaths of protesters, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

“I am deeply concerned by the recent violence and continued clashes in Nigeria, and am alarmed by widespread reports of civilian deaths.

“We call for an end to violence. The Nigerian government must urgently investigate reports of brutality at the hands of the security forces and hold those responsible to account.”

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## [Highways England announces archaeological specialists for A303 upgrade near Stonehenge](#)

The transformational scheme is still awaiting its Development Consent Order (DCO), and Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps announced earlier in the summer a revised deadline of 13th November for the decision, following a six-month Public Examination in 2019.

To ensure programme timescales are maintained in the meantime, Highways England has selected Wessex Archaeology, one of the largest contractors in the sector, to undertake its Archaeological Mitigation Contract work.

The contract has been awarded now to enable Wessex Archaeology to start their pre-planning, with fieldwork not expected to start until late spring 2021, should planning consent be granted for the scheme.

The company, responsible for England's motorways and major A roads, has also awarded an £8.5 million Preliminary Works Contract to Osborne through its Collaborative Delivery Framework.

Highways England Project Director Derek Parody said:

The World Heritage Site (WHS) around Stonehenge is a heritage site of national and international importance and the scope of the archaeological contract announced today is unprecedented for Highways England, reflecting the importance of the WHS and surrounding landscape.

Building on thorough evaluation work carried out before the DCO application was submitted, the archaeological mitigation strategy is being developed in consultation with specialist advisors from Historic England and Wiltshire Council, the National Trust and English Heritage, and with input from a scientific committee of independent experts.

Wessex Archaeology have an extensive track record of work in connection with the Stonehenge landscape, we want to ensure that all archaeological remains are preserved and recorded, and we are delighted to announce that they will be undertaking this specialist work.

The contract award in no way pre-empts the granting of a Development Consent Order and while we await the Secretary of State's decision, we need to progress the procurement to ensure the project is in the best position it can be in to proceed thereafter.

The Archaeological Mitigation Contract involves archaeological evaluation and recording, ahead of and during construction work, and will also deliver a major programme of public archaeology and community engagement (PACE) to make the archaeology of the scheme accessible to all. This will involve local schools and community interest groups, as well as Wiltshire Council, the National Trust and English Heritage.

Caroline Budd, Chief Operating Officer at Wessex Archaeology, said:

Wessex Archaeology is very proud to be an ongoing part of the integrated A303 team, and we welcome the chance to be involved in such a significant road improvement scheme. This project enables us

to continue our work towards the sensitive management and interpretation of one of the UK's most important historic landscapes, and ensure that both local communities and the general public can benefit from a greater understanding of this fascinating place.

As part of the Preliminary Works Contract, Osborne will deliver ecological mitigation work, site clearance, associated highways alterations and utilities work, such as modifications to the Rolleston junction, safety improvements to the A303 east of Amesbury and water main installation.

Osborne project director Chris Hudson said:

Osborne has significant experience working collaboratively with Highways England and local stakeholders on a wide variety of challenging projects. We are looking forward to undertaking this essential project safely and efficiently keeping inconvenience to neighbours and travelling public to a minimum.

Highways England is also currently progressing the procurement process for the Main Works contract and participating in dialogue with bidders before they submit their final tenders. The preferred bidder is expected to be announced in late 2021.

Highways England's proposed £1.7 billion upgrade of the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down includes:

- 8 miles of free-flowing, high-quality dual carriageway
- a twin-bore tunnel two miles long underneath the World Heritage Site, closely following the existing A303 route, avoiding important archaeological sites, and avoiding intrusion on the view of the setting sun from the stones during the winter solstice
- a new bypass to the north of the village of Winterbourne Stoke, with a viaduct over the River Till valley
- new junctions with the A345 and A360 either side of the World Heritage Site

The scheme will unlock congestion along this vital A303 route, conserve and enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site and benefit the local and regional economy by providing skills and job opportunities for businesses large and small.

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448

and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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## Royal Navy seizes over 450kg in the largest methamphetamine drug bust in the Middle East

News story

Sailors and Royal Marines from HMS Montrose intercepted over 450 kilograms of methamphetamine, with a wholesale value of £18 million, during a counter-narcotics operation in the Arabian Sea.



Sailors and Royal Marines from HMS Montrose contributed to an international effort

The operation, which was part of the Combined Maritime Forces' (CMF) Operation SEA SHIELD, was an international effort involving several of the CMF's 33 member nations and partners.

In rough seas, and aided by the ship's Wildcat helicopter, sailors and Royal Marines conducted the boarding of the suspicious vessel, and during an extensive search discovered the 450kg haul hidden amongst the boat's cargo.

**Minister for the Armed Forces James Heappey said:**

Following several large drugs busts by the Royal Navy in the Caribbean, HMS Montrose has conducted the most successful counter-methamphetamine operation ever in the Middle East.

Organised crime funds terrorism and by preventing these drugs

reaching the open market HMS Montrose has directly interrupted illegal activity that causes considerable harm across the globe.

Intercepting and boarding suspicious vessels at sea is a skilled operation, made more challenging by the threat of COVID. The ship's medical team was responsible for de-contaminating all personnel and equipment, and specialist PPE was used throughout the boarding process.

**Commanding Officer of HMS Montrose Commander Charles Collins said:**

Every sailor and marine, airman and woman, alongside our international partners, should be proud to have contributed to the success of this operation which has undoubtedly kept millions of pounds of drugs off our streets.

With four Mine Countermeasure Vessels, a forward deployed Type 23 Frigate and a Royal Fleet Auxiliary support ship permanently deployed in the Middle East, the Royal Navy remains committed to keeping the region's critical sea lanes free from illegal activity in order to maintain maritime security.

**The Royal Marine Boarding Team's Officer Commanding from 42 Commando Lt Joe Martin said:**

For many of the Royal Marines in the team, this was their first operational tasking. It's good to see all of our hard work and training come to fruition in an operational environment where we are truly making a positive impact to regional maritime security.

CMF is a multinational maritime partnership that works to counter illicit non-state actors in the Gulf region, promoting stability and security across some of the world's busiest shipping lanes. The main focus is counter-narcotics, counter-smuggling, suppressing piracy and encouraging regional co-operation in order to promote overall security and stability in the region.

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## **[Statement on further UK-EU negotiations: 21 October 2020](#)**

We have studied carefully the statement by Michel Barnier to the European Parliament this morning. As the EU's Chief Negotiator his words are

authoritative.

The Prime Minister and Michael Gove have both made clear in recent days that a fundamental change in approach was needed from the EU from that shown in recent weeks.

They made clear that the EU had to be serious about talking intensively, on all issues, and bringing the negotiation to a conclusion. They were also clear that the EU had to accept once again that it was dealing with an independent and sovereign country and that any agreement would need to be consistent with that status.

We welcome the fact that Mr Barnier acknowledged both points this morning, and additionally that movement would be needed from both sides in the talks if agreement was to be reached. As he made clear, “any future agreement will be made in respect of the decision-making autonomy of the European Union and with respect for British sovereignty.

Lord Frost discussed the implications of this statement and the state of play with Mr Barnier earlier today. On the basis of that conversation we are ready to welcome the EU team to London to resume negotiations later this week. [We have jointly agreed a set of principles for handling this intensified phase of talks.](#)

As to the substance, we note that Mr Barnier set out the principles that the EU has brought to this negotiation, and that he also acknowledged the UK’s established red lines. It is clear that significant gaps remain between our positions in the most difficult areas, but we are ready, with the EU, to see if it is possible to bridge them in intensive talks. For our part, we remain clear that the best and most established means of regulating the relationship between two sovereign and autonomous parties is one based on a free trade agreement.

As both sides have made clear, it takes two to reach an agreement. It is entirely possible that negotiations will not succeed. If so, the UK will end the transition period on Australia terms and will prosper in doing so.

It is essential now that UK businesses, hauliers, and travellers prepare actively for the end of the transition period, since change is coming, whether an agreement is reached or not.

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## [Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers announced](#)

Made up of employers from the public and private sector, and including industries such as engineering, banking, healthcare, retailing, local

government, accountancy and employers from the charity sector, the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers rankings celebrates 100 of the country's most outstanding apprenticeship employers.

The British Army achieved the top spot by helping over 8,000 apprentices gain new skills and progress in 2019-2020; with almost a fifth of its workforce currently completing apprenticeship programmes as part of their military training – in areas including engineering, telecommunications, logistics, construction, health and IT.

**Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Gillian Keegan said:**

A huge congratulations to all those businesses featured in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers rankings. It is fantastic to see the British Army recognised for its incredible support for apprentices and the apprenticeships programme.

Apprenticeships help business of all sizes to grow, and give people of all ages and backgrounds a chance to learn new skills and get ahead in their chosen career.

They will continue to play a vital role in delivering the skills individuals and the economy needs to thrive after coronavirus. I hope this initiative highlights the crucial role of apprenticeships in bringing in new talent & supporting our economic recovery, and encourages even more employers to get involved.

**Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:**

Now more than ever we should celebrate businesses who are driving our efforts to build a stronger, fairer, and more competitive economy.

High-quality apprenticeships give people from all backgrounds and ages a real choice in life, providing them with the skills employers value, which our economy needs, and which lead to better paid jobs.

These modern employers are at the heart of levelling up our workforce, and with the extra support we are providing will help the country build back better from coronavirus.

New in 2020, the rankings showcase the very best of England's large apprenticeship employers, with employers recognised for providing some of the most successful apprenticeship programmes over the previous 12 months. The list will help potential apprentices, parents and careers advisers to identify the best apprenticeship opportunities with the highest performing apprentice employers.

Over 400 applications were received, with the results announced at a special online event broadcast earlier today attended by organisations including Rochdale Borough Council, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Pepsico and London Ambulance Service.

The new leader board of apprenticeship employers was independently developed, assessed and compiled in partnership with High Fliers Research.

1. British Army
2. HMRC
3. Royal Navy
4. BT
5. MTR Elizabeth Line
6. Mazars LLP
7. Optionis Group
8. Mitchells and Butlers
9. Greene King
10. Royal Air Force

View the full list of the [The Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers 2020](#) (PDF, 486 KB, 3 pages)

**Colonel Kate George MBE, Assistant Head Learning and Development, from the British Army said:**

In the British Army, we view people as the Army, not in the Army, so we are passionate about our soldiers' professional development.

Our myriad apprenticeships play a critical part in developing the skills our soldiers need to succeed in their careers and on operations. The Army also benefits because our soldiers gain so much from the apprenticeship – not just in learning a new trade, but also in developing their own self confidence and leadership abilities.

Entering the Top 100 Awards provides an opportunity to reflect on our own apprenticeship achievements but also it gives employers the chance to celebrate the achievements of their staff and their apprentices, and the vital role we have as an employer in contributing to changing lives.

**Peter Mucklow, Director, Apprenticeships, Education and Skills Funding Agency concluded:**

During such a difficult year it is encouraging to see that apprenticeships continue to be critical to business performance and success.

Today's announcement shows that there are outstanding employers



delivering apprenticeships across all sectors, and the Top 100 apprenticeship employer rankings rightly give recognition and thanks to those who have shown, and continue to show, huge commitment to apprenticeships.

I look forward to seeing how these 100 employers use their status to showcase the many benefits of apprenticeships, whilst encouraging other employers to consider recruiting an apprentice.

More information about the process can be found by visiting:

<http://www.topapprenticeshipemployers.co.uk/>.

If you are an employer and would like to find out more about the benefits of recruiting an apprentice, please visit: [www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk).