Rt Hon Dr Julian Lewis MP
Chairman, Defence Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

29 May 2018

Dear Dr Lewis,

Thank you for your letter of 17 May 2018. I am glad that the Defence Committee noted my Department’s publication of the slides on the Framework for the future UK-EU Security Partnership.

As you will be aware, the UK presented the slides to the European Union’s (EU) negotiating team last month to discuss our Future Security Partnership. This is part of a series of ongoing engagements regarding our future relationship with the EU and its Member States. The UK is looking to develop a close and special Security Partnership with the EU. This will include an ability for us to combine our efforts on foreign policy and security issues outside of the EU, when it is in our shared interests.

The Prime Minister made clear in her Munich Speech that the UK’s global role ‘means ensuring that a reformed NATO alliance remains the cornerstone of our shared security’. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a leading contributor to NATO and the US’ closest partner, we have never defined our approach to external security primarily through our membership of the EU.

We will therefore continue to cooperate closely with European partners in a wide range of ways. We see the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as being an important component of that broad cooperation, and recognise the important role that CSDP missions and operations can play in crisis management and response.

The UK has a legitimate interest in the evolution of CSDP, its role alongside NATO and in effective EU-NATO cooperation before and after we leave. Greater EU-NATO Cooperation is something the UK has championed for over a decade now, and has never been a lone voice. A good example of the UK’s support for this cooperation is Operation ALTHEA, which is an important operation for the UK, not least because it is the only one to benefit from the Berlin Plus arrangements. The objectives of this and other EU Operations will remain important to the UK after we leave the EU.
Once the UK has left the EU, we must develop more bilateral cooperation between European nations, build the ad hoc groupings that allow us to counter terrorism and hostile state threats, and we must ensure a reformed NATO remains the cornerstone of our shared security.

I hope that this response adequately clarifies the Government’s position on this matter.

RT HON DAVID DAVIS MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION