

# News story: Clean-up work underway in Salisbury in next phase of recovery

Clean-up work is beginning in Salisbury after the appalling nerve agent attack, to bring a small number of potentially contaminated sites back into safe use for the people of the city and its visitors.

This follows the continuing handover of sites from the police investigation to recovery operations, including The Maltings, the cemetery, Zizzi and the Ashley Wood compound. In total nine sites, three of which are in the city centre, have been identified as requiring some level of specialist cleaning.

Today (Tuesday 17 April) a small cordoned area of London Road cemetery was the first area to be reopened to the public after extensive investigations and testing established that it was not contaminated.

All remaining potentially contaminated sites will remain secured and the current scientific assessment is that the remainder of Salisbury is safe for residents and visitors. Public Health England have reaffirmed that the risk to the general public is low.

Work to clean each site will involve a process of testing, removal of items which may have been contaminated, chemical cleaning and retesting. Sites will not be released back into use until test results and the work undertaken has been reviewed and approved by the government's decontamination science assurance group.

The work, which is expected to take a number of months, is being planned and overseen by Defra based on expert advice from Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), Public Health England, Department for Health and Social Care, Home Office, and Ministry of Defence (MOD). The clean-up operation will be carried out in partnership with Wiltshire Council with support from the MOD, who are providing specialist teams to carry out work on the sites. Around 190 specialist military personnel from the Army and RAF will support the operation.

Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser Ian Boyd, who is chair of the decontamination science assurance group overseeing the work, said:

Our approach is based on the best scientific evidence and advice to ensure decontamination is carried out in a thorough and careful way. Our number one priority is making these sites safe for the public, so they can be returned to use for the people of Salisbury.

Thanks to detailed information gathered during the police's investigation, and our scientific understanding of how the agent works and is spread, we have been able to categorise the likely level of contamination at each site and are drawing up tailored plans.

Meticulous work is required and we expect it will be a number of months before all sites are fully reopened.

The public will begin to see more activity in the city as the work gets underway. In the coming days residents can expect to see current cordons around the most public sites replaced with secure fencing, backed by police patrols and security guards. At certain points during decontamination, some cordons will be temporarily expanded to allow workers access to the sites with specialist equipment and ensure public safety as work is underway. Wherever possible this sort of disruption will be kept to a minimum.

As work in the city moves from site to site the local authority will keep businesses and the community informed.

The clean-up work goes hand in hand with the [£2.5m already announced](#) to support businesses, boost tourism and meet unexpected costs in recognition of the exceptional response and recovery effort in Salisbury.

Baroness Jane Scott, the Leader of Wiltshire Council, said:

We are pleased that work will be starting to decontaminate the sites affected by the shocking attack in our city. Working together with local and national agencies we are doing all we can to help Salisbury return to normal. Our main concern is to ensure that Salisbury is safe for residents, businesses and visitors and that the city can focus on the future, its recovery and that it will go from strength to strength.

---

## [News story: UK reaffirms African military commitments after five-nation visit](#)

The reaffirmation was made by Mark Lancaster following a week-long visit to the continent that took in a wealth of projects in Rwanda, Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

Minister for Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, said:

From tackling terrorist threats in Somalia, to the role we have played alongside our UN partners in South Sudan, I have been extremely proud to see the way Britain's global influence is being exerted to support our partners in east Africa.

At the start of the visit, in Rwanda, Mr Lancaster met with President Paul Kagame, to find out how UK aid – which has helped to lift almost two million people out of poverty since 2005 – can continue to support continued growth and prosperity.



The Minister for Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, meets the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. Crown Copyright.

He also paid his respects at a genocide memorial event in Kigali, which marks the start of 100 days of mourning for the hundreds of thousands killed in the mass slaughter of 1994.

The Minister then travelled to Mogadishu to examine the work being done towards the African Union Mission in Somalia, to which the UK is the third-largest donor, tackling the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and rebuilding stability in the country.

During the next leg of the trip, to Kenya, the Minister held talks with Cabinet Secretary for Defence Raychelle Omamo and senior Kenya Defence Force Officers.

He also visited the British Army Training Unit Kenya, where he observed UK troops conduct training, and met the staff of Permanent Joint Headquarters' East Africa Support Node, which provides support to our troops in Somalia and South Sudan.

The Kenyan leg finished with a brief from the British Peace Support Team (BPST), who coordinate much of the UK's military training with African countries, including work to stop the illegal wildlife trade. The BPST also

supports the Women, Peace and Security agenda and helps to counter sexual and gender-based violence on peacekeeping missions.

Whilst in Malakal, South Sudan, he met members of the UK Task Force who are building accommodation and helicopter landing sites for the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), to which the UK has pledged continued assistance until at least April 2020.

In Bentiu, the Minister met personnel operating a UK-run field hospital for UN aid workers, where British medics deal with the complex range of injuries and illnesses that UN operations in this area might face.

After meeting Mr Lancaster, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General David Shearer said:

I admire the way UK troops in the UN mission in South Sudan have integrated themselves and that they are now fully part of the UNMISS team delivering excellent engineering and medical aid and supporting the UNMISS Headquarters too.

In Juba the Minister met with the South Sudanese Minister of Defence Kuol Manyang Juuk where they discussed how peace could be brought to South Sudan and where Mr Lancaster reaffirmed the UK commitment to bringing an end to the violence in the country.

The final leg of the visit, in Ethiopia, included a meeting with the Chief of The Defence Staff, General Samora Younis and a visit to The Ethiopian Peace Support Training Centre.

Each provided an opportunity to reinforce the UK's continued support to the Ethiopian National Defence Forces with training for peacekeeping support operations.

---

## [News story: RAF jets strike chemical weapon facility in Syria](#)

*Updated:* image

At 0200 UK time on 14 April, British forces joined close Allies in a precision strike on Syrian installations involved in the regime's use of chemical weapons against its own people. The strike was launched as a response to the chemical weapon attack on 7 April in Douma which killed up to 75 people, including young children; a significant body of information, including intelligence, indicates that the Syrian regime was responsible for

this latest attack.

As the Prime Minister has made clear, this pattern of behaviour must be stopped, not just to protect innocent people in Syria from these horrific weapons, but also because the erosion cannot be allowed of the international norms that prevent the use of chemical weapons.

Our action is proportionate, specifically aimed at degrading the regime's ability to use chemical weapons and deterring further such appalling acts; it is therefore focused on regime facilities linked to the production and use of chemical weapons.

The UK element of the carefully coordinated joint action was contributed by four Royal Air Force Tornado GR4s. They launched Storm Shadow missiles at a military facility – a former missile base – some fifteen miles west of Homs, where the regime is assessed to keep chemical weapon precursors stockpiled in breach of Syria's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Very careful scientific analysis was applied to determine where best to target the Storm Shadows to maximise the destruction of the stockpiled chemicals and to minimise any risks of contamination to the surrounding area. The facility which was struck is located some distance from any known concentrations of civilian habitation, reducing yet further any such risk.

Detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the strike is currently underway, but initial indications are that the precision of the Storm Shadow weapons and meticulous target planning have resulted in a successful attack.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The reprehensible use of chemical weapons in Douma is further evidence of the Syrian regime's appalling cruelty against its own people. We will not stand by whilst innocent civilians, including women and children, are killed and made to suffer.

The international community has responded decisively with legal and proportionate military force. Let these united actions send a clear message to the regime – the use of chemical weapons is categorically unacceptable and you will be held to account.

---

**[News story: Australian Air Force officer teams up with RAF to train](#)**

# Aerospace experts

Pete is a specialist in GPS and navigation – a subject that has its roots in aerospace but is used by every part of Modern Defence operations. He teaches people from all over Defence, both military and civilian, about the complex workings of Aerospace technology.

Still a member of the Australian RAAF, Pete works as part of a UK RAF team. Training is very hands-on, with just a third of time spent in the classroom learning the theory, a third on a written thesis, and the last third devoted to visiting the industry to see new products in action.

This course requires a thorough understanding of the science behind the technology, but we also emphasise the importance of its practical use, to help make sure that our equipment is functional and fit for purpose. We try to demonstrate the very latest practices and developments so that people can compare what's on offer in the market, and determine the best choice of supplies for their organisation.

My students usually graduate into trials, procurement, test and evaluation jobs, so seeing what's in the pipeline and at the very cutting edge of modern technology helps prepare them for that.

Pete made his first trip to the UK with his wife in 2009 to study his Masters degree – an MSC in Aerospace Systems – in an exchange between his own service, the Royal Australian Air Force and their British counterparts.

I came to the UK because they're recognised as a top trainer around the world, so it was an easy choice.



Peter Mole with Staff, Students & Families at the Graduation of No. 48 Aerosystems Course, College Hall, RAF Cranwell

When he qualified, Pete returned to Australia, and spent the next four years on the frontline testing RAAF aircraft systems.

Among other things, I worked on a team developing countermeasures in aircraft – mechanisms that can be used to protect the aircraft and pilot against enemy attack whilst in flight. And I was deployed to Afghanistan to test how new equipment would function on the ground.

My job was to make sure that the equipment we wanted was fit for purpose. Creating useful equipment in a lab or a factory is only half the battle. If it doesn't work in the environments it's designed for, with all the extra challenges they bring, then it's not a useful tool for the men and women who are expected to use it day to day.

But Pete and his wife had loved their time in the UK. So when the opportunity arose for Pete to return in 2016 as an Aerospace trainer they both jumped at the chance.

I'm giving back to the course that shaped my career. I love being able to pass on my knowledge and front line experience – I've put my skills to use in Australia and around the world, so I know what

it's like to do the job and now I'm teaching the next generation.

When my students graduate they are specialists who understand the inner workings and use of very complex equipment – so they're in high demand. Members of the Armed Forces find that when they become veterans, the Aerospace industry are snapping them up!

Pete loves being in England and teaching with the RAF – but he still works for the Royal Australian Air Force and keeps strong links with his Australian colleagues – part of his job to act as an interface between the Australian Air Force and the British Air Force.

Reflecting on his Commonwealth roots he said:

There's a large group of Australians on exchange here at and when I was working at the Air Warfare school recently it was completely normal to see one or two international students being trained by UK military.

My Aussie colleagues and I hosted an Australia day function earlier this year. It was great to see lots of people from the UK and from other nations getting into the spirit of it. And the international links go much further than the Commonwealth, with Pete gaining extra benefits from the UK's reputation for first class training.

Working here as an adopted Brit and representing the RAAF opens a lot of doors with other European countries such as the Danish, French, Estonians and Latvia – who I wouldn't be able to build a relationship with if I were based in Australia. There's a huge amount of international co-operation when it comes to purchasing equipment and finding the best way to use them on operations, so every little helps.

My course only teaches 16 people a year so it's a close-knit community. One of my former students is now testing Australian Navy equipment, and many are working out in the industry bodies they visited when they were qualifying. They're now feeding back to me from the other side of the fence!

---

**[Press release: Security in the Gulf is](#)**



# vital to keeping Britain safe

In the UAE, Gavin Williamson met with the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Zayed, and his Emirati counterpart, Mohammed Ahmad Al Bowardi, reaffirming the historic and very successful defence relationship. He also commended the role the UAE, a Global Coalition partner, has played in the fight against Daesh.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our long-standing and deep relationship with our Gulf partners epitomises Britain's global outlook. Be it through our involvement in the Duqm port project in Oman or the opening of the Naval Support Facility in Bahrain, we are committed to regional security and stability.

Gulf security is our security and what happens in the Gulf has a direct impact on the security of the British public at home.

The Defence Secretary also visited personnel on board HMS Middleton and HMS Bangor, which were alongside at Port Zayed. Mr Williamson reiterated how grateful he was for the access and facilities that the UAE provides the UK. The UAE is the most visited port globally by the Royal Navy, highlighting the value Britain places on this relationship in its support to regional stability and security.

In Oman, Mr Williamson met the Minister Responsible For Defence, Badr bin Saud al Busaidi, to discuss the potential embedding of Omani officers to work and train alongside UK Armed Forces as Loan Service Personnel. It will be a unique arrangement for the UK as it does not currently have any other Loan Service Personnel embedded with our world renowned Armed Forces.

They also reviewed the work taking place at the Duqm port facilities which, in time, will host UK warships and is large enough to welcome the UK's future flagships, aircraft carriers HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales. They also discussed Exercise SAIF SAREEA 3 which will be the largest UK-Oman joint exercise for 15 years. Almost 5,500 British troops from all three services will train side by side with the Sultan's Armed Forces, sharing experiences and trialling new concepts.