

KEY MESSAGES FOR HOME SECRETARY to regain control of the Visa Narrative

- Just as this country welcomed refugees from Hitler, so we shall welcome refugees from Putin. Of this there is no question. I myself am a child of refugees from a different pathological regime, in Idi Amin's Uganda. Does anyone seriously think I don't understand this?
- But while it may feel virtuous to abandon all border checks in order to let people from the war-zone pour in, as Home Secretary I cannot permit that.
- I have been criticised from many quarters, notably from 'rejoiners' whose first loyalties are with the EU, who try unhelpfully to weave a narrative of "EU good, Brexit bad." I find it tiresome as I imagine most decent people do, that they go on and on playing these games at such a time as this.
- But I know my duty to our country. And I need to tell you exactly why and how this Government will in coming days use our recovered sovereign powers over our borders to manage the Ukrainian refugee influx to keep everyone safe.
- Despite my orders, I am sorry to say that my Department has not risen to the occasion as I would have wished. I have been incorrectly briefed on occasion and I am taking firm steps to see all this is corrected. Likewise, with my friend the Foreign Secretary, we are stamping on any turf wars between the Home Office and the Foreign Office in getting biometric and other necessary identity checking equipment in place, at scale and at pace.
- Why are we doing this when it would be so easy to do as the EU has done and simply let people in, for example with on-line forms? There are two main reasons.
- First, on 4 March 2018, a fierce critic of Putin called Sergei Skripal, and his daughter, were poisoned by Putin's agents at their home in Salisbury with a nerve agent, novichok. In 2006 Alexandr Litvinenko died a horrible death from radiation poison.
- Second, we, the UK, have been and still are the indispensable European country in supporting the heroic democratic people of Ukraine under their great wartime leader President Zelensky who yesterday honoured our Parliament with the greatest wartime speech to be heard in the Chamber since Churchill, during our darkest hour.
- Let no-one forget that while the EU floundered around, it was independent Great Britain that was first with vital arms like the NLAW anti-tank weapons that stopped the elite First Guards Tank Army outside Kharkiv on Day Two of Putin's invasion. And we have been first in diplomacy too, guiding the world-wide condemnation of Putin in the General Assembly Emergency Session of 2 March.

- Putin is a KGB man to his core. He knows his enemies. He bears a grudge. He has no principles. And now he is like the cornered rat that bit back at him when he was chasing it in the basement of the squalid flats in Leningrad where he was a boy.
- So the Government knows that we are his Number One target for a revenge attack. We also know his methods of 'false flag' operations: sending in murderers with novichok posing as tourists.
- The danger is that Russian agents posing as Ukrainian refugees might enter our country if we followed the EU approach of dropping biometric and other essential identity checks. That is why we have not done so and will not do so. The first duty of government and of the Home Office is to keep everyone safe.
- But let me be clear. We only need the most stringent controls for individuals who we do not already know. That is why we have different requirements for family members of Ukrainians already resident in our country.
- As I already said, I am not satisfied with the way that civil servants from the Home Office and the Foreign Office consular services have responded to my orders. This is wartime: Putin has brought war back to Europe. That is why I demand wartime speed and wartime creativity where the reflex answer is not, 'no minister for ten bureaucratic reasons' but 'yes, minister we are already onto the problem.'
- Therefore I can tell you tonight that I have taken measures to sharpen up the Whitehall operation and to get the essential biometric and other identity checking for refugee visas in place on the Continent with more teams, working at wartime tempo. The Foreign Secretary and I are resolved to see maximum co-ordination between our departmental staff on the ground.
- I assure you that we will not let our true Ukrainians friends wait a moment longer than is necessary for visa processing. But I also assure you that no 'false flag' murdering agents of Putin, like Litvineko's killers and Sergei Skripal's would-be killers, will slip in to threaten your peace and safety. Our Ukrainian friends – who know Putin's horror close up – would expect no less of us and now that we once more control our borders in the nick of time, neither would you.
- Sadly the EU borders are unsafe in this crisis for the reasons I have explained, which means, for us the Irish land border. Therefore I have also contacted my Republic of Ireland colleagues to find ways to ensure that the republic cannot become a back door for Putin's agents and I am happy to tell you that together we have discussions in hand to protect us all from that eventuality.
- We British can feel proud of the way that we have led the Free World during the crucial first fortnight of Putin's despicable and unjustified war. The Prime Minister has in his own brilliant way been the voice of the British lion. And we can all feel both respect and relief that in President Zelensky, not only Ukraine but all freedom loving

people have an authentic wartime leader of such courage, such humility and such steely resolve.

- We will not let the Ukrainians down. The Home Office will play its part to the full.