



DEBATE PACK

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Russian Federation activity in the UK and globally

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Background

Russian former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia were poisoned in Salisbury in March 2018, and subsequently the UK authorities announced that the nerve agent Novichok had been used, leading them to conclude that Russia was responsible for the attack.

These events put allegations of Russian interference in the UK and elsewhere on the front page all over the world.

Russia denied any knowledge about the poisoning, but Western capitals were sufficiently persuaded to retaliate by expelling a total of more than a hundred Russian diplomats.

Nothing new?

States have been taking covert action against each other for centuries. The Soviet Union had particular expertise in 'active measures': political manipulation both at home and abroad using disinformation, propaganda, censorship, front organisations and a host of other techniques. A former officer of the KGB said that active measures were at the heart of Soviet intelligence:

...not intelligence collection, but subversion: active measures to weaken the west, to drive wedges in the western community alliances of all sorts, particularly Nato, to sow discord among allies, to weaken the United States in the eyes of the people of Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and thus to prepare ground in case the war really occurs.¹

Of course, Western intelligence agencies used subversion too. The UK sponsored a coup against a democratically-elected government in Iran in 1953, with US help. Scores of elections have been influenced by Western intervention. But for the Soviet Union, political subversion was relatively more important; apart from nuclear parity, the Soviets knew that militarily, economically and in soft power, the West was stronger.

So, what has changed?

The internet and social media have diversified Western publics' sources of information, and this has led their 'Establishments' to lose some grip the political narrative.

Those same technological developments have provided a host of opportunities for hostile interventions.

The pace of technological and economic change, globalisation, increasing inequality, job insecurity, increasing migration, the financial crisis and consequent austerity measures have probably all helped shake some people's trust in traditional parties and leaders.

Active measures used to rely on 'plausible deniability'. Another change is that, particularly as far as the Russian Federation is concerned, deniability is no longer plausible, as Rory Cormac and Richard J. Aldrich argue in an article in the latest issue of [*International Affairs*](#). While denying such interventions as the poisoning of the Skripals, the Russian leadership may want everyone to assume that it was indeed the Russian state that carried out the attack. That would serve as a demonstration to potential future 'traitors' that they would not get away with it; to everyone else it would be a straightforward show of strength.

This could presage a more general disregard for the rules in international relations in years to come.

Meanwhile, the present fears about Russian activities serve Moscow's purpose: that Russia should be taken seriously, despite its deficiencies in comparison with its competitors in military, economic and soft power.

2. Press Articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views of accuracy of external content.

[Pompeo says the Russians 'don't share our value set' but Trump should meet Vladimir Putin to try to put the relationship back on track](#)

DailyMail.com
Francesca Chambers
26 June 2018

[Exclusive: Ukraine says Russia hackers laying groundwork for massive strike](#)

Reuters
Pavel Polityuk
26 June 2018

[Tech didn't spot Russian interference during the last election. Now it's asking law enforcement for help.](#)

Washington Post
Elizabeth Dwoskin and Ellen Nakashima
26 June 2018

[Russia investigation will be 'wild' in next couple of months, top Senate intel member says of Mueller probe](#)

Newsweek
Greg Price
25 June 2018

[Obama Criticized in Senate for Not Doing More on Russia Meddling](#)

Bloomberg
Steven T. Dennis
20 June 2018

[EU must defend itself against Russian interference](#)

The Parliament Magazine
Sajjad Karim
18 June 2018

[At Site of U.K. Poisoning, Doubts About Case Creep In](#)

New York Times
Ellen Barry
16 June 2018

[Russia Keeps Meddling, Mueller Says in Bid to Guard Evidence](#)

Bloomberg
David Voreacos and Andrew M Harris
12 June 2018

[Putin demands Russian consular access to Yulia Skripal](#)

Guardian
Andrew Roth
7 June 2018

[The West Still Isn't Prepared to Stop Russia Meddling in Our Elections](#)

Politico
Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Michael Chertoff
5 June 2018

[How Sweden is preparing for Russia to hack its election](#)

BBC News Online
Erik Brattberg & Tim Maurer
31 May 2018

[Haley calls on Russia to withdraw from Ukraine](#)

CNN
Laura Koran
29 May 2018

[Poland's €1.7 billion bid for permanent US base to combat 'Russian interference'](#)

Euro News
Chris Harris
28 May 2018

[Salisbury: A Classified Case](#)

Russian Embassy in London
Ambassador Alexander Yakovenk
3 May 2018

[West takes a stand to halt reckless ambitions](#)

The Times
Boris Johnson MP (Foreign Secretary)
27 March 2018

[Putin's sinister threats and lies extend far beyond his own country](#)

Daily Telegraph (text taken from gov.uk)
Boris Johnson MP (Foreign Secretary)
19 March 2018

[Interview with Ambassador Alexander Yakovenko](#)

Mail on Sunday (text taken from the Russian Embassy in London)
17 March 2018

[Boris Johnson: Britain needs its allies to stand with us against Russia](#)

Washington Post
Boris Johnson MP (Foreign Secretary)
14 March 2018

[Four years since the illegal annexation of Crimea](#)

Various European media (text taken from gov.uk)

Boris Johnson MP (Foreign Secretary)

22 February 2018

[The Russian Embassy in London responded to the article: "[Four years since the coup in Kiev: Embassy Press Officer on the article by Boris Johnson on Crimea](#)", 23 February 2018]

[Mueller charges 13 Russians with interfering in US election to help Trump](#)

Guardian

Jon Swaine and Marc Bennetts

17 February 2018

[Here's what we know about alleged Russian involvement in Brexit](#)

Channel 4 News

Georgina Lee

16 November 2017

[Theresa May accuses Russia of interfering in elections and fake news](#)

Guardian

Rowena Mason

14 November 2017

[Russia-backed Facebook posts 'reached 126m Americans' during US election](#)

Guardian

Olivia Solon and Sabrina Siddiqui

31 October 2017

3. Press Releases

[Russian briefing on Syria chemical weapons use, 21 June 2018:](#) [UK response](#)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
22 June 2018

The British Embassy Moscow attended a briefing by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) on chemical weapons in Syria.

The Russian MFA's briefing today on chemical weapons in Syria included unfounded criticisms of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)'s independent and objective investigations in Syria.

It is well known that the Syrian regime has a long history of using chemical weapons against its own people. The OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism was set up by the United Nations Security Council in 2015 to attribute responsibility for chemical attacks in Syria. Russia agreed to the working and investigative methods of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

The JIM has confirmed the use of chemical weapons in Syria by the Syrian regime on 4 separate occasions. Despite this clear evidence, the international community has been unable to respond due to repeated Russian vetoes at the UNSC.

A significant amount of information indicates that the Syrian regime was also responsible for the chemical weapons attack in Douma. An independent OPCW report is due to be published soon.

We hope that Russia will constructively cooperate with the OPCW investigation into Douma, rather than disrupt and undermine. Russia has a right to submit any relevant evidence to the OPCW for independent analysis.

It is vital all countries work together constructively to ensure the Chemical Weapons Convention is upheld.

[PM statement at G7 summit](#)

10 Downing St
9 June 2018

Introduction

Good afternoon. At this G7 summit, we have discussed a range of issues – including the vital importance of defending democracy and the rules-based international system, free and fair global trade, the need to work for equal opportunities for all our citizens, and the need to protect our oceans.

There have been some difficult conversations and strong debate, but – by working together – we have agreed on outcomes to shape a better future.

Allow me to set out how.

Upholding international law

Foreign interference in our democratic institutions and processes, and other forms of malign state activity, pose a strategic threat to our shared values and interests.

Recent events have demonstrated the importance of a unified international response to send a clear message that such malign activity will never be tolerated.

We have agreed a new Rapid Response Mechanism to tackle this growing threat.

We have agreed we must maintain the global norm against the use of chemical weapons – and we have agreed to strengthen the ability of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to attribute responsibility for chemical weapons attacks.

I also welcome the G7's recognition of the need to maintain sanctions on Russia in light of Russia's failure to fully implement the Minsk Agreements in Ukraine.

We have agreed to stand ready to take further restrictive measures against Russia if necessary.

[...]

[Foreign Secretary statement on the MH17 investigation](#)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

25 May 2018

Australia and the Netherlands have declared their intention to hold the Russian Federation responsible for its role in the downing of the plane.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

I would like once again to offer my condolences to the families and friends of those so tragically killed by the downing of flight MH17 on 17 July 2014, and to thank the Joint Investigation Team for its painstaking work. It is vital that this work continues towards prosecution. The 298 people, including 10 British nationals, who lost their lives in such horrific circumstances, deserve justice.

Earlier investigations, by both the Joint Investigation Team and the Dutch Safety Board, concluded that the aircraft was brought down by a Russian-made Buk missile system, launched from within territory held by Russian-backed separatist groups. Thanks to the thorough and professional work of the investigators, we now know that that missile belonged to the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Military Brigade of the Russian army.

The Kremlin believes it can act with impunity. The Russian Government must now answer for its actions in relation to the downing of MH17. The UK fully supports Australia and the Netherlands in their request to the Russian Federation to accept state responsibility, and to cooperate with them in their efforts to deliver justice for the victims of this tragedy.

Instead of seeking to undermine the investigation through the deluge of disinformation we have seen from Russia about MH17 in the past, the Russian Federation must fulfil its obligations under UN Security Council resolution 2166 to provide any requested assistance to the investigation. To do otherwise would be a violation of the UN's resolution, and to deny the families the justice they seek for their loved ones.

This is an egregious example of the Kremlin's disregard for innocent life. The international community has witnessed this irresponsible and destabilising pattern of behaviour in Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, in its fomenting of conflict in eastern Ukraine which has led to the death of over 10,300 people, and in its shielding of President Assad's brutal regime as he uses chemical weapons against his own people.

The UK will continue to offer its full support to the efforts of the Joint Investigation Team, the Dutch and Australian authorities and other grieving nations to deliver accountability for this terrible act and justice for all those who died.

Foreign Secretary to discuss Russia at NATO meeting
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
27 April 2018

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson will discuss Russia's continued "reckless and destabilising" activity, at a NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Brussels today (April 27).

During his intervention at the meeting, the Foreign Secretary will also urge fellow NATO allies to do more to tackle 'hybrid threats' such as cyber-attacks, and interference in the domestic politics and infrastructure of Russia's near-neighbours.

Ahead of the meeting, the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

This is the first NATO Foreign Ministerial since the attempted murder in Salisbury, and the chemical weapons attack in Syria. It is a key moment to discuss Russia with foreign ministers of all 29 allies.

At the July Summit NATO will take decisions on how to enhance its deterrence and defence.

NATO's ability to react quickly has already been demonstrated by the Alliance's swift response to both the attack in Salisbury and in Syria, and by its show of solidarity with the UK's actions.

We have seen similar support from the EU and the G7. We must now maintain momentum and hold Russia to account for its reckless and destabilising behaviour.

During the meeting, Allies will also discuss other important issues including Afghanistan, enlargement, and projecting stability.

[UK position on briefing by Russia and Syria at the OPCW: 26 April 2018](#)

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office
26 April 2018**

Statement from the UK Permanent Representative to the OPCW on the briefing by the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic at the OPCW on 26 April 2018.

The UK has outlined its position on the briefing by the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic held at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) today on "the staged incident in Syrian Duma on 7 April, with the participation of unwitting comedians and other witnesses from the famous 'White Helmets' footage broad (sic) to The Hague straight from the site of the event."

Ambassador Peter Wilson, the UK's Permanent Representative to the OPCW, said:

Russia and Syria's briefing at the OPCW premises today is a stunt. The Director General has opposed Russia's decision to host this briefing today. The UK will not attend, in company with our allies.

The OPCW is not a theatre. Russia's decision to misuse it is yet another Russian attempt to undermine the OPCW's work, and in particular the work of its Fact Finding Mission investigating chemical weapons use in Syria; The Director General of the OPCW has called on Russia and Syria to work with the Fact Finding Mission, and to wait for its report. Russia and Syria have ignored his concerns.

Describing chemical weapons victims as 'comedians' is despicable. It shows the utter disregard Russia and Syria have for the suffering of the Syrian people, and indeed the global norm against chemical weapons use.

Widespread reports of intimidation of witnesses to the Douma attack is a cause for real concern. The Director General has asked states to supply information about the Douma attack to his Fact Finding Mission. Russia and

Syria should do so, instead of waging a propaganda campaign of misinformation. We will not compromise with states that seek to degrade the structures and treaties that keep us safe.

Any witnesses with information related to chemical weapons attacks in Syria should be heard by the impartial OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM). We support the FFM and urge others to cease attempts to undermine its vital work.

[G7 foreign ministers' statement on the Salisbury attack](#)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

17 April 2018

G7 foreign ministers unite to condemn the nerve agent attack and share the UK's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation was responsible.

We, the G7 foreign ministers, of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union, are united in condemning, in the strongest possible terms, the attack that took place against Sergei and Yulia Skripal, using a nerve agent in Salisbury, United Kingdom, on March 4, 2018. A British police officer and numerous civilians were exposed in the attack and required hospital treatment, and the lives of many more innocent British civilians have been threatened. We express our deepest sympathies to them all and our admiration and support for the UK emergency services for their courageous response.

The United Kingdom has thoroughly briefed G7 partners. We share, and agree with, the [UK's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation was responsible](#) for the attack and that there is no plausible alternative explanation. We condemn Russia's continued failure to address legitimate requests from the UK government, which further underlines its responsibility. We call on Russia to urgently address all questions related to the incident in Salisbury. The [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\) has now independently confirmed](#) the findings of the United Kingdom relating to the identity of the toxic chemical that was used in Salisbury. Russia should provide full and complete disclosure of its previously undeclared Novichok program to the OPCW in line with its international obligations.

This use of a military-grade nerve agent, of a type developed by Russia, constitutes the first offensive use of a nerve agent in Europe since the Second World War and is a grave challenge not only to the security of the United Kingdom but to our shared security. It is an assault on UK sovereignty. Any use of chemical weapons by a state party, under any circumstances, is a clear breach of international law and a violation of the [Chemical Weapons Convention](#). It is a threat to us all. Their use is abhorrent, completely unacceptable and must be systematically and rigorously condemned. We, participating states of the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, stand

together against impunity for those who develop or use these weapons, anywhere, any time, under any circumstances.

The G7 is committed to protecting and promoting the rules-based international system. We stand in unqualified solidarity with the United Kingdom. Our concerns are also heightened against the background of a pattern of earlier irresponsible and destabilizing Russian behaviour, including interference in countries' democratic systems. We call on Russia to live up to its Chemical Weapons Convention obligations, as well as its responsibilities as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, to uphold international peace and security. In order to bring Russia back into the rules-based international system, we will continue to engage with Russia, as appropriate, on addressing regional crises and global challenges.

The G7 will continue to bolster its capabilities to address hybrid threats, including in the areas of cybersecurity, strategic communication and counter-intelligence. We welcome national action taken to constrain Russian hostile-intelligence activity and to enhance our collective security. The G7 will remain closely focused on this issue and its implications.

[Salisbury attack: Joint statement from the leaders of France, Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom](#)

**10 Downing St
15 March 2018**

The leaders of France, Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom have issued the following joint statement on the attack which took place in Salisbury, UK.

We, the leaders of France, Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom, abhor the attack that took place against Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, UK, on 4 March 2018. A British police officer who was also exposed in the attack remains seriously ill, and the lives of many innocent British citizens have been threatened. We express our sympathies to them all, and our admiration for the UK police and emergency services for their courageous response.

This use of a military-grade nerve agent, of a type developed by Russia, constitutes the first offensive use of a nerve agent in Europe since the Second World War. It is an assault on UK sovereignty and any such use by a State party is a clear violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and a breach of international law. It threatens the security of us all.

The United Kingdom briefed thoroughly its allies that it was highly likely that Russia was responsible for the attack. We share the UK assessment that there is no plausible alternative explanation, and note that Russia's failure to address the legitimate request by the UK government further underlines its responsibility. We call on Russia to address all questions related to the attack in Salisbury. Russia should in particular provide full and complete disclosure of the Novichok programme to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Our concerns are also heightened against the background of a pattern of earlier irresponsible Russian behaviour. We call on Russia to live up to its responsibilities as a member of the UN Security Council to uphold international peace and security.

[Novichok nerve agent use in Salisbury: UK government response, March to April 2018](#)

Various government departments

Last updated 18 April 2018

This page sets out the government's initial response to the Salisbury attack, where a military-grade nerve agent was deployed in the UK on 4 March 2018. The page includes various statements and responses, and further press releases.

[Foreign Office Minister condemns Russia for NotPetya attacks](#)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

15 February 2018

Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmad has today attributed the NotPetya cyber-attack to the Russian Government. The decision to publicly attribute this incident underlines the fact that the UK and its allies will not tolerate malicious cyber activity.

The attack masqueraded as a criminal enterprise but its purpose was principally to disrupt. Primary targets were Ukrainian financial, energy and government sectors. Its indiscriminate design caused it to spread further, affecting other European and Russian business.

Foreign Office Minister for Cyber Security Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

The UK Government judges that the Russian Government, specifically the Russian military, was responsible for the destructive NotPetya cyber-attack of June 2017.

The attack showed a continued disregard for Ukrainian sovereignty. Its reckless release disrupted organisations across Europe costing hundreds of millions of pounds.

The Kremlin has positioned Russia in direct opposition to the West yet it doesn't have to be that way. We call upon Russia to be the responsible member of the international community it claims to be rather than secretly trying to undermine it.

The United Kingdom is identifying, pursuing and responding to malicious cyber activity regardless of where it originates, imposing costs on those who would seek to do us harm. We are committed to strengthening coordinated international efforts to uphold a free, open, peaceful and secure cyberspace.

Minister for Europe concerned by the conviction and sentencing of Crimean Tatar leader by 'de-facto' Russian authorities

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

11 September 2017

Akhtem Chiygoz, Deputy Chair of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, was today found guilty of 'organising mass un-rest', and sentenced to 8 years. Human rights groups have reported serious flaws in the trial. This represents the latest development in a wider campaign by the Russian 'de-facto' authorities of targeting Crimean Tatars.

Speaking after the verdict and sentencing of Akhtem Chiygoz was passed by the so-called 'Supreme Court' of the illegally annexed Crimea, Minister for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, said:

The guilty verdict and sentencing of Akhtem Chiygoz to 8 years for 'organising mass un-rest' in Crimea demonstrates the deeply concerning persecution of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians opposed to the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation.

The trial itself appears to fall well short of international standards: Chiygoz was denied the option to attend court proceedings and his legal representative faced intimidation, which included arrest and temporary detention earlier this year. The alleged offence took place before Russia had even claimed control of Crimea through its illegal annexation, and appears part of a worrying effort to repress any political opposition in Crimea.

The UK calls for the release of Chiygoz as well as the growing number of Crimeans the 'de-facto' Russian authorities have imprisoned for opposing the illegal annexation.

Crimea is an integral part of Ukraine, and as such the UK does not recognise the legitimacy of Russian 'de-facto' authorities in Crimea including those 'elected' since the illegal annexation of the peninsula, such as the so-called 'Governor of Sevastopol'.

4. PQs

European Union Referendum: Alleged Russian Interference

19 Jun 2018 | 791 cc1936-8

Asked by: Lord Tyler

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will conduct an investigation into alleged Russian interference in the European Union referendum, including the Leave.EU campaign.

Answered by: Lord Young of Cookham

My Lords, the Electoral Commission is the independent regulatory body responsible for ensuring that elections and referendums are run effectively and in accordance with the law. The Government are committed to defending the UK from all forms of malign foreign state interference, whether from Russia or from any other state. To date, however, we have not seen evidence of successful interference in UK democratic processes by any foreign Government, but we remain vigilant.

Asked by: Lord Tyler

My Lords, do the Government not recognise that this piecemeal approach is potentially quite dangerous? Given that it is the considered judgment of the chairman of the DCMS Select Committee—the Minister's Conservative colleague—that the leaders of the Leave.EU campaign have been lying, and given that there is ever-rising evidence of illegality, with even Mr Banks admitting that there was Russian collusion in the leave campaign, is it not now urgent that the Government should authorise a comprehensive investigation into what exactly happened? After all, this calls into question the very marginal outcome of the referendum, where for every 17 people who voted leave, 16 voted to remain. Does that not, in turn, raise real questions about the whole Brexit process?

Answered by: Lord Young of Cookham

On the first question, the noble Lord will know that it is for the Electoral Commission to investigate any alleged irregularities concerning the referendum. It has already published a decision on Leave.EU and fined that body £70,000. Investigations continue into allegations that Vote Leave avoided the cap on election expenditure on the referendum by channelling resources into another, linked organisation, and that is a matter for the Electoral Commission to resolve. As far as the outcome is concerned, 1.3 million more people voted to leave than to remain, and I am not sure that one can attribute that fairly substantial margin to the activities of the Russian bots or, indeed, any other outside agencies.

Asked by: Lord West of Spithead

My Lords, there is absolutely no doubt that the Russians are behaving in a dangerous and threatening way in cyberspace: we know that and it is a real threat to Europe. The noble Lord was no doubt celebrating yesterday the victory of 203 years ago, when we thrashed the French, in conjunction with the Prussians, at Waterloo; and the victory of 100 years ago this week, when, with the French, we thrashed the Germans at the second Battle of the Marne. We have expended a huge amount

of blood and treasure on European security. Does the Minister not believe, in view of that, that the decision on Galileo is quite extraordinary?

Answered by: Lord Young of Cookham

If I may focus on the first part of the noble Lord's question, which is about Russian involvement in covert activities, he may know that the Intelligence and Security Committee, on which two noble Lords sit, is currently investigating Russian involvement in the 2016 referendum and the 2017 general election. It makes sense to allow that important inquiry to be completed, and then we will have a clearer view of the impact, if any, of Russian involvement in the election, which is the subject of this Question. So far as Galileo is concerned, I commend the noble Lord's ingenuity but I have listened to fellow Ministers give very adequate answers on Galileo and I will not attempt to rise to that level.

Asked by: Lord Hannay of Chiswick

My Lords, will the Minister say whether the Government are satisfied that the Electoral Commission has access to all the rather complex means—obviously, I do not want to go into intelligence matters in this House—that foreign Governments have to interfere in our affairs? Is the Electoral Commission really equipped to carry out that inquiry in all its aspects?

Answered by: Lord Young of Cookham

The noble Lord makes a very good point in that, obviously, it makes sense for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, not the Electoral Commission, to have overall responsibility for our relationship with Russia. It makes sense for the DCMS to have overall responsibility for "fake news" and for the Information Commissioner. It makes sense for the Cabinet Office to have overall responsibility for electoral law and a dialogue with the Electoral Commission. Where all these things come together, which I think is the noble Lord's point, clearly, we need a collective view. It makes sense to await the outcome of the ISC inquiry that I mentioned a few moments ago, the DCMS inquiry into fake news that is currently under way, and the Electoral Commission inquiries into the referendum campaigns. When we have all that, we can stand back and see whether we have the right resources and the right information in the right place and come up with a collective view on the serious issue raised in the original Question.

[Security Threat: Russia](#)

11 Jun 2018 | 642 cc572-3

Asked by: Barry Sheerman

4. What discussions he had with other NATO member states on the potential security threat posed by Russia. [905745]

Answering member: Gavin Williamson | Department: Ministry of Defence

I met NATO Defence Ministers met last week to discuss progress towards next month's summit. The UK wants NATO to strengthen its deterrence and defence capabilities while ensuring that dialogue with

Russia continues as part of the alliance's commitment to avoiding misunderstanding and miscalculation.

Barry Sheerman

I tabled this question before the disastrous consequences of the failure of the G7 in Canada. Does it not seem as though this country is back in the 1939—isolated from Europe, with NATO under threat and with a big gulf between us and our traditional United States ally? What is the Secretary of State going to do about it?

Gavin Williamson

In my discussions with the US Defence Secretary, he has been clear about the US commitment to NATO and European defence. Let us not underestimate how supportive the US has been of NATO, or its commitment over the next couple of years to pump resources, troops and money into ensuring that our defence is the very best we can possibly have.

James Gray

NATO is quite rightly concentrating on the Russian threat to the east and to the south-east of Europe, but what more can we do to encourage it to take an interest in the high north and the Arctic, where the Russians have recently built eight new military bases at enormous cost? They also have huge submarine activity coming out into the north Atlantic and have reinvented the old bastion concept that was left over from the cold war. Surely there is a huge threat there and NATO has to do something about it.

Gavin Williamson

We have seen a considerable increase in Russian activity in the high north, and we have seen an increase in our activity in the high north as well, with HMS Trenchant taking part in ICEX—Ice Exercise 18—and the announcement of the additional Astute class submarine, HMS Agincourt. This is all about how we invest to keep ourselves safe and the north Atlantic free from threats.

Alison McGovern

Further airstrikes in Syria on Friday left civilians dead and injured. What conversations has the Secretary of State had with our NATO colleagues about how we can make sure that Russia upholds international humanitarian law?

Gavin Williamson

Syria is yet another of those areas of conflict where we see Russia so heavily involved. We have been working with the Syrian Democratic Forces to make sure that we give the level of support that is needed, and we will continue to have a dialogue with our allies to do everything we can to bring a peaceful solution to Syria. We need a diplomatic dialogue and Russia has to step up to the plate. It has to recognise that it needs to put pressure on the Assad regime to stop the dreadful, atrocious actions that are continuing to be carried out on the Syrian people. This has to be brought to an end.

Nigel Huddleston

Will the Secretary of State confirm the role that Romania is playing in tackling the Russian threat and what resources the UK is putting into Romania?

Gavin Williamson

We have been working closely with Romania, with Royal Marines working closely with Romanian defence forces, but more recently the Royal Air Force has been deployed in Romania to deliver air policing over that country and its neighbours. As a result of that RAF support, there has been a significant drop-off in the number of Russian incursions.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald

Just a couple of weeks ago, myself and SNP colleagues returned from the Ukrainian town of Avdiivka, which is just two miles from the contact line of the conflict. We witnessed at first hand what Russian aggression really looks like against civilians, yet at the weekend President Trump made the astonishing claim that President Obama was to blame for the illegal invasion of Crimea. Will the Secretary of State set the record straight that this Government do not hold that view and that Russia is to blame for the illegal invasion of Crimea?

Gavin Williamson

Russia is solely to blame for the illegal invasion of Ukraine and the activities that have occurred there.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald

I am extremely grateful for that answer.

Thinking of national security in the broadest context and Russian influence, of course we learned at the weekend of revelations concerning Russian influence operations as far UK electoral contests go, which showed that Russia's operations are as widespread as they are pernicious. What action is the Secretary of State taking in government and with NATO allies to crack down on Russian money flowing through London and to reform Scottish limited partnerships? Does he agree that that is not only in our interest, but in the collective interest of our partners, including Ukraine?

Mr Speaker

The hon. Gentleman has completed his disquisition and we are deeply grateful to him for doing so.

Gavin Williamson

A number of the areas that the hon. Gentleman touched on are probably more suitable for Treasury questions, but we continue to work with our allies to make sure that everything that we can do is implemented to stop the flow of Russian money into our country and others.

Ukraine: Armed Conflict**01 Jun 2018 | HL7990****Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the current situation in eastern Ukraine and the Donbass region following the failure of the ceasefire agreed on 26 March by the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Ceasefire violations and casualties in the Donbas remain at a worryingly high level; the latest recommitment to the ceasefire on 26 March only lasted 10 minutes before Russian-led forces shelled Avdiivka with weapons proscribed under the Minsk peace agreements. Since the start of the conflict in 2014 the UN estimate that over 10,300 people have been killed and 25,000 injured. We remain particularly concerned about the impact of this conflict on the civilian population, including through civilian casualties and damage to critical infrastructure.

We continue to support the French and German-led diplomatic efforts towards securing implementation by all parties of the Minsk Agreements, and in particular call on Russia to end its provision of weaponry and personnel to the separatists, and to use its considerable influence to get them to comply with their Minsk commitments.

Russia: Diplomatic Relations**15 May 2018 | 641 cc124-5****Asked by: Kevin Hollinrake**

9. What recent assessment he has made of the UK's diplomatic relations with Russia. [905289]

Answered by: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Russia's use of an illegal nerve agent in Salisbury was met with an unprecedented global, diplomatic rebuff, in the sense that 28 countries expelled a total of 153 diplomats. The House will understand, therefore, the balance between the UK and Russia in expulsions of operatives: we lost a handful of people involved in the security side, while they lost about 153 across the world—a massive net loss for Russia and a significant gain for the UK. But we remain committed to a policy of engaging with Russia, while being wary of what they do.

Kevin Hollinrake

Despite the fact that oil and gas exports make up 70% of Russia's international trade, they are not currently covered under the EU sanctions regime due to the high reliance of the EU on Russian gas exports. After our exit from the European Union, would that be a sensible extra measure for us to take that might assist with our diplomatic efforts?

Boris Johnson

We will, of course, consider all possibilities once we exit the European Union and take back control of our sanctions policy.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan

At the European championships in 2016, Russian hooligans showed themselves to be organised, well armed and extremely violent. British fans' safety must be our top priority at the World cup. Will the Secretary of State confirm whether the British diplomat responsible for fans' safety at the World cup was expelled by Russia? If so, how can the Government even contemplate relying on Russian reassurances that our fans will be safe?

Boris Johnson

We are not actively trying to dissuade fans preparing to go to Russia for the World cup, as we do not think that would be right. They should look at our "Be on the Ball" website and the risks that we believe may be associated with any particular venues. But it is up to the Russians, and on their honour, to guarantee the safety of not just British fans, but fans from around the world.

John Whittingdale

21. Does my right hon. Friend share the widespread concern about Nord Stream 2, the proposed Russian gas pipeline? Does he agree that there appears to be no economic justification for it? It is instead a political project, designed to increase European dependence on Russian gas and weaken Ukraine. Will he press that point on our allies—particularly Germany and Denmark? [905301]

Boris Johnson

I assure my right hon. Friend that we in the UK Government are well aware of the deep controversy surrounding Nord Stream 2. We raise it not just in Ukraine but with other European friends and partners.

Gregory Campbell

Earlier, the Foreign Secretary indicated the diplomatic headcount exchange. How would he describe current diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Russia? Are they likely to change in the near future?

Boris Johnson

I can sum up our policy, which I repeat to the House: engage but beware. We will continue, where necessary and possible, to engage with Russia diplomatically and culturally across the field. But relations are currently, of course, difficult.

Richard Benyon

In firmly supporting the Government's robust response to the malign actions of the Putin regime, may I remind my right hon. Friend that in the cold war we had the best civil servants and an enormous infrastructure based on preparation for strategic arms limitation talks? That kind of engagement is as vital today, and I hope that the Government are putting equal resources into it.

Boris Johnson

My right hon. Friend raises an extremely good point. As I think he is indicating, we are increasingly concerned about a Russian breach of the intermediate-range nuclear forces treaty. There will have to be much more international engagement to keep that treaty intact.

[Russia: Council of Europe](#)

26 Apr 2018 | 137138

Asked by: Liam Byrne

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what criteria he plans to use to decide whether to support lifting the suspension of Russian credentials at the council of Europe.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

In accordance with its status as a statutory body of the Council of Europe and independent from the Committee of Ministers, the decision is a matter for the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) to decide. PACE has made clear its own criteria for Russia to return which are laid down in the its own resolution requirements. PACE has not suspended Russia; the decision was taken by Russia since 2015 not to present credentials for its own Delegation in response to voting restrictions placed upon them by PACE following the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. The UK is clear that a Russian return to PACE would be contingent on the withdrawal of all Russian military personnel and support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine, as well as an end to the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

[Russia: Diplomatic Relations](#)

23 Apr 2018 | 136282

Asked by: Nigel Dodds

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many diplomats of the Russian Federation in the UK are based in locations outside London.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

No diplomatic staff of the Russian Federation are posted in locations in the UK outside London. However the Russia Federation has a Consulate General in Edinburgh with accredited consular staff.

[Crimea: Tatars](#)

19 Apr 2018 | 135138

Asked by: Emily Thornberry

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of reports of the harassment and intimidation of Tatars in Russian-occupied Crimea in the run-up to the recent presidential election.

Answering member: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK is deeply concerned about the ongoing human rights abuses taking place in Crimea, particularly against ethnic and religious minorities such as the Crimean Tatars. This has included widespread harassment; arbitrary detentions; threats to rights of worship, expression and assembly, and the banning of the Tatar Mejlis Council. The UK did not recognise the legitimacy of recent elections to the Russian Federation held in Crimea, as part of our broader policy against recognising Russia's illegal annexation of the peninsula; reports of pressure exerted on the Tatars and other groups to vote are very worrying. I recently met members of the Tatar leadership as part of our ongoing engagement with Crimean Tatar groups and human rights organisations reporting on the situation on the peninsula.

**[Russia: Foreign Relations](#)
03 Apr 2018 | HL6496**

Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what overall strategic approach they have for future relations between the West and Russia.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon
| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The Salisbury incident has shown that Russia does not respect international boundaries. It highlights the threat that Russia poses to our national security - threats we will face together. We will work with our EU allies and other international partners to hold Russia to account for this flagrant breach of international laws; to ensure that such a heinous crime is never repeated; to uphold and protect the international rules-based order and to protect our shared security in the face of the long-term challenge that Russia poses. As the Prime Minister said in her statement on 14 March, it is not in our national interest to break off all dialogue with Russia. It is important to work together on challenging issues which impact on international security.

**[Russia](#)
27 Mar 2018 | 638 cc628-32**

Asked by: James Brokenshire

2. What discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the Salisbury incident; and if he will make a statement. [904583]

Asked by: Alan Brown

7. What recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in EU member states on diplomatic relations with Russia. [904589]

Asked by: Toby Perkins

10. What discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the Salisbury incident; and if he will make a statement. [904593]

Answered by: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Following the abhorrent chemical attack in Salisbury, I have had a number of discussions with counterparts across the EU, the US and elsewhere, which has helped to foster an unprecedented, robust, international response to this reckless Russian act.

James Brokenshire

I commend my right hon. Friend for that approach. President Putin and the Russian Government should be in no doubt about the resolute response of the UK and our international allies to what remains a brazen and utterly repugnant act on UK soil. Given that we will need to continue to work with our allies, will he ensure that Russian intelligence officers, where they have been expelled from one country, will be denied entry into other countries? Will he also ensure that international co-operation is strengthened to trace tainted funds, enhance cyber-resilience and support criminal investigations into the deaths of Russian citizens in the UK and elsewhere?

Boris Johnson

My right hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. One of the conclusions that we can draw from the 23 countries who chose to expel diplomats or people whose presence was not conducive to the public good, as they say, is the importance that they attach to co-operation with our security services. He should be in no doubt that that co-operation will intensify in the months and years ahead.

Alan Brown

Although Scotland suffered a self-inflicted withdrawal from the World cup, many fans will still travel from Scotland to the tournament, as will thousands of England fans. Following the expulsion of UK diplomats from Russia, has the Foreign Secretary approached any EU colleagues to ask for additional consular assistance to be made available to the UK citizens who travel?

Boris Johnson

I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. We have not yet sought extra consular assistance from any other European country, and we are content with the arrangements that we have at the moment. The onus is clearly on the Russian authorities to honour their FIFA contract in full and to ensure that Scottish fans and all UK fans have a safe, enjoyable tournament.

Toby Perkins

I welcome both the domestic and international unanimity on this issue. Now that the Government support the Magnitsky Act, may I encourage the Foreign Secretary to do all that he can to learn from the Americans about how they have been able to prosecute the people who were exposed by Sergei Magnitsky? The UK is the only country that has not started criminal proceedings against such people.

Boris Johnson

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. As he knows, an amendment will be made to the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Bill on Report, and work is going on across the Chamber to get that right. We hope

that that will make it even easier for our law enforcement agencies to prosecute such people. They already have such powers, and it is important that they are allowed to get on with their job without political interference.

Sir Nicholas Soames

Will my right hon. Friend congratulate the foreign service, the intelligence services and all those others involved in putting together this exceptional coalition? Does he agree that international institutions need strengthening against Russia's constant infiltration? Will he take steps to examine what might be done at the UN, the World Bank and the IMF to strengthen their resources against such infiltration?

Boris Johnson

I thank my right hon. Friend, who will know that we have enjoyed strong support, not just bilaterally but multilaterally, for our explanation of what happened at Salisbury. We had the NATO statement and the statements by our friends in the UN Security Council, and the EU ambassador to Russia has also been recalled.

Dr Rupa Huq

21. The Prime Minister swung full support behind her position among our EU allies, which is encouraging, but how will we ever replicate that influence on foreign policy after we leave, when we will not even have a seat at the table? [904606]

Boris Johnson

I am afraid I must correct the hon. Lady. The UK may be leaving the EU, but we are not leaving Europe, and we remain unconditionally committed to the security of our friends and partners. As she will know, we secured strong support from the EU both institutionally and bilaterally, but it is worth observing that not every EU member chose to withdraw—expel—diplomats. Many of them did, however, and that is a good omen for the future.

Jack Lopresti

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the international response to the Salisbury incident demonstrates the enduring value, reliance and quality of our NATO alliance?

Boris Johnson

I do; I thank my hon. Friend for that excellent point. NATO was one of the very first off the blocks with a powerful statement, which a lot of people then echoed.

Nigel Dodds

I too congratulate the Government on bringing together a strong, impressive and co-ordinated international response to the Russian threat, but does it not point out the need for the Government to plug the gaps in the defence budget that have been identified? We really need to match our words with our actions.

Boris Johnson

The right hon. Gentleman makes an important point, which was raised many times in last night's debate. As he knows, the Government are

one of the biggest defence spenders in the whole European area, and the second biggest player in NATO. We remain committed to spending more than 2% of our GDP on defence.

Rachel Maclean

Does my right hon. Friend not agree that, contrary to what some Opposition Members have just suggested, despite Brexit we will have strong foreign policy relations around the world?

Boris Johnson

I am delighted that my hon. Friend has said that, because I think that the events of the past few days have vindicated that very point. The contrast is very striking between the rather tepid response to the assassination of Alexander Litvinenko in 2006 and the overwhelming global response we have seen in the past few days.

Stephen Gethins

The Foreign Secretary will be aware of calls across the House, including from the Scottish National party group leader, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford), to tackle some of the financial measures, and that is very important. What conversations has he had with his counterparts about specific measures that might be taken?

Boris Johnson

The hon. Gentleman will know that under the Criminal Finances Act 2017, which came in last April, there is provision for unexplained wealth orders to be made against those whose assets might have been corruptly or illicitly obtained, and he can be in no doubt that the National Crime Agency and the national economic crime centre are looking intently at what avenues to explore. However, I stress that this is not something for political direction or control; we in this country operate under the rule of law.

Emily Thornberry

At the end of an excellent debate on Russia yesterday, I am afraid that the Foreign Secretary failed to answer a single one of the dozens of questions he was asked over the course of four hours, so may I repeat just two of them? First, will the Government now initiate a case against the Russian state at the European Court of Human Rights for its clear extraterritorial violation of human rights in relation to the Salisbury attack?

Boris Johnson

I believe that the right hon. Lady has legal training. We must wait for the investigation to be concluded.

Emily Thornberry

I do not really understand that answer, but I hope that the Foreign Secretary will give it some consideration. After all, a third of all cases currently before the Court relate to Russia, and its rulings have been used by leading opposition figures, such as Alexei Navalny, to send a powerful message about the Russian state's abuses.

Let me ask a second question that the Foreign Secretary failed to answer yesterday. Given the justified criticism of Donald Trump and Jean-Claude Juncker for congratulating President Putin on his re-election, will the Government guarantee, for the sake of consistency, that they will not congratulate President Sisi of Egypt on his sham re-election when it is confirmed next week?

Boris Johnson

If I may say so, I think that it is a bit much to bash America and the Trump Administration today, as much as that is the right hon. Lady's instinctive reflex. The United States has just led the world in expelling 60 Russian spies. If she had an ounce of grace, she might concede that that was a very considerable gesture in the right direction. As for any future elections that might take place, we do not anticipate the outcome of any election.

Syria: Military Intervention

12 Mar 2018 | 131267

Asked by: Roger Godsiff

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether the Government (a) holds (b) is aware of and (c) has sought to obtain information on Russian air force responsibility for hospital bombings in Syria.

Answering member: Alistair Burt | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have obtained information about attacks against medical facilities in Syria from various sources, including non-government organisations, humanitarian organisations supporting hospitals on the ground in Syria, and the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry. A large number of attacks on hospitals have been documented in the Syrian conflict - the vast majority by the regime and its backers. In its reports of 6 March 2018, the UN Commission of Inquiry stated that pro-regime forces deliberately target medical infrastructure as part of their war strategy. Between March 2011 and December 2017, Physicians for Human Rights documented 16 attacks on medical facilities by Russian forces and a further 118 attacks committed by either Russian or Syrian government forces. These attacks on hospitals, as well as on the heroic White Helmets rescue workers, are utterly unacceptable. On 5 March the UN Human Rights Council, at the UK's initiative, adopted a resolution which included condemnation of attacks on medical facilities.

Ukraine: Politics and Government

07 Mar 2018 | 130261

Asked by: Daniel Kawczynski

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what his policy is on future of the Minsk II agreement; what assessment he has made of the implications for UK foreign policy of the entry into force of the Ukrainian law on reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK has been clear that any solution to the conflict in the Donbas must be political not military and that the Minsk II Agreement provides a framework to resolve the conflict. Both sides need to be meeting their commitments under the Minsk agreements, but Russia remains fundamentally responsible for creating this conflict and continuing to maintain it through its political and material support for separatist forces. With respect to the recent law passed in Ukraine on Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories it is important to remember that Russia's territorial aggression in the Donbas and Crimea, and its broader efforts to undermine and destabilise Ukraine, represent a fundamental challenge to the rules-based international order and a threat to regional security. It is for the Ukrainian government to determine how it organises its response to this aggression.

USA: Elections**02 Mar 2018 | 129039****Asked by: Tom Brake**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether the Government has (a) been asked to provide, (b) offered and (c) provided any information to the Mueller inquiry into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The US and UK have a strong and close relationship. We cooperate with the US authorities when required to do so. The Mueller inquiry is a matter for the US judiciary. As the investigation is ongoing, it would be inappropriate to comment.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Russia**30 Jan 2018 | HL4812****Asked by: Baroness Helic**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Russian-trained mercenaries are helping to establish a paramilitary unit in the entity of Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon
| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Our Ambassador discussed this issue with the Minister of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 16 January 2018. We understand that the Minister of Security has submitted evidence relating to a group known as Srpska Čast to the BiH Prosecutor's Office. The Government of Republika Srpska has denied reports that Srpska Čast is a paramilitary organisation. We expect a full investigation into the group's activities by the responsible law enforcement agencies, including those in the Republika Srpska.

[Georgia](#)

10 Jan 2018 | 788 cc186-9

Asked by: Lord Harries of Pentregarth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking with the international community to ensure that Russia respects the territorial integrity of Georgia and withdraws its troops from Georgian soil.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

My Lords, my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary discussed Georgia with Foreign Minister Lavrov in Moscow.

The UK is a staunch supporter of Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Last year we supported two UN resolutions on Georgia's breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia using OSCE statements to call out Russian activities; we have funded secondees to the EU monitoring mission and contributed to NATO and other international efforts to build Georgian resilience to Russian pressure.

Lord Harries of Pentregarth

I thank the Minister for his Answer. It is coming up to 10 years since the Russia-Georgian war, and after all that time Russia is still in control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia while its troops are camped only 20 miles from the capital city, Tbilisi. Furthermore, it was reported last year that Russia has been moving its control points forward by several hundred yards, to the dismay of local farmers. Does the Minister not agree that this position is totally unacceptable and that it would be fatal for the international community to acquiesce to it in any way? We need new initiatives to get Russia to respect Georgian integrity.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

The noble and right reverend Lord is of course right to point out the recent attempts by Russia to further strengthen its intervention in the breakaway regions. I assure all noble Lords that the Government continue to use all their international influence. Most notably, my right honourable friend the Prime Minister met with the Georgian Prime Minister in the margins of a recent meeting in Brussels, where the integrity of Georgia, concerning specifically the two regions the noble and right reverend Lord mentioned, were discussed and prioritised. We continue to support that. We of course continue to support the efforts currently under way in Geneva in this respect.

[Engagements](#)

15 Nov 2017 | 631 c362

Asked by: Mary Creagh

The Foreign Secretary told this House that he has seen no evidence of Russian interference in UK elections or the referendum. Yet on Monday the Prime Minister warned Russia not to meddle in western democracies, and today The Times reports that fake Russian Twitter accounts churned out thousands of messages in an attempt to influence the EU referendum result. Has the Foreign Secretary been kept in the dark on the intelligence? Has he not read it, or is he wilfully blind? Will

the Prime Minister now stop dragging her feet and set up the Intelligence and Security Committee to look urgently into the Kremlin's attempts to undermine our democracy?

Answered by: The Prime Minister | Department: Prime Minister

The hon. Lady is right to say that I spoke on Monday about the issue of Russian interference in elections, which has taken place in a number of countries in Europe—[Interruption.] It is all very well for Labour Members to point at the Foreign Secretary. He made a specific point about what was happening in the United Kingdom, and if they cared to look at the speech I gave on Monday they will see that the examples I gave of Russian interference were not in the United Kingdom. The hon. Lady raises the issue of the Intelligence and Security Committee, which is being established today.

[RT](#)

28 Mar 2017 | HL6044

Asked by: Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the spread of misinformation, or (2) interference in the internal affairs of foreign states, through the activities of Russia Today.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns

| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Russian government has a poor record of respecting freedom of expression and enjoys a near monopoly over Russian language media across the post-Soviet region. This provides an avenue for the spreading of disinformation and propaganda.

Where media plurality exists such as that enjoyed by broadcasters in the UK, the impact is low. Russia Today, for example, has a limited audience share in the UK and we have judged that there is little to no impact measurable from its activity in the West.

[Russia: Romania](#)

19 Jan 2017 | 59609

Asked by: Sir Nicholas Soames

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what reports he has received on alleged Russian interference in the affairs of the government of Romania.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have received no reports about Russian interference in the affairs of the Government of Romania.

[Russia: Bulgaria](#)

19 Jan 2017 | 59608

Asked by: Sir Nicholas Soames

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what reports he has received on alleged Russian interference in the affairs of the government of Bulgaria; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have received no reports about Russian interference in the affairs of the government of Bulgaria.

[Russia: Montenegro](#)

19 Jan 2017 | 59607

Asked by: Sir Nicholas Soames

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what reports he has received on alleged Russian interference in the affairs of the government of Montenegro.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Government is very concerned about various reports that we have received of alleged Russian interference in the affairs of the government of Montenegro, including a coup plot on election day last October, and is working closely with partners on the issue.

[Russia: Czech Republic and Slovakia](#)

19 Jan 2017 | 59606

Asked by: Sir Nicholas Soames

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what reports he has received on alleged Russian interference in the affairs of the government of (a) the Czech Republic and (b) Slovakia.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have received no reports about Russian interference in the affairs of the government of the Czech Republic or Slovakia.

5. Debates

[National Security Situation](#)

19 Apr 2018 | House of Lords | 790 cc1255-1332

Lords motion to take note of the national security situation. Agreed to on question.

[Syria](#)

16 Apr 2018 | House of Commons | 639 cc104-151

Motion that this House has considered the current situation in Syria and the UK Government's approach. Emergency debate following a Standing Order No. 24 application. Closure motion agreed to. Main question agreed to on division (314 to 36).

[National Security and Russia](#)

26 Mar 2018 | House of Commons | 638 cc550-620

Motion that this House has considered national security and Russia. Agreed to on question.

[Russia](#)

29 Jan 2018 | House of Lords | 788 cc1345-1370

Lords question for short debate on what is their current strategy towards relations with Russia.

[Russian Interference in UK Politics](#)

21 Dec 2017 | House of Commons | 633 cc1323-1357

Unallotted Backbench debate (part one). Agreed to on question.

6. Statements

[Foreign Affairs Council - 16 April 2018](#)

22 May 2018 | HCWS707

Sir Alan Duncan (Minister of State for Foreign and

Commonwealth Affairs): My Rt Hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 16 April. The Council was chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP), Federica Mogherini. The meeting was held in Luxembourg.

Foreign Affairs Council

[...]

Russia

The Council agreed unanimously on the continued relevance of the five guiding principles that were agreed in March 2016. Following the Salisbury attack and the European Council Conclusions that were agreed in March 2018, Ministers highlighted the need to strengthen the resilience of the EU and its neighbours against Russian threats, including hybrid threats such as disinformation campaigns. Ministers commended the work carried out by the East StratComms taskforce in the European External Action Service. Ministers also highlighted the importance of supporting Russian civil society and continuing to develop people-to-people contacts.

[...]

[Syria](#)

16 Apr 2018 | 639 cc38-92

[Extract of opening statement only]

Theresa May (The Prime Minister): With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the actions that we have taken, together with our American and French allies, to degrade the Syrian regime's chemical weapons capabilities and to deter their future use.

[...]

Following the sarin attack in eastern Damascus back in August 2013, the Syrian regime committed to dismantle its chemical weapons programme, and Russia promised to ensure that Syria did that, overseen by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. At the weekend, the Leader of the Opposition cited that diplomatic agreement as a

“precedent that this process can work”,

but this process did not work. It did not eradicate the chemical weapons capability of the Syrian regime, with the OPCW finding only last month that Syria's declaration of its former chemical weapons programme is incomplete. And, as I have already set out, it did not stop the Syrian regime carrying out the most abhorrent atrocities using these weapons.

Furthermore, on each occasion when we have seen every sign of chemical weapons being used, Russia has blocked any attempt to hold the perpetrators to account at the UN Security Council, with six such vetoes since the start of 2017. Just last week, Russia blocked a UN resolution that would have established an independent investigation able to determine responsibility for this latest attack. Regrettably, we had no choice but to conclude that diplomatic action on its own is not going to work. The Leader of the Opposition has said that he can

“only countenance involvement in Syria if there is UN authority behind it”.

The House should be clear that that would mean a Russian veto on our foreign policy.

[...]

We support strongly the work of the OPCW fact-finding mission that is currently in Damascus, but that mission is only able to make an assessment of whether chemical weapons were used. Even if the OPCW team is able to visit Douma to gather information to make that assessment—and it is currently being prevented from doing so by the regime and the Russians—it cannot attribute responsibility. This is because Russia vetoed, in November 2017, an extension of the joint investigatory mechanism set up to do this, and last week, in the wake of the Douma attack, it again vetoed a new UNSC resolution to re-establish such a mechanism. Even if we had the OPCW's findings and a mechanism to attribute, for as long as Russia continued to veto the UN Security Council would still not be able to act. So we cannot wait to alleviate further humanitarian suffering caused by chemical weapons attacks.

[...]

[This statement was repeated and debated in the House of Lords. The exchanges are available on the Lords Hansard: [Syria](#)]

[European Council](#)

26 Mar 2018 | 638 cc521-546

[Extract of opening statement only]

Theresa May (The Prime Minister): Before I turn to the European Council, I am sure the whole House will join me in sending our deepest condolences to the families and friends of those killed in the appalling terrorist attack in Trèbes on Friday. The House will also want to pay tribute to the extraordinary actions of Lieutenant Colonel Arnaud Beltrame who, unarmed, took the place of a hostage and gave his own

life to save the lives of others—son sacrifice et son courage ne seront jamais oubliés. Just last week, we marked the first anniversary of the attack on Westminster and remembered the humbling bravery of PC Keith Palmer. It is through the actions of people such as PC Palmer and Lieutenant Colonel Beltrame that we confront the very worst of humanity with the very best. And through the actions of us all—together in this Parliament and in solidarity with our allies in France—we show that our democracy will never be silenced and that our way of life will always prevail.

Turning to the European Council, we discussed confronting Russia's threat to the rules-based order. We agreed our response to America's import tariffs on steel and aluminium, and we also discussed Turkey and the western Balkans, as well as economic issues including the appropriate means of taxing digital companies. All of those are issues on which the UK will continue to play a leading role in our future partnership with the EU after we have left, and this Council also took important steps towards building that future partnership.

First, on Russia, we are shortly to debate the threat that Russia poses to our national security—I will set that out in detail then—but at this Council I shared the basis for our assessment that Russia was responsible for the reckless and brazen attempted murder of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, and for the exposure of many others to potential harm. All EU leaders agreed and, as a result, the Council conclusions were changed to state that the Council

“agrees with the United Kingdom government's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible and that there is no alternative plausible explanation.”

This was the first offensive use of a nerve agent on European soil since the foundation of the EU and NATO. It is a clear violation of the chemical weapons convention and, as an unlawful use of force, a clear breach of the UN charter. It is part of a pattern of increasingly aggressive Russian behaviour, but it also represents a new and dangerous phase in Russia's hostile activity against Europe and our shared values and interests. So I argued that there should be a reappraisal of how our collective efforts can best tackle the challenge that Russia poses following President Putin's re-election. In my discussions with President Macron and Chancellor Merkel, as well as with other leaders, we agreed on the importance of sending a strong European message in response to Russia's actions not just out of solidarity with the UK, but recognising the threat posed to the national security of all EU countries.

The Council agreed immediate actions including withdrawing the EU's ambassador from Moscow. Today, 18 countries have announced their intention to expel more than 100 Russian intelligence officers from their countries. That includes 15 EU member states, as well as the US, Canada, and the Ukraine. It is the largest collective expulsion of Russian intelligence officers in history. I have found great solidarity from our friends and partners in the EU, North America, NATO and beyond over the past three weeks as we have confronted the aftermath of the Salisbury incident, and together we have sent a message that we will

not tolerate Russia's continued attempts to flout international law and undermine our values. European nations will also act to strengthen their resilience to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear-related risks, as well as to bolster their capabilities to deal with hybrid threats. We also agreed that we would review progress in June, with Foreign Ministers being tasked to report back ahead of the next Council.

The challenge of Russia is one that will endure for years to come. As I have made clear before, we have no disagreement with the Russian people who have achieved so much through their country's great history. Indeed, our thoughts are with them today in the aftermath of the awful shopping centre fire in Kemerovo in Siberia.

[...]

[This statement was repeated and debated in the House of Lords. The exchanges are available on the Lords Hansard: [European Council](#)]

[Novichok nerve agent use in Salisbury: UK government statements](#)

Various government departments

This page sets out the government's initial response to the Salisbury attack, where a military-grade nerve agent was deployed in the UK on 4 March 2018. The relevant Statements to Parliament are:

[Salisbury Incident: Further Update](#)

14 Mar 2018 | 637 cc854-885

Statement on the response of the Russian Government to the incident in Salisbury.

[Salisbury Incident](#)

12 Mar 2018 | House of Commons | 637 cc619-640

Statement on the incident in Salisbury and the steps being taken to investigate what happened and to respond to the reckless and despicable act.

[Salisbury Incident Update](#)

12 Mar 2018 | House of Lords | 789 cc1378-1391

Lords statement on the incident in Salisbury and the steps being taken to investigate what happened and to respond to the reckless and despicable act.

[Salisbury Incident](#)

08 Mar 2018 | House of Commons | 637 cc485-494

Statement on the incident in Salisbury that has been unfolding over the past four days.

[Incident in Salisbury](#)

08 Mar 2018 | House of Lords | 789 cc1245-1252

Lords statement on the incident in Salisbury that has been unfolding over the past four days.

7. Early Day Motions

[Russia's poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal](#)

EDM 1071 (session 2017-19)

14 Mar 2018

John Woodcock

That this House unequivocally accepts the Russian state's culpability for the poisoning of Yulia and Sergei Skripal in Salisbury using the illegal novichok nerve agent which has also led to the serious illness of Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey who went to their rescue, and to the possible poisoning of other members of the emergency services and public as yet unknown; fully supports the statement made by the Prime Minister on 14 March 2018 in response to Russia's illegal attack on the UK; further supports the Government's sanctions against Russia resulting from this incident thus far, including the expulsion of 23 Russian diplomats; supports the decision not to send Government ministers or members of the Royal family to Russia until further notice; supports the Government's call for a special meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss Russia's use of chemical weapons on UK soil; and resolves to consider support for further proportionate actions to deter future acts of aggression by the Russian state.

[The illegal organisation of the Russian presidential election in Ukraine](#)

EDM 1067 (session 2017-19)

13 Mar 2018

John Grogan

That this House welcomes the address of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the International Community regarding the organisation of the Presidential Elections of the Russian Federation in the Temporarily Occupied Areas of the Territory of Ukraine, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol; notes that on 18 March 2014 the Russian Federation illegally annexed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol; further notes that over the four years since that time, the Russian Federation has been committing a crime of aggression against Ukraine and occupying parts of its territory and that the Russian authorities are planning to hold elections for the President of the Russian Federation in the temporarily occupied territories of the autonomous Republic of Crimea, where they have detained many Crimean Tatar leaders for their opposition to the annexation and the City of Sevastopol on 18 March 2018 in violation of the UN Charter; and concludes that the conduct of the election for the President of Russian Federation in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine is illegal.

[Actions of Russia in the UK and Russia Today](#)

EDM 1052 (session 2017-19)

12 Mar 2018

Stephen Doughty

That this House notes with deep concern the allegations of Russian involvement in assassination attempts on UK soil, the illegal occupation of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, the human rights record of the Russian Government and especially the treatment of journalists, and the use of Russia Today as a propaganda outlet for the Russian Government; therefore calls on the Parliamentary authorities to remove Russia Today from the in-house broadcasting system; urges hon. Members not to undertake interviews for Russia Today; and calls on Ofcom to review Russia Today's UK broadcasting license.

[Targeted attacks on medical facilities in Syria](#)

EDM 230 (session 2016-17)

15 Jun 2016

Roger Godsiff

That this House notes with very great concern the ongoing targeting of medical facilities in Syria by airstrikes carried out by the Russian Air Force and by Assad regime forces; further notes that doctors, nurses, healthcare workers, patients and civilians have been killed in huge numbers as a result of these barbaric and unjustifiable attacks; notes that these attacks make it much more difficult for Syrian civilians to access essential healthcare within their own country; observes that schools and other civilian infrastructure have also been targeted, leading to loss of life among teachers and children; further observes that these attacks are very accurate and that the targeting of civilian infrastructure is deliberate; notes that this contravenes international law and the rules of warfare, including the Geneva Conventions which call for parties to conflict to take action to ensure the safety of medical teams operating in warzones; condemns in the strongest possible terms the deliberate targeting of medical facilities and medical workers; calls on the Russian government to respect the Geneva Conventions, to which it is a State Party, and immediately desist from targeting attacks at civilians, the wounded or at those carrying out medical or humanitarian work; and calls on the Government to do all it can to support medics and humanitarian organisations operating in Syria and to protect healthcare workers and civilians.

8. Further reading

Library Briefing Papers

[Sanctions against Russia - in brief](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8284
12 April 2018

[National security and Russia](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8271
26 March 2018

[Russia 2017](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8157
20 December 2017

[Russia's Rearmament Programme](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-7877
24 January 2017

[Russian foreign and security policy](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-7646
5 July 2016

[UK relations with Russia 2016](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-7541
21 March 2016

[Ukraine, Crimea and Russia](#)

Commons Briefing Paper RP14-16
17 March 2014

Committee inquiries

[Russian corruption and the UK inquiry](#)

Foreign Affairs Committee

The Foreign Affairs Committee is examining what action the Government can take against the proceeds of Russian corruption being funnelled into the UK.

Committee report:

[Moscow's Gold: Russian Corruption in the UK](#), House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–19, HC 932, 21 May 2018

UK's relations with Russia inquiry

Foreign Affairs Committee

The Foreign Affairs Committee conducted an inquiry into the FCO's policy towards Russia and the broader UK-Russian bilateral relationship.

Committee report:

[The United Kingdom's relations with Russia](#), House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2016–17, HC 120, 2 March 2017

Government response:

[The United Kingdom's relations with Russia: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2016–17](#), House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, First Special Report of Session 2017–19, HC 332, 21 September 2017

Russia: implications for UK defence and security inquiry

Defence Committee

The House of Commons Defence Select Committee conducted an inquiry into Russian defence policy and the implications of this for UK defence and security.

Committee report:

[Russia: Implications for UK defence and security](#), House of Commons Defence Committee, First Report of Session 2016–17, HC 107, 5 July 2016

Government response:

[Russia: Implications for UK defence and security: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2016–17](#), House of Commons Defence Committee, Fourth Special Report of Session 2016–17, HC 668, 15 September 2016

Journal articles

Russian Election Interference: Europe's Counter to Fake News and Cyber Attacks

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Erik Brattberg and Tim Maurer
23 May 2018

Grey is the new black: covert action and implausible deniability

International Affairs, Volume 94, Issue 3, Pages 477–494.
Rory Cormac and Richard J. Aldrich
1 May 2018

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