



Foreign Affairs Committee

Committee Office House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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From the Chair

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

18 February 2019

Dear Foreign Secretary

Georgia is a key ally of the United Kingdom in the fight against Russian aggression and disregard for the international rules based order. Lying on the frontline of this fight, Georgia faces continual and deepening transgressions of its territorial integrity through the Kremlin's continued support for the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Concurrently, Russia continues to increase military activity in the Black Sea region, undermining regional security.

To this end, I write for clarification on three points connected to continuing UK support for Georgia against its hostile neighbour:

The UK's role in peacekeeping in Georgia

- Following Brexit, will the UK will continue to maintain a presence and engage with the Geneva International Discussions?
- In the event of UK exit from the EU without a deal, what will be the legal status of UK personnel currently deployed as part of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia? Would these personnel be redeployed as a British mission or withdrawn?

Black Sea regional security

- How does the UK Government plan to address threats to Black Sea security as part of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and NATO Summit, to be held in London this autumn?

I note Georgia's progress in becoming a reform-led, democratic state, and trust that the UK will continue to provide Georgia with essential support to reinforce its place as a positive role-model in the region.

The Committee intends to publish this letter and your response.

TOM TUGENDHAT MP
Chair

Copy to Dr Julian Lewis MP, Chair of the Defence Committee



Foreign &
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Minister of State for
Europe and the Americas

5 March 2019

Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee
Committee Office
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter of 18 February 2019 to the Foreign Secretary on UK support for Georgia.

Georgia is a key ally for the UK. We regularly cooperate on foreign policy and security issues, including following the Salisbury attack and countering Russian aggression in the region. We recognise the pressure Georgia is under from Russia, who, via their support for the de facto authorities in the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, effectively control 20% of Georgian territory. The UK's support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity is unwavering. We are committed to working closely with Georgia to counter the Russian threat and to help build Georgia's resilience via political and economic reform. We are pleased that discussions about the future framework of our bilateral relationship post Brexit have already made good progress.

Our overarching priority is the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia. We strongly support the Geneva International Discussions (GID). While we are not a party to the discussions, we will continue to follow them closely through our membership of the OSCE and the UN, who act as Co-Chairs alongside the EU. In addition, we undertake diplomatic and programme activity in the region to complement GID efforts. We will, however, no longer be eligible to second staff into the EU Special Representative's Office, post-Brexit.

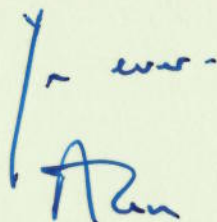
You also asked about the future of UK personnel seconded to the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM). We are very proud of the contribution made by UK secondees to EUMM since it was established in 2008. It is the UK Government's aim to deliver a deal negotiated with the EU. This remains our top priority. The UK is unequivocally committed to European security and will continue to work closely with the EU on external security following our exit from the Union. It is the UK's intention to pursue a close partnership with the EU, including the possibility of the UK continuing to contribute to EU missions of mutual interest.

However, in the event of a UK exit from the EU without a deal, UK staff in EUMM Georgia will have no legal status to remain in the mission and will be required to withdraw by 29 March. UK secondees to EUMM Georgia (those seconded through contracts with HMG) received 'no deal' contingency planning emails from the Stabilisation Unit on 24 January and 28 February which outlined the process for the termination of their secondments.

In response to your question on the Black Sea, HMG recognises the importance of the Black Sea to regional and our own national security. We share the concerns raised by regional partners, particularly Ukraine and Georgia, about Russian activity there. We regularly engage with the littoral states, which includes three NATO members and two with membership aspirations, on security matters and also work through NATO to support our Allies and partners in the Black Sea.

Since Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, the UK has supported a significant increase in NATO's presence at sea, and also in the air and on land, in the Black Sea region. The UK supports NATO stepping up cooperation with Georgia at sea, between NATO naval forces and Georgian forces (the Coast Guard) including training for boarding teams; and cooperation between Georgia's Joint Maritime Operations Centre and NATO's maritime command. We welcome the recent visit of Vice Admiral Sir Clive Johnstone, Commander, Allied Maritime Command, to Tbilisi to advance NATO / Georgia cooperation. Following Russia's use of force against Ukraine in the Black Sea in November, a British vessel, HMS Echo, was dispatched under a UK flag to the region, calling at four ports in the Black Sea including in Georgia and Ukraine. We are pleased that other individual Allies and NATO have undertaken similar activity. NATO will continue to develop its response to the security threat in the Black Sea this year.

You specifically mention the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the planned NATO Summit in London and how we can use these fora to address our Black Sea security concerns. We are working closely with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and its members in the lead up to their autumn session in London in October. We have started work on the programme for the NATO Leaders meeting scheduled to take place in the UK in December 2019. We will be working closely with NATO to consider a range of proposals over the next few months.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alan Duncan', with a vertical line extending upwards from the start of the signature.

RT HON SIR ALAN DUNCAN MP