From the Chair, Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
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The Parliamentary Working Group on bilateral defence co-operation between the UK and France met in Paris on 17 April. Ahead of that meeting you kindly provided an updated assessment of progress in developing the relationship.

Among the topics we discussed with our French counterparts was progress on specific projects stemming from the Lancaster House treaties.

Under the terms of the treaty on security and defence co-operation it was agreed that France and the UK would work together on the next generation of medium-altitude, long endurance (MALE) unmanned air surveillance systems. In February 2012, it was announced that a jointly funded contract would be placed shortly with BAE Systems and Dassault to study the technical risks associated with the MALE UAV.

In your letter you explained that there had been a commitment to “co-operation on Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and a contract was placed with industry for Watchkeeper evaluation in Oct 2012”. There was, however, no mention of the MALE UAV project.

I should be grateful if you would provide the Defence Committee with an update on both the Watchkeeper and MALE UAV projects and any associated development work on unmanned air surveillance systems. In order to enhance the transparency of our scrutiny of this particular project and the Lancaster Treaty more generally, it would be helpful if this could be in the form of an unclassified paper.

A response by 31 May would assist the Committee greatly.
I am copying this letter to the Chairman of the House of Lords EU Sub-committee (C)

Yours ever

James

CHAIR