



Defence Committee

Chairman, Rt Hon Dr Julian Lewis MP

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Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP

Secretary of State for Defence

Ministry of Defence

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Dear Gavin,

I am writing to ask for more information on the withdrawal of the British Army from Germany following a series of reports suggesting that the scope of this policy may be reconsidered.

The decision to withdraw all major Army formations in Germany was part of the SDSR 2010 and was explained in detail by your predecessor Philip Hammond during his statement to the House of March 2013 on the Army Basing Plan (HC Deb, 5 March 2013, c 845). In that statement he indicated that no British-run facilities were being retained, but that the Army might exercise the option to continue using NATO training facilities and that there might be a residual British presence of around 100 personnel.

Since then there have been a number of indications that the residual presence in Germany may be more substantial than originally envisaged. The Chief of the Defence Staff, when still Chief of the General Staff, told our predecessor Committee in June 2016 that "it will be our intention, certainly until 2023, given what is going on more broadly in Europe, to retain some assets in Germany that provide us with jumping-off points for other exercises and other activity that might be necessary." In his speech at RUSI in January this year, General Carter added that "we are actively examining the retention of our infrastructure in Germany where we store our vehicles in Ayrshire Barracks in Rheindahlen and our training facilities in Sennelager. As well as our Heavy Equipment Transporters that are based there and our stock-piling and ammunition storage."

The Department's response to our report *Indispensable Allies: US, NATO and UK Defence Relations* (HC 387) indicates that you have endorsed the Army's aspiration after 2020 to continue training in Germany, retain a combined river crossing capability with the Bundeswehr, and maintain vehicle and ammunition storage facilities.

News reports throughout the year have suggested that the withdrawal policy is under review. The most recent of these reports, in *The Sunday Times* on 9 September, indicates that 200 servicemen and 400 family members will remain in Germany, and that a range of heavy equipment including armoured vehicles will be retained, along with the sites at Sennelager and Monchengladbach.

I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions:

1. Does the Department's policy on rebasing from Germany continue to be as set out by the then Secretary of State in his statement of March 2013? If not, please explain how the policy has changed and when decisions on these changes were made.
2. How many personnel will be retained in Germany after 2020?
3. Which units will these personnel be from? If you are unable to be specific about the identity of the units involved, please indicate whether they will be combat, combat support or combat service support personnel.
4. Will Service families remain in Germany after 2020?
5. What types and numbers of equipment (including vehicles and HETs) will be retained in Germany?
6. What will be the fate of the Sennelager and Monchengladbach facilities? Will any further facilities or infrastructure be retained in Germany?
7. What discussions have you had with allies, in particular the United States which is seeking to continue to reinforce its formations in Europe, on these issues and on how our withdrawal affects our NATO commitments?

Yours sincerely,

Julian
