Andrew Marr: Welcome Home Secretary. Can I start by asking you about – we’ve been talking a lot about the Russian threat at the moment. Are you convinced that the GRU gets its orders from the Kremlin?

Sajid Javid: It gets its orders from the highest level of the Russian government. It’s a very well disciplined organisation. This was no rogue operation and there’s no question that it would only act with orders from the highest levels of the Russian government.

AM: Which means a certain Vladimir Putin?

SJ: It means the Russian government, and we all know what’s at the top of the Russian government.

AM: Let’s be clear. You think that Putin himself ordered these assassinations?

SJ: As the Prime Minister has said, we know how well this organisation is run in terms of its structure. It’s got a very short leash from the Kremlin and I think it’s quite clear that it’s getting its instructions directly from the highest levels of Russian government.

AM: Which is as I say again, means Vladimir Putin. You’re not quite saying it, but that’s what it means.

SJ: Well, and let’s just remember what we have learned this week. This was a sickening, a despicable attack on our country that left
four people fighting for their lives in hospital. It killed an innocent and murdered an innocent young – an innocent British woman and this was the act we now know unequivocally, crystal clear, this was the act of the Russian state. Two Russians nationals sent to Britain with the sole purpose of carrying out a reckless assassination attempt. That’s what happened and the work of our security services and the police, after they’ve gone through some 11 thousand hours of CCTV footage, 250 detectives on the case, one thousand four hundred witness statements, this is what they’ve managed to uncover and it’s brilliant police work.

AM: All that brilliant police work leads us to these two gentlemen we can see I think on the screen just now. These are the guys we’re pretty sure who did it, but the truth is in terms of what happens next this as near as you’re going to get to them. We’re never going to be able to put our hands on these people, are we?

SJ: Well on your screen, you’ve got Alexander Petrov and Rusian Boshirov, these are the aliases.

AM: Or whatever their real names are.

SJ: Or whatever their real names are. These are the aliases they used on officially issued Russian passports that show you the Russian state is involved in many levels in this assassination attempt. But as you say, the truth is the Russians –

AM: We’re not going to lift them in Red Square, are we?

SJ: Russia has no extradition treaty with the UK. It has a history of not extraditing its citizens and the reality is we’ll probably never see them in the UK, that’s the reality. The Russians will probably never let them leave the Russian Federation. But if they ever do let’s be clear we’ve got an arrest warrant out for them, a European arrest warrant, an Interpol red notice, that’s an international arrest warrant and if they ever step out the Russian Federation Britain and its allies will get them and we will bring them to prosecution.
AM: I wanted to ask you about that because if this happens, let’s say on the 1st of April next year, after we’ve left the EU, the day after we’ve left the EU, these two characters are spotted wandering through the middle of Rome or in Germany or somewhere else in Europe, can they then be grabbed and extradited to the UK because the European Arrest Warrant, according to Michel Barnier, will have gone?

SJ: Well we have extradition arrangements with partners across the world, including European countries that are members of the European Union that go beyond the current structure of European Arrest Warrants. I’d be very confident and given the support that we’ve got from our international allies, not just in Europe but much more broadly across the world, I’d be very confident that all our allies will continue to work with us to help find these two individuals. I have full confidence in that.

AM: Okay. I don’t know if you had a chance to hear Edward Lucas earlier on talking about the Russian threat. He said there’s a very difficult turf war going on across government about who’s really responsible for taking on the Russians. Can I have your reflections first of all on the nature of the Russian threat, those pipelines connecting us to the European Union in terms of electricity and other supplies, and the possibility of a cyber war.

SJ: I think it is - I did listen a little to what Edward had to say and he’s right about Russia’s broad strategy. Divide and rule. Russia is against the International Rules Base System. The same system by the way that since the end of the Second World War has brought us prosperity and peace, relative peace throughout the world. Russia doesn’t like that system. It’s tackling it wherever it can, whether it’s in the Crimea, whether it’s in Eastern Ukraine, its support for Assad and its chemical weapons, and of course here in Britain with this assassination attack and all its entire government interference programme.
AM: Do you think we can defend ourselves properly?

SJ: I think we have enormous capability to defend ourselves. We cannot be naive and think that alone that we, as a freedom loving nation that we can protect the International Rules Based System and make sure it keeps delivering peace and prosperity and that’s why it’s so important we need to keep working with our allies and after this recent news this week it was also important, I thought, that the US, Germany, France, Canada came out together with us and condemned Russia once again for this reckless assassination attempt.

AM: Your colleagues, the Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson said recently that he thought the Russians could take out major utilities including gas and electricity plants in the UK and have the capability of causing thousands and thousands and thousands of deaths and plunging this country into chaos. Was that hyperbole?

SJ: I’m not going to get into what we think Russia’s capability will be, but it is a large and powerful nation, we all know that. But we also know that Britain, working together with its allies we have considerable strength, we have considerable capabilities as Britain ourselves. We’ve seen some discussion of that publicly for example with the head of GCHQ just recently, so we have considerable powers and we’ll bring all those powers, both covert and overt to bear on Russia and what it represents today.

AM: Okay. I’d like to come on to what you have said is your top priority as Home Secretary. The last time we were talking about Windrush I asked you how many people had been wrongly detained and deported and you gave me a figure, you said, ‘but I’m still working on that,’ you said at the time. Do you have an updated figure?
SJ: Yes, I do. I mean this remains a priority for me. What happened to some of the Windrush generation is completely unacceptable at every level. We’ve been working through the summer on a historic cases review and we’ve determined about 164 people we believe were wronged over something in their record that suggests that they were wrong –

AM: They were either arrested or locked up or deported?

SJ: Yes, either detained – wrongly detained or wrongly removed. It’s important.

AM: That’s a lot more than we thought originally.

SJ: It is a lot more and I’m determined to get down to every single case. Of that 164 there’s 18 that we determined who are absolutely wronged. They were the most, what I would call the most severe cases and of those 18, 15 –

AM: And you’ve written to them or their families directly?

SJ: Yes. Well sadly three of those have died and I’ve written to 15 and through the respective High Commissions I’m contacting the families of the other three. It’s also worth, Andrew – and this has become a big sort of national discussion –

AM: It’s a national scandal.

SJ: - and it is a national scandal, but it’s a scandal that goes back many years under successive governments. I was also able to reveal that of those 164 cases, roughly half happened under the Labour years and I’ve rightly apologised on behalf of this government and the coalition government for what happened. There are still many people that are waiting for an apology from Diane Abbott on behalf of what happened under Labour governments.

AM: All right. Well you’ve talked about people who are wrongly arrested and deported, but there’s an even bigger number, we
think, who have lost lots of other things. They might have lost
their access to housing, they’ve lost their access to banking, they
haven’t been able to work, their lives have been turned upside
down. What about them?

SJ: It’s right that in any case if people have been wrongly affected
in the ways that you describe that we need to help them, and
that’s why –

AM: Do you know how many we’re talking about? For instance,
how many people have been denied NHS treatment because of
the Windrush scandal?

SJ: I don’t think we know exactly how many yet, but we set up a
Windrush –

AM: Roughly?

SJ: We don’t have an exact number on that and I wouldn’t even
want to guess what that is because we’re still trying to put that
information together, but it is right that we get to the bottom of
that. We set up immediately when this whole sort of scandal came
to light and discovered the problems people were having a task
force. The task force has helped thousands of people. A number
of people have been issued with all the correct documents
including over a thousand people with British passports. I’ve also
set up a lessons learned review, an independent review and we’re
going to see what more we can do.

AM: While you’re setting things up and people are getting to the
bottom of it lots of people are living really miserable lives. Let me
give you just one example. George Poleon, who I think came to
one of your meetings around the country, he came to the UK from
St Lucia in 1968. He’s living homeless in a charity hostel at the
moment, according to the Guardian. He can’t open a bank
account, his benefits have been cut off and he still can’t work.
People like him are living in really, really hard conditions all the
time. How soon is the government going to be able to help him?
SJ: Well people like George and others immediately now today they can contact and should contact the task force and we are helping them in a variety of ways. Not just with documentation, a variety of ways. But I also want to make sure that eventually when we’re setting up and consulting on a compensation scheme that people are properly compensated for what’s happened and let me tell you –

AM: And when will that happen? I must ask you. When are people going to get compensation?

SJ: That process, the consultation has just closed. We wanted to make sure that we listened to people that have been affected by this and take that into account, so it’s not just something that’s dreamed up by government, and when that’s set up, within coming weeks people, like George and others will be able to look that for compensation. And again, you know, given that I’m here on your show I want to apologise to everyone that was affected by this, it was wrong in every way and I will do everything I can to put it right.

AM: All right. Let me turn to another big story in today’s papers which is the National Police Coordination Centre’s report on what happens if we get a no deal Brexit. I don’t know if you’ve seen that story but they say for instance, shortages in food and medical supplies could cause and I quote: ‘civil disorder resorting in widespread arrests for three months.’ Is that true?

SJ: Well first of all I’m glad the police and other experts are looking into this and thinking what might happen in a no deal scenario.

AM: But widespread arrests are extremely worrying.

SJ: Well first of all I don’t expect a no deal outcome.
AM: But it’s perfectly possible.

SJ: We need to prepare for all contingencies and it’s absolutely correct and that’s what we’ve been doing across government, including my own department, so of course that means working closely with police. I’m not going to get into what the situation may or may not be, but I think it’s fair to say we’re planning for all contingencies.

AM: Do you think it’s possible we could face civil disorder resulting in widespread unrest if there is no deal?

SJ: Well, I think it’s right that government prepares for all possible outcomes.

AM: So that is possible?

SJ: Well I’m not going to try and predict. I don’t think any of us – this is an unprecedented situation, but most important of all we’re to keep focused on the deal and get a deal delivered, but at the same time of course every government department should prepare for all possible outcomes.

AM: Because the police themselves are saying for instance ‘there would be unprecedented and overwhelming disruption to the national road network and even rest days for police officers would have to be delayed or cancelled and crime would rise, particularly theft and robbery.’ And when the police say this is a possible outcome of a no deal scenario, a lot of people are watching and want to know is that broadly speaking true? Is that something they should worry about if there’s a no deal scenario?

SJ: Well, I don’t think people need to worry, and the great reason people don’t need to worry is because the government is looking rightly at what could be the possible outcome in a no deal situation and then preparing for that and then trying to mitigate
that, and that’s why the police and others have been asked to do this kind of analysis.

AM: Let’s talk about Brexit a little more generally. Is the basic choice in front of the country now Chequers or no deal? Is that the choice?

SJ: The choice that’s been put out there actually to the European Union is that we’ve gone away and the government’s done a lot of work, it’s put together a package, the so-called Chequers deal. The European Union has been chewing through that throughout the summer. At some point they’ll come back with a formal response. I’m sure we’ll get more info when the Prime Minister in Salzburg meets with her colleagues later this month.

A: But if that falls is the only alternative to that no deal?

SJ: Well, I think the only deal that we’ve got on the table, that’s the Chequers deal. And so it’s up to the EU to respond to that and the Prime Minister has said, quite rightly, all along this is the deal, no deal is better than a bad deal and we will not be signing up to a bad deal.

AM: As I suspect you know perfectly well, the reason I’m asking about this is so many Conservative MPs are now talking about a so-called Canada free trade deal as the better alternative to Chequers. What’s wrong with that?

SJ: Well, actually I think the Canada deal has a lot to commend it, but it doesn't deal with the underlying issues, and one of the underlying challenges, which is the Northern Ireland-Ireland border. And that’s why the government rightly looked at lots of different options and alternatives. It’s settled on a preferred outcome and now it’s up to the European Union to respond to that.

AM: Boris Johnson, the former Foreign Secretary, says this morning that worrying about the Irish border is insane and mad.
SJ: Well, I’ve just caught up with Boris Johnson’s article this morning, and it’s not news that he has a difference of opinion.

AM: What do you make of it all?
SJ: Well, he has a difference of opinion with the Prime Minister, and that’s he’s –
AM: The use of the term suicide bomb, suicide vest, to describe the Prime Minister’s approach, a lot of your colleagues are absolutely furious about it.
SJ: I think there are much better ways to articulate your differences, and I think it’s a reminder, I think, for all of us in public policy, whichever political party we represent, to use measured language, because I think that’s what the public want to see.

AM: And in terms of measured language, it’s the first time I’ve had a chance to ask you about this, would you approve of the description of women who wear the hijab or the niqab, as looking like letter boxes?
SJ: It’s not language I would use.

AM: Do you think Boris Johnson has a language problem?
SJ: You’ll have to get him on your programme and quiz him yourself.

AM: Until then, do you think he’s Islamophobic?
SJ: No. Absolutely not, I don’t. Not in the slightest. Boris Johnson is one person I’ve known well for a number of years and I think he loves all of Britain’s communities no matter where they come from.

AM: And you look at all of the stuff in today’s papers, do you think that he would be a fit leader of the Conservative Party in due course?
SJ: The Conservative Party is not looking for a leader because we are lucky to have a very good leader and she’s also the Prime Minister of this country and she’s doing a great job.

AM: When it comes to the other great thing on your desk, immigration policy, you’ve announced a new scheme to allow in a limited number, two and a half thousand agricultural workers to come in from outside the EU. Now, the industry, the people that actually grow soft fruit, the farmers themselves, say that’s about a tenth of what they need.

SJ: They do. And that’s why as we are preparing to leave the EU now for the first time we’ll be able to have our own immigration system, we’ll control our borders in the way that we want to. As we design that we’ve got time to listen to the agriculture industry and others and get the right scheme that brings in the skills we need but also brings immigration down to sustainable levels. That’s why what you’ve just referred to is a pilot. So it’s a pilot while we’re still in the EU, it’s a pilot that’s going on. That’s why it’s limited and it will help us design the ultimate system that we need.

AM: Because it’s pretty odd that still, even now, not long before we leave the EU, we don’t know what the government’s actual immigration policy is going to be afterwards. We haven’t seen the paper.

SJ: Well, you’ll know very soon. I’ve said first all along I’ve wanted to base it on evidence and that’s why we commissioned the independent migration advisory committee to produce a report and that will be available actually in a couple of weeks’ time.

AM: So before the Conservative Party conference?

SJ: Well, the report will be available within a couple of weeks’ time and I’ll respond to it soon after that with a White Paper on our new immigration system, an immigration system that’s going to be designed here in Britain under our full control to meet our needs.
AM: Sajid Javid, thanks very much indeed for talking to us.

(ends)