

Speech: Hard as well as soft power: the case for modern defence

1. BRITAIN'S PROUD HISTORY

The United Kingdom has a proud history on the world stage. We helped defeat tyranny in two world wars and communism in the Cold War. We have shielded the most vulnerable from Kosovo to Sierra Leone. We helped liberate millions from the shackles of oppression and exported democracy, tolerance and justice around the world. In the process, Britain alongside our allies ushered in a period of peace and prosperity across our continent unparalleled in its history

2. OUR ARMED FORCES ARE STILL DELIVERING FOR US TODAY

Today, our Armed Forces continue to uphold this proud British tradition. They are keeping us safe across the world. Our pilots are destroying terrorist targets in Iraq and Syria and policing Eastern European skies against an increasing threat from Russia.

Our soldiers stand sentinel with our NATO Allies in Estonia and Poland to deter this threat. We are strengthening the security of Afghanistan and, in South Sudan, helping establish stability and giving democracy the chance to grow and flourish.

Our sailors are countering international piracy, policing our waters and securing safe passage for the ships that support our global trade.

Beneath the waves our nuclear submarines go undetected, our submariners on patrol every day of every year providing our ultimate defence against the most deadly dangers to our way of life

In the last few weeks alone our forces have provided vital assistance in the wake of Storm Emma and are using their expertise to assist the ongoing criminal investigation following the horrific attack in Salisbury.

I want to thank each and every one of them for the dedication and commitment they have shown our nation.

3. THREATS INCREASING

Continuing to deliver for the Armed Forces is imperative – especially in a world where the threats are growing.

When it comes to non-state actors we're seeing a generational shift with terrorist organisations able to access increasingly sophisticated weapons.

And state-based dangers are increasing. Back in 2010 we did not believe they posed us a credible threat. With the benefit of hindsight, this can, at best, be described as naive.

China is pushing for superpower status, restructuring the People's Liberation Army, pushing towards the Indian Ocean and employing "sharp power" including military, media and economic pressure against any challenger.

Iran's proxy military presence in Iraq, Syria and Yemen is well known.

North Korea has demonstrated an active global cyber capability while its nuclear actions are destabilising the international order, flouting decades' worth of non-proliferation treaties.

And then there is Russia.

At a time when its economy is under pressure, it is still prioritising military expenditure, investing in highly capable equipment across all domains including long-range surface to air missiles, T-90 tanks, new advanced submarines, long-range precision strike systems and ISKANDER ballistic missiles, a new range of BLACKJACK strategic bombers and the new nuclear systems President Putin recently boasted about in his state of the nation address.

What is also clear is that the Kremlin is ripping up the international rule book. Using its growing hybrid capabilities to subvert, undermine, and influence countries around the world. Its cyber operations are active and brazen. It uses social media to muddy the waters and spread confusion.

Last year Russia's military intelligence organisation directed the NotPetya ransomware activity. Overwhelming systems in Ukraine from its power grid to its postal service and causing hundreds of millions of pounds of damage to companies around the world including here in the UK

But Russia is capable of much more. It is already increasingly using proxies to undermine sovereign states. Its involvement in the Ukraine conflict has cost tens of thousands of lives.

In Syria, we're seeing a humanitarian crisis where Russia is using private military companies such as the Wagner Group to reduce their liability and limit criticism on the world stage.

Meanwhile, Russia is also using its operatives insidiously to interfere in the political processes of other nations.

Security authorities have compelling evidence to show Russia was involved in the attempted 2016 coup in Montenegro, just prior to that country's joining NATO.

And, if we doubted the threat Russia poses to our citizens, we only have to look at the shocking example of their reckless attack in Salisbury.

4. WE MUST HAVE THE CAPABILITY

But against this backdrop of threats, we shouldn't forget that our Armed Forces remain truly world class and we are giving them the capabilities to respond

For example, we know the chemical threat doesn't just come from Russia but from other actors so we're evolving the capability to meet that danger.

I made the decision to offer the anthrax vaccine to our forces at the highest readiness providing them with vital protection against a deadly danger

And today I can announce we are building on our world class expertise at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in Porton Down.

We are investing £48 million in a new Chemical Weapons Defence Centre to maintain our cutting edge in chemical analysis and defence.

We've brought together Defence's world-renowned explosive ordnance expertise with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear specialists.

And we are continuing to invest and explore new ways and new capabilities to deal with this threat.

More broadly, our Armed Forces are internationally recognised as having an almost matchless combination of capability and experience, able to field a well-equipped Army division, with armoured brigades, strike brigades, and an air assault brigade, able to project power at distance through an expeditionary air group, based on the state-of-the-art Typhoon and the new F35 Lightning II that will soon embark on our new aircraft carriers.

Those carriers, in turn, will form part of a hard-hitting maritime task group including modern destroyers, frigates, submarines and commando forces.

All this plus the world's best Special Forces and some of the most advanced intelligence gathering and analytical capabilities in the Alliance.

These are all the hallmarks of a serious military nation:

able to conduct first night, first strike attacks with the technology to go into contested air, sea or land space to project power at range from the UK and make a major contribution to deterring threats not just in the Euro-Atlantic area but across the globe.

Many of these forces are on operations and missions today, we are making a major contribution to the campaign that has crippled Daesh, where we have helped to train over 60,000 Iraqi Security Forces, seen the first UK use of offensive cyber in combat and our airforce is operating at an intensity not seen in more than 25 years

We're training the Afghan and Nigerian security forces and even the US Marine Corps.

And this month we have deployed HMS Trenchant to the Arctic with the US Navy on ICEX 2018 – confirming our ability to operate under the ice.

Our operational experience and prowess is the reason the UK has played an important leadership role in NATO since its formation.

The reason we lead a range of international divisions and operations right around the globe.

And the reason we're the preferred operational partner for other top tier Western militaries, particularly the US and France who also acknowledge they too must modernise to stay ahead of our adversaries

5. THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

But, after a long period of relative peace, threats are increasing again.

So we have arrived at a profound moment in our history.

A crossroads where the choice before us as a nation is simple.

To sit back and let events overtake us.

Or step forward.

Seizing the moment, as we leave the European Union, to shape our vision for a bolder, more prosperous Britain.

A Britain proud of its past and confident of its future.

A Britain ready to reassert its right to do global good in a dangerous and unpredictable world.

A Britain able to protect our security and prosperity at home and abroad

After all, our Armed Forces are the face of Global Britain, enhancing our international reputation, epitomising everything that is great about our nation.

We talk about soft power and we must acknowledge the amazing work of the Foreign Office and DFID, but also of business and organisations like the British Council, in promoting Britain's values around the world.

Our Armed Forces work with them delivering aid in the wake of Hurricane Irma minesweeping in the Gulf and bringing medical support to fight Ebola in West Africa.

But let's be clear soft power only works because hard power stands behind it.

And that's what our Armed Forces deliver and why they are so important to our future.

That's why this is our moment to retain our competitive advantage and invest

in hard power capabilities

6. MODERNISING DEFENCE PROGRAMME

And that is why we have launched our Modernising Defence Programme.

It will make sure our country can respond to the changing character of warfare and can deter and, if necessary, contest the new threats we face to British interests demonstrating to potential adversaries that their efforts to harm the UK are futile and not worth the costs they will incur.

So our Modernising Defence Programme will give us a more productive, more lethal, harder-hitting Joint Force able to counter conventional threats and deal with the new challenges of asymmetric conflict. Building on our existing plans for the future of our Armed Forces.

It will balance routine every day capabilities vital to fulfilling day-to-day tasks with highly sophisticated new equipment, using technology and different approaches to counter the full range of threats to our security and to be able to operate freely in all five domains, land, sea, air, space and cyber

It will prioritise game-changing technologies giving our service personnel the edge in combat.

In practice this will mean taking our intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capability to the next level, hoovering up information from beneath the waves, from space, from across the increasingly important electro-magnetic spectrum finding out what our enemies are doing in high-definition and providing artificial intelligence – enabling analysis that can stay ahead in a fast-moving world

It will mean accelerating the development of our innovative 77 Brigade – those reservists and regulars who give us the ability to win the information war – so we create and counter the narratives so central to modern conflict

It will mean investing in new more advanced and more capable armoured vehicles, more drones as well as stealth fighters and state-of-the-art anti-submarine ships in new autonomous systems – in areas like mine hunting – to enhance the protection we can provide to the Royal Navy and our NATO allies and in offensive cyber developing our capability, working in partnership with GCHQ.

Today I can announce we will be spending almost £4million with Thales and General Dynamics Land Systems-UK to deliver the Ajax Shot Detection System which can sense enemy gunfire and protect troops using our next generation armoured vehicles.

But we'll be going further developing and embedding new approaches to warfighting protecting and enhancing our information networks to give our commanders the edge over our adversaries and pursuing technological 'big bets' in big data, artificial intelligence and novel weapons.

All the while building innovation and risk tolerance into our thinking, planning and operating.

So that's my vision:

A modernised force.

Fit for the future.

Delivering the hard power to complement Britain's soft power.

Strong, balanced and innovative Armed Forces, equipped with cutting edge capabilities.

Operating confidently in the new domains of warfare.

Preparing us for the unpredictable.

Keeping British citizens safe wherever they are.

Fulfilling our global ambitions and defending Britain's national interests.

Our Modernising Defence Programme will make sure we continue leading in NATO.

Continue to be a capable and reliable contributor to missions led by close allies and partners but just as importantly continue to act independently or, lead multinational missions when the need arises.

And this weekend I will be attending a major exercise of the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force – bringing together the capabilities of nine nations that allow us to respond more rapidly and pack a more powerful punch in times of crisis.

7. STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDUSTRY

Our Modernising Defence Programme is also about our prosperity.

You cannot have prosperity without security.

What better illustration of that fact than our iconic hosts in Filton today – Rolls Royce.

The very embodiment of cutting edge, world leading technology, one of our largest suppliers of defence aerospace engines, and a driver of local economic growth, as an employer of more than 22,000 people across the UK.

Together with thousands of other brilliant British businesses they form an industry supporting one in every two hundred jobs in the UK and providing high-quality training and apprenticeships that in just over a decade generated more than £73 billion in exports.

Our Modernising Defence Programme will support the growth and competitiveness of the defence sector, helping to create and sustain jobs by transforming our

partnership with industry.

It will allow us to deliver cutting-edge capability more effectively bring more small and medium sized enterprises into the supply chain encourage greater innovation and deliver long-term value whilst we drive a harder bargain for the goods and services we buy.

Since strong defence underpins our nation's prosperity, I have invited Philip Dunne to conduct a review to help demonstrate it is far more than an insurance policy, it's an investment in jobs at home and exports abroad.

He understands this sector extremely well and also brings an important independent perspective.

8. SUMMARY ON MDP

This work on the Modernising Defence Programme, delivering the right capabilities for our Armed Forces, making sure we remain a leading voice on the world stage, supporting economic growth and creating a stronger and more strategic partnership with industry will be substantially completed by the time of the NATO Summit in July, at which point we will be in a position to share some headline conclusions

I will be saying more in the weeks ahead about my vision for the Armed Forces we want to create.

I hope to engage with many of you between now and then, and would encourage you to take part in our public consultation.

9. CONCLUSION

But let's be clear – after 1990, we believed the world was going to become a safer and better place with every year that passed.

Just as we have believed there would be only one superpower.

But, as we have seen increasingly clearly over the last few years, the reality is rapidly changing.

In every continent of the world there are not just extremists but states willing to undermine our values, ideas, and everything we stand for.

To deal with this challenge we need to ensure that soft power has the hard power to back it up.

As we take a new approach to Defence in a post-Brexit world we must work harder to explain why it matters to the nation.

When I visited the Parachute Regiment recently I was told something that's stuck with me:

“Knowledge dispels fear”

So let's not give into the demons of doubt

Instead let us be confident.

Let us be determined.

And let us be resolute in our belief that, by using all our power, hard and soft, Britain will continue bringing light to a darkening world.

News story: World war one Durham light infantry soldier finally given military burial a century after his death

Private (Pte) Thomas Telford Edmundson has been laid to rest over 100 years after he died on 26 April 1915 fighting during the Great War. Since his death aged just 20 years old, he has remained in a shallow grave in a field near the town of Zonnebeke, Belgium and today (Wednesday 14 March) he was given a ceremonial burial with full military honours at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Perth (China Wall) Cemetery in Belgium.



Sergeant Gareth Forrest, 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, reads a passage from the Order of Service, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The service, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, was conducted by The Reverend John Swanston, CF, Chaplain to the 1st Battalion the Rifles.



Riflemen from the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, prepare to lower the coffin of Private Edmundson, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

It followed the discovery, in November 2014, of remains of a British world war 1 casualty were discovered in Zonnebeke. Artefacts discovered included a single Durham shoulder title. Following forensic samples being taken from the remains in December 2016, extensive research was undertaken by the JCCC and the Durham Light Infantry Museum/Durham County Council had narrowed the number of potential candidates to 8. Further work including genealogy was conducted by JCCC who successfully traced descendants for all 8 soldiers, all of whom provided DNA samples for comparison.

A positive match with a second cousin once removed of Pte Thomas Edmundson confirmed the identification.

Louise Dorr, JCCC said:

Pte Edmundson was one of only 8 Durham Light Infantry soldiers still missing from the Second Battle of Ypres, which is why it has been possible to identify him by means of DNA.

I'm delighted that Thomas' family have been very involved in the planning of today's service. It's been a huge pleasure to get to meet them, some of whom have travelled from Canada. Thomas Edmundson made the greatest sacrifice for his country and it's humbling to be here today with his biological and military family

to honour him.

Pte Edmundson was born in Sunderland in 1894 to George and Mary Edmundson. He enlisted into his local regiment, the Durham Light Infantry.



Riflemen from the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, carefully fold the ceremonial Union Flag in honour of Private Edmundson, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The 1st/7th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry was involved in the second Battle of Ypres which was fought from 22 April to 25 May 1915 for control of the strategic Flemish town of Ypres in western Belgium. The Battalion's war diary records them as camping beside the Ypres-Zonnebeke road on 25 April 1915 before advancing over open fields towards Zevenkote and Gravenstafel in the afternoon of 26 April, taking up a position north of Zonnebeke. The Battalion lost 8 soldiers in action on 26 April 1915. None of them have a known grave and their names are recorded on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres.



Riflemen from the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, stand alongside dignitaries, officials, family members and members of the public during the burial service of Private Edmundson, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Family members who paid their respects to Pte Edmundson included several second cousins twice removed, some of whom had travelled from Vancouver, Canada for the ceremony. Current members of the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles paid tribute to their former colleague by providing a bearer party for his coffin.

David Hall, a cousin of Pte Edmundson on behalf of the Edmundson family said:

There was fascination and great interest at the news that human remains found in Zonnebeke, Belgium, had been positively identified as a relative of ours, Thomas Telford Edmundson. He died in the First World War, but had no known grave. We were unaware of this branch of the family, and sadly this part of Edmundson line died out, as Thomas had been the sole surviving son, a younger brother of Thomas' died in infancy. There was also a sister, but we have no information about her. Our branch of the Edmundson family is widely scattered, with some still living in Sunderland, and others living in Canada and Australia.

We have been greatly impressed by the painstaking work organised by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) of the Ministry of Defence. They had to identify descendants of 8 Durham Light

Infantry soldiers who were killed in fighting around Zonnebeke on 26 April 1915 and had no known grave. Then they had to arrange the collection of samples for DNA testing, and this led to the identification.

Sub Lieutenant Harry Lewis, British Embassy said:

It is an honour to be involved in this service. After so much time, Pte Edmundson has been given the military funeral that he deserves. It is important that he receives a final and proper resting place, after having made the ultimate sacrifice during the first world war. This occasion is especially poignant as his family has joined us here today to remember him.

It is important that we continue to commemorate these soldiers, who 100 years ago gave their lives for freedom. Although we may not know everything about who they were, we honour their immense courage, conviction, and service. We give thanks for these extraordinary acts made by ordinary people.

Mel Donnelly, CWGC said:

More than 100 years after his death, Private Thomas Edmundson has been laid to rest at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Perth (China Wall) Cemetery with the honour and dignity his sacrifice deserves. Today's ceremony is an opportunity for us to give thanks for this brave man's service, to understand the effect his loss had on his family and his community, and to renew our determination to remember him and his fallen comrades forever.

Captain Patrick Keating, Adjutant 3 Rifles, successor regiment to the Durham Light Infantry, said:

It is an immense honour for the Riflemen of 3 RIFLES to be involved in the burial of Pte Edmundson of the Durham Light Infantry who faithfully served his country over 100 years ago. It is humbling to think of this sacrifice and the debt which the country owes him and we are proud that we in the RIFLES carry on the traditions of the Durham Light Infantry and our other antecedents to this day.

A new headstone bearing Pte Edmundson's name has been provided by the CWGC, who will now care for his final resting place in perpetuity.

[News story: Top industry group pledges to support veteran entrepreneurs](#)

The Institute of Directors (IoD) became the latest organisation to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant yesterday at their annual conference in London.

The IoD's Covenant pledges also include allowing veterans to access their organisation's expert network of advice and resources for entrepreneurs, joining with the MOD on forging stronger links between business and the military, and encouraging businesses to help the small number of veterans who struggle with mental health issues.



Earl Howe and Stephen Martin sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

The signing comes as National Express, the first business to sign the Covenant in 2013, renewed their commitment to the military community at an event on Horse Guards Parade.

The signings demonstrate how the support for the Armed Forces Covenant has grown across the UK since it was first introduced as part of the Armed Forces Act 2011, with over 2,200 organisations having pledged their support.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve

or have served, and their families, are treated fairly.

Institute of Directors

Defence Minister Earl Howe attended the annual Institute of Directors Open House conference in Pall Mall yesterday to countersign the Armed Forces Covenant with Director General Stephen Martin.

Defence Minister for the House of Lords Earl Howe said:

The Institute of Directors signing the Armed Forces Covenant sends a powerful message to its members and those in the wider economy that they are a Forces-friendly organisation, helping to attract high-quality Service leavers who bring with them a wide range of skills and experience.

Stephen Martin, Director General of the Institute of Directors, said:

I'm extremely proud to signing the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of the Institute of Directors, and I look forward to the IoD's continued engagement with the Ministry of Defence. In signing the Covenant, the IoD will help to ensure that the immense contribution the armed forces make to our society and to business does not go unrecognised. Not only do service personnel provide the security and freedom that underpins our lives, but they also have the potential to become great assets to the UK economy, bringing the wide array of skills and experience they have gained to businesses activity the country.

In becoming a signatory to the covenant, we will use the tools at our disposal to highlight the many benefits of employing those coming out of the armed forces. In keeping with our Royal Charter, we will also look to help budding ex-services entrepreneurs to establish the networks, confidence, and skills they need to start and scale their own businesses.

The IOD will open its 2,500 members strong IoD99 networking and social events to ex-service entrepreneurs and champion stronger links between the business community and the Armed Forces, showcasing those that highlight the benefits to employers of taking on ex-Service personnel.

National Express

Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood countersigned National Express' Covenant renewal alongside their Group Chief Executive Dean Finch during a networking event at Horse Guards Parade in central London yesterday. A Covenant branded National Express coach, which will be navigating the London airport routes, was parked on Horse Guards for a photoshoot with the Queen's Guard to mark

the occasion.



Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood at the National Express re-signing on Horse Guards Parade.

National Express Group Chief Executive Dean Finch said:

We're very proud to have been the first company to sign the Covenant and I am delighted we are signing an even greater commitment today. Armed Forces personnel and their families do a great service to this country and it is right that companies like ours do what we can to support them.

We employ many ex-services members and current reservists and also want to recognise their significant contribution to our company and the country. Our extended commitments demonstrate both the success of our first covenant and our commitment to growing this important partnership with the Ministry of Defence. I would like to thank all involved in this great initiative.

National Express will offer guaranteed interviews to service leavers and their families for all National Express roles across Coach and Bus, provide ten days extra leave for staff in the Reserve Forces, and offer free bus travel to families visiting soldiers at the Military Hospital at the QE in Birmingham and to volunteers on Remembrance Sunday.

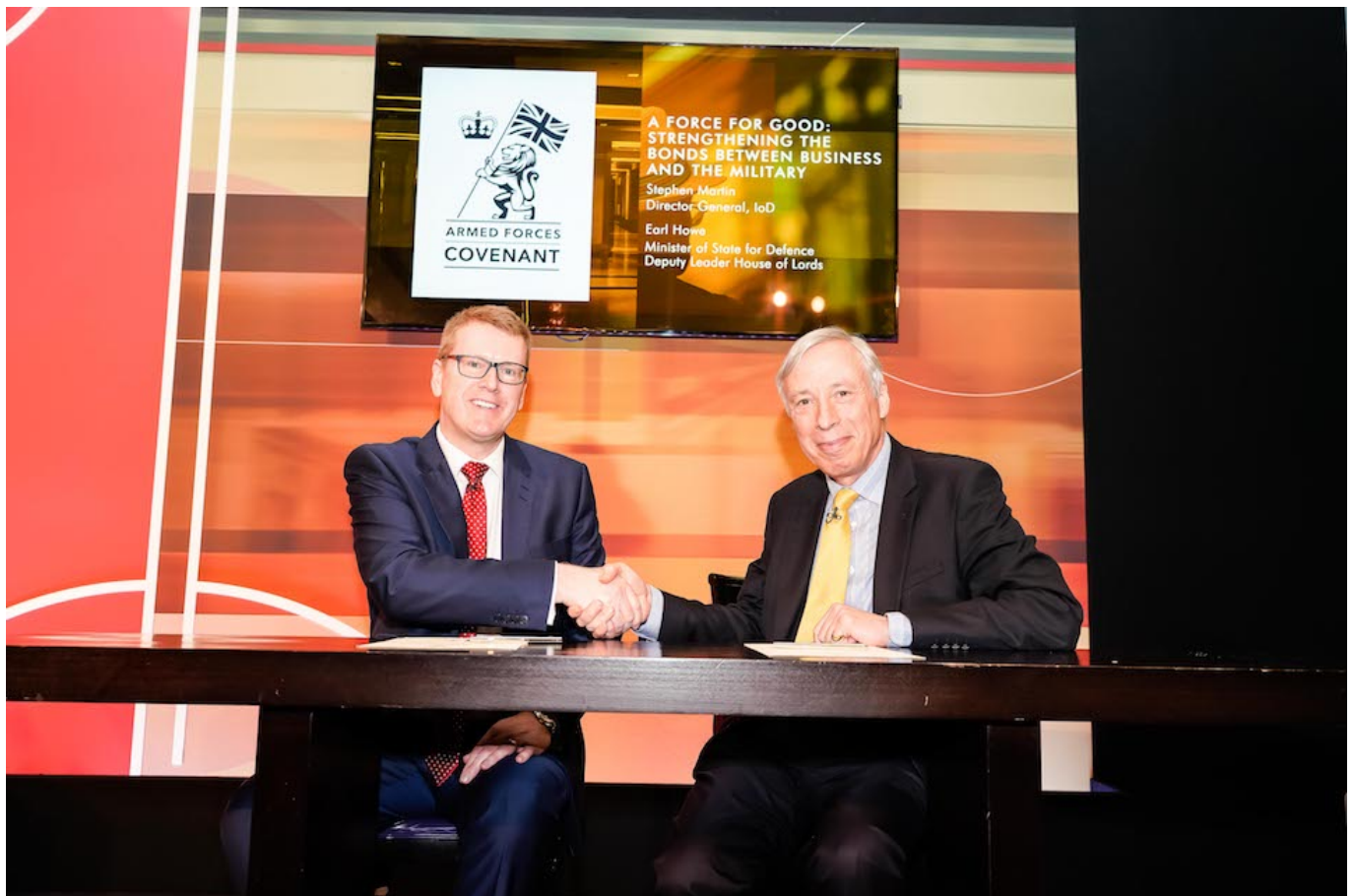
The company already employs over 40 former forces personnel and reservists in

a variety of roles including: drivers, health and safety officers, bus engineers, and customer service advisors from all over the Armed Forces, ranking from Private all the way up to Major.

[News story: Top industry group pledges to support veteran entrepreneurs](#)

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[News story: Novichok nerve agent use in Salisbury: UK government response](#)

Updated: Statement to the OPCW Executive Council added

On Sunday 4 March Sergei and Yulia Skripal were poisoned in Salisbury with a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia.

G7 foreign ministers' statement

The [G7 foreign ministers issued a statement](#) condemning the nerve agent attack and agreeing with the UK's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation was responsible.

Letter to NATO

On 13 April UK National Security Adviser Sir Mark Sedwill sent a [letter to Jens Stoltenberg NATO Secretary General](#) setting out further information on how Russia has the technical means, operational experience and the motive for the Salisbury attack. The UK Ambassador to Russia gave a [briefing to the international diplomatic community](#).

OPCW report

On 12 April the [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\) published their report](#). It confirmed the UK findings: the toxic chemical used in the attempted assassination of Sergei and Yulia Skripal was a military grade nerve agent – a Novichok.

The [Foreign Secretary gave a statement on the OPCW report](#) and the [Head of UK Delegation updated the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#).

On 18 April Peter Wilson, UK Permanent Representative to the OPCW gave a

[statement to the Executive Council](#).

[OPCW findings](#)

Read the [Foreign Secretary's statement](#).

UN Security Council and OPCW meetings

On 5 April the UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Karen Pierce, gave a [statement at the UN Security Council emergency meeting](#) called by Russia. Writing in the Sunday Times on 8 April, the Foreign Secretary said that [only Russia could have committed this crime](#).

At the request of Russia, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council met on 4 April. The [Acting UK Permanent Representative to the OPCW responded](#) on the UK's actions, in line with the Chemical Weapons Convention. Following the defeat of Russia's proposals, the [Foreign Secretary gave a statement](#).

Prime Minister's 26 March statement on collective diplomatic expulsions

Speaking in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister said that 18 countries have announced their intention to expel more than 100 Russian intelligence officers. This includes 15 EU member states as well as the US, Canada and the Ukraine, and is the largest collective expulsion of Russian intelligence officers in history. Find out more in the Prime Minister's [Commons statement on national security and Russia](#).

The Prime Minister also spoke about this in her [Commons statement on the March European Council](#).

On 27 March the Foreign Secretary wrote in The Times that [our allies will expel Russian officials because they share our view of the threat posed by the Kremlin](#) to their values and security.



View our [Twitter Moment about our allies and partners expelling Russian intelligence officers](#).

In his 28 March [Mansion House speech](#), the Foreign Secretary thanked the 27 countries and NATO for expelling Russian officials whose presence they deem to be no longer conducive to the public good.

[Russian disinformation: 6 points](#)

The Russian government's response has demonstrated disdain for the gravity of the Salisbury attack.

Prime Minister's 14 March statement: immediate actions including diplomatic expulsions

In her [statement to Parliament on 14 March](#) the Prime Minister said that Russia provided no explanation as to how this agent came to be used in the UK. There is no alternative conclusion other than that the Russian State was culpable for the attempted murder of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, which was an unlawful use of force by the Russian State against the UK. The UK government would:

- expel 23 Russian diplomats identified as undeclared intelligence officers

- propose new legislative powers to harden defences against Hostile State Activity and ensure those seeking to carry out such activity cannot enter the UK
- suspend all planned high-level contacts between the UK and Russia

On 17 March the Foreign & Commonwealth Office issued [a statement in response to the Russian government's decision to expel UK diplomats](#), following the British Ambassador's meeting with the Russian government.

On 22 March British Ambassador to Russia, Laurie Bristow, gave a [briefing to the international diplomatic community](#)

Russian State disinformation

Writing for the Telegraph on 20 March, the Foreign Secretary looks at the [Russian State's disruptive behaviour in Russian elections and the Salisbury attack](#).

[Russian disinformation](#)

Russia's impact on global security

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson wrote an [article in the Washington Post](#) setting out Russia's threat to global security.

[The Kremlin has positioned Russia in direct opposition to the West](#)

Prime Minister's 12 March statement: seeking explanation from Russia

On 12 March [Prime Minister Theresa May gave a statement](#) in Parliament. Either this was a direct act by the Russian State against our country, or the Russian government lost control of this potentially catastrophically damaging nerve agent and allowed it to get into the hands of others. The [Foreign Secretary spoke to the BBC](#) and reiterated the Prime Minister's message.

Russian state aggression in the past few years

[Pattern of Russian state aggression](#)

Home Secretary's initial statement

On 8 March the Home Secretary Amber Rudd gave an [initial statement on the investigation](#) into events in Salisbury. This followed Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson's [response to an Urgent Question](#) in Parliament on 6 March.

International response

World leaders

On 22 March the [Prime Minister met with President Macron and Chancellor](#)

[Merkel](#) where the 3 leaders agreed on the importance of sending a strong European message in response to Russia's actions. The [European Council also issued a press release](#) on its conclusions about the Salisbury attack

On 15 March the leaders of France, Germany, the US and the UK have issued a [joint statement on the Salisbury attack](#).

The Prime Minister has spoken with world leaders about the ongoing investigation. Each expressed their solidarity with the UK:

- [call with Japanese Prime Minister Abe on 20 March](#)
- [call with Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki on 18 March](#)
- [call with Italian Prime Minister Gentiloni on 16 March](#)
- [call with Australian Prime Minister Turnbull on 16 March](#)
- [call with French President Macron on 15 March](#) and on [12 March](#)
- [call with Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau on 14 March](#)
- [call with Prime Minister Xavier Bettel of Luxembourg on 14 March](#)
- [call with US President Trump on 13 March](#)
- [call with German Chancellor Merkel on 13 March](#)

On 13 March the Foreign Secretary also [called for a united response](#) with our international counterparts. Find out more about the international response in our [14 March Twitter Moment](#).

European Foreign Ministers express their solidarity

The [Foreign Secretary spoke to the media](#) before the Foreign Affairs Council on 19 March and the [Foreign Affairs Council issued a statement](#).

[Foreign Ministers express solidarity](#)

On 21 March [UK National Security Advisor Sir Mark Sedwill gave a statement](#) on his meeting with the EU High Representative, senior EU officials and representatives of member states.

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Peter Wilson, UK Permanent Representative gave an [update to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#). This follows his [statement to the OPCW on 13 March](#).

[Independent technical experts from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#) arrive in the UK on 19 March to begin their investigation into the nerve agent used in the attempted assassinations in Salisbury.

[Independent OPCW investigation](#)

NATO

The Foreign Secretary and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg held a [joint press conference on 19 March](#).

On 15 March National Security Advisor Sir Mark Sedwill [briefed the NATO North Atlantic Council](#)

Other international organisations

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office also raised this issue in other international forums:

- Head of UK Delegation Sian MacLeod gave a [statement to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#) on 15 March
- Ambassador Jonathan Allen gave a [briefing to the United Nations Security Council](#) on 14 March
- in the 37th Human Rights Council session Julian Braithwaite, the UK Permanent Representative, gave a [statement to the United Nations in Geneva](#) on 14 March

Related government announcements

On 17 April the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs gave an update on [decontamination work in Salisbury](#).

On 15 March Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson announced a [£48 million investment in a new Chemical Weapons Defence Centre](#) to maintain our cutting-edge in chemical analysis and defence.

Advice and guidance

- latest Foreign & Commonwealth Office [travel advice for Russia](#)
- Public Health England [advice for people in Salisbury](#)