



HOUSE OF LORDS

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Witness: Mr Peter Millett

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Members present

Lord Balfe
Baroness Brown of Cambridge
Lord Dubs
Lord Horam
Earl of Oxford and Asquith (Chairman)
Lord Risby
Lord Stirrup
Baroness Suttie

Examination of Witness

Mr Peter Millett, British Ambassador to Libya, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Q1 The Chairman: Mr Millett, thank you for coming in and giving us your time. As you know, this session will be recorded and filmed. There will be a public record of it, and of course you will be welcome to look at the transcript beforehand. I remind members that they should state any interests they have before they ask questions.

As you can imagine, following the referendum, the work of this sub-committee will start to evolve, but given that last year we looked at migration issues, with particular regard to Libya and Operation Sophia, and that much of the evidence we were then collecting was necessarily hypothetical and dependent on the possibility of some sort of future stable government, we thought it would be very appropriate if you could give us an update on your assessment of the Government of National Accord (GNA) and the current status. You are based in Tunis, so, perhaps as a preliminary, it would be very useful for us to hear—just as background—how that affects your scope of work and the coverage of what you do.

Mr Peter Millett: Okay, very good. Starting with how we operate, I have been in Tunis for just over a year. In that time, I was very closely involved with the negotiations on the Libyan Political Agreement, supporting the United Nations. Most of that happened in Morocco. I was struggling to understand the country, because the only Libyans I was meeting were those involved in the negotiations themselves or those who were living in London or based in the region. The normal diplomatic process of trying to understand a country by being there and absorbing the atmosphere was not something I could do, so I struggled in the beginning to try to get that understanding.

In the last couple of months, I have been to Tripoli five times. Last week I was able to stay overnight for the first time, and I think that in the coming weeks and months my team and I will be able to spend more time in Tripoli, but probably only in Tripoli for the time being. I hope, if progress continues in a positive direction, that we will then be able to expand our team, our presence and the range of places that we can visit.

Q2 The Chairman: Thank you very much. We might revert to that in a later question. I thought we might amalgamate our first two questions on the security and the political side, because they are related. We would be very grateful if you would give us an update on the current security situation in Libya, what progress has been made and how you assess the

relationship between the Government of National Accord and the Tobruk-based House of Representatives.

Mr Peter Millett: The situation in Tripoli is calm. I was there for 24 hours and heard no gunfire or violence at all. The Presidency Council has now been in Tripoli for almost three months. It is well embedded in the naval base but is increasingly getting out and about, and the ministers from the Government of National Accord can now operate out of their ministries. Most of the militias in Tripoli accept and welcome the Government of National Accord, but some of them are still waiting to see whether the Government can succeed in establishing themselves and gain all the political and public support that they need for the credibility that we want them to establish.

Elsewhere in the country there is still a lot of instability and insecurity, partly from competing militias but particularly from the presence of Daesh in and around Sirte. In the last six weeks, the Misrata militias under the command of the Government of National Accord have made some very rapid progress and have now squeezed Daesh into quite a small area in the city of Sirte. We will have to wait to see whether they can finish that job off or whether they find the final task more difficult. We are waiting to see what their tactics are on that.

The security situation in Libya is not good, but the government are trying to bring the many different militias under one unified command, which is going to be difficult for them to do given the regional and tribal background of many of those militias, but it is a work in progress. As regards the relationship of the Government of National Accord and the House of Representatives, under the Libyan Political Agreement the House of Representatives is the sole legislative body for the new government. The House of Representatives has the right and duty to give a government a vote of confidence. They have not done that yet, and over the last few months there have been various efforts to hold that vote. On 25 January, the Parliament endorsed the Libyan Political Agreement, which means that it has endorsed the Presidency Council but it has not endorsed the list of ministers. On two occasions a majority of the members—over 100 members—have signed declarations that they support the government but they have not been able to hold a physical formal vote in their favour. It is going to be very difficult, because the president of that Parliament has not been prepared to organise sessions where there is enough of a quorum for the majority of members who I believe still want to support the government to hold the vote.

The Chairman: Until the vote of confidence is passed, are you saying that the government are not regarded as wholly legitimate?

Mr Peter Millett: We the international community, especially under Security Council Resolution 2259, recognise that government as the sole legitimate government of Libya. They have not had a vote of confidence, but the urgency of the situation means that we need to support that government in trying to deliver better public services and operate fully as a government.

Q3 Lord Horam: You mentioned the difficulty that the Government of National Accord have experienced in getting control of the militias and uniting them under one command. How far are the government able to get power over the main instruments of national power?

Mr Peter Millett: There is now a Minister of Defence, who is actually from the Libyan National Army, from Benghazi—Minister Barghathi. He has supervision of many of the

militias in Tripoli. He has very close links with the Misrata militias that are fighting Daesh and he is working with many of his officer class to try to build that unified structure.

Lord Horam: How does he relate to General Haftar?

Mr Peter Millett: His relationship with General Haftar is not good, and General Haftar does not accept him as Minister of Defence, but he has good relations with many of the officers in the Libyan National Army. He is quietly trying to work with them on how to bring the very many groups into one structure.

Lord Horam: Is he a credible figure?

Mr Peter Millett: I think he is a credible figure. I have met him a number of times. There are ideas out there about military councils, which might include General Haftar but that could look at the regional basis. The Libyan National Army has been reasonably successful in the east in removing some of the extremists from Benghazi. I am sorry that I cannot give you a very precise answer as to what the structure is going to look like, because a lot of it is being done through personal relationships and trying to gain confidence through personal relationships rather than saying, "Here is a precise structure with particular military grades and military roles".

The other thing worth underlining is that under the Libyan Political Agreement the supreme commander of the armed forces is the nine-member Presidency Council. The president of the House of Representatives says that he is the supreme commander and he is not going to let that role go, so there is a tension there between—

Lord Horam: Inside the actual institution—the constitution.

Mr Peter Millett: Yes.

Q4 Lord Horam: The other interesting aspect is the European Council on Foreign Relations paper on the subject. It made the point that there is a huge liquidity crisis in the country—in simply paying the staff and so on—and that that is more immediate in many ways than the military problem. Do you agree? What will the solution be?

Mr Peter Millett: I saw that for myself in Tripoli last week at eight o'clock in the morning in Ramadan with large queues of people outside banks trying to get access to their salaries. The Central Bank tells me that Libya has twice as many notes in circulation per capita as the United Kingdom. They have 24 million dinars in circulation.

Lord Horam: They are all stuffed in mattresses, are they?

Mr Peter Millett: Exactly. The British company that prints the dinar, De La Rue, has recently supplied another 1 billion dinars. It has gone into the system, but tackling the liquidity problem is not an issue of printing more notes; it is a matter of building confidence and security.

Lord Horam: How can that be done? You mean military security, do you?

Mr Peter Millett: It can be done by building public confidence and commercial confidence, because it is the businessmen who are sitting on the money. Issuing letters of credit and regenerating the economy is the best way to bring those notes, that liquidity, back into the system.

Lord Horam: What can be done about that?

Mr Peter Millett: Economic reform, such as increasing oil production and enabling businessmen to obtain the letters of credit that they are looking for to import foodstuffs,

medicines and building materials; and reconstruction in many of the cities, which will involve a major set of objectives, programmes and projects. That can be done only once people have confidence. If they are rebuilding a power station, for example, much of it needs international commercial support. The international commercial support will not come back until people know that there is security. All those things are interlinked.

Q5 The Chairman: To follow on from what you were saying about the tension between the Presidency Council and the government, how does Operation Sophia and its extended mandate fit into that? Will Operation Sophia, if it continues, be working and reporting to the government?

Mr Peter Millett: Yes. The tension is between the president of the House of Representatives and the government. In the Presidency Council and the Government of National Accord, they are all on the same wavelength, especially on Operation Sophia. The Presidency Council has now identified a seven-person committee to liaise with the European Union on designing a training programme for the coastguard. I have discussed that with both the Minister of Defence and the Minister of the Interior over the last couple of weeks. They are identifying the individuals who can go for such training and are now trying to design a concrete package of training, which we regard as immediate and urgent.

Q6 Lord Stirrup: I would like, if I may, to try to understand the current situation of and prospects for ISIL in Libya. We know that it has lost control of Derna, and you have mentioned the struggle for Sirte, the outcome of which remains uncertain. ISIL is having significant problems in Syria and in Iraq, and has suffered significant setbacks there, but we have seen that it regards political voids in other parts of the world as an opportunity for expanding its brand, in some sense balancing what is going on in Iraq and Syria. How have you seen ISIL evolving in Libya over the last year or so? How do you think it is going to move on in the future, and how does all this relate to the issue, which you mentioned earlier, of the various tribal groupings and the militias associated with them? There is tension between military activity, and indeed the support of external actors, for the GNA and for the militias separately, and we have seen ISIL exploiting those sorts of fractures and fissures in other parts of the world. I am afraid that it is a rather complicated question, but it is a rather complicated subject, and I would be interested in your views on it.

Mr Peter Millett: We cannot be clear about the numbers or the identities of members of Daesh—or ISIL—in Libya. We heard about numbers of 5,000 or 6,000; we now believe that they are lower than we thought. The assessment is that their military capability probably is not as great as we thought. In Sirte in the last two months or six weeks, we have seen a rapid movement by the Misrata militias that has squeezed them into the centre of the city. We do not know whether the lower numbers are because many of them have left Sirte and dispersed through other parts of the country, and whether that now poses a different kind of threat. Rather than them mainly being in one location, are they now in groups in many different locations?

The other point is that Daesh has very little Libyan support. The vast majority of the fighters, as we understand it, are not Libyan. They are from regional countries, such as Tunisia, and from southern Sahara, and we hear that people from Boko Haram have also been part of the fight in Sirte. In so far as the public are concerned, unlike in Iraq or in Syria, the fighters are not engaging with local populations. They were able to go into Sirte partly because Sirte was Gaddafi's city and therefore governments were not giving Sirte the involvement in reconstruction and redevelopment that it was looking for; so some of the other terrorist or extremist organisations, not Daesh, went into Sirte and took up occupation, and then Daesh

came in behind them. The fundamental point that I am trying to make is that the Libyan public are not embracing Daesh in the way we have seen in other countries.

What is the prospect for the future? There is a debate going on at the moment between the Ministry of Defence and the Misratans as to whether—to put it crudely—to finish them off in Sirte or just to hold them and see what happens next. The Misratans have taken a lot of losses. They have lost 250 fighters and have had 900 wounded. It is getting to be quite a sensitive subject in Misrata. The future of Daesh in Libya is pretty uncertain. In short, it is weaker than we had thought and very much on the back foot at the moment. However, if its fighters have dispersed, that poses a significant and very different type of threat that is much more difficult to handle.

Q7 Lord Stirrup: Could I follow up on a point you made that has raised some questions in my mind? You talk about the Misrata militia fighting against Daesh. How is all this going to be resolved as the GNA, hopefully, moves forward? You talked about the tensions over military command between the House of Representatives and the Presidency Council, but where do the militias fit into all that? How are they going to be integrated, and are external actors—because the militias get support from outside the country—aggravating the situation?

Mr Peter Millett: The Misrata militias fall under an operations room that is authorised by the Government of National Accord and is under the Minister of Defence. The Misrata militias have pledged their loyalty to the Government of National Accord, so it is being done under the umbrella and the control of the Government of National Accord. There is no tension between what the Misratans are doing and the current government, but to go back to your earlier question there are still tribal and regional tensions between the Misratans and some of the other towns and tribes—the Warfalla tribe and the Warshefana tribe. We are trying to encourage much more movement on national reconciliation to avoid some of the conflicts we saw breaking out in the past. The situation in the east, however, is rather different, as is the situation in Benghazi, where the tribal dynamic is very complicated. To the east of Sirte there are oil installations. There is a force called the Petroleum Facilities Guard, which is also under the command and control of the Ministry of Defence, so there is an operations room in the west and an operations room in the east. I am not clear where those operations rooms come together in a unified command. The next step is to bring them together in a unified command.

Q8 Lord Risby: You are in Tunisia most of the time, and I want to ask you about the spill-over effect of the dire security situation in Libya on Tunisia and then, of course, Algeria, which has a very long border and a history. Would you also make some observations on how the security situation in Libya is being impacted by neighbours to the south, such as Chad, Niger and Mali?

Mr Peter Millett: The issues in Tunisia are pretty clear; both Bardo and Sousse were attacked by Tunisians who had been trained in Libya. Then there was the incident in Ben Guerdane, the first town you come to from Libya, when a large Daesh force tried to take control of the city. Most of them were Tunisian, but their training and their arms came from Libya. There is a very serious risk of further contamination. As I am sure many know, we have very close co-operation with the Tunisian police and security forces in trying to reinforce their ability to provide security, but the Tunisians are very sensitive about controlling their border and preventing the influx of fighters from Libya into Tunisia.

In Algeria, they are much better at monitoring and controlling their border. As you know, we have a regular six-month dialogue with the Algerians on security issues, which enables us to explore the issues and how we might be able to assist.

The problems in the south are much more difficult to evaluate. The border is enormous—it is so long—and it is wide-open territory with almost no habitation. We see that as the migration route, but the groups, the criminal gangs, who are involved in smuggling and trafficking people are almost certainly also involved in smuggling or trafficking weapons, drugs and other illicit goods. When we talk to the Libyans about helping them on issues such as migration and Operation Sophia, we need to recognise that they want our help in dealing with criminality and in reinforcing not only their coastal borders but their western, eastern and southern borders.

Baroness Suttie: Do you have an estimate for the number of Libyan refugees currently in Tunisia? I have heard various figures used and obviously it is quite difficult to analyse. I heard from Tunisian politicians that the figure could be as high as 1.2 million.

Mr Peter Millett: I have heard that figure as well. I think the number is lower than that. I do not have any accurate assessment. I must say, looking around the town of Tunis, the Libyan-registered vehicles that I see are not driven by refugees, but as to whether there are more Libyans nearer the border I am afraid I do not have a figure; 1.2 million is probably higher than is correct. The total population of Libya is supposed to be only 6.5 million.

Baroness Suttie: Thank you.

Q9 Lord Risby: To touch on the migratory flow situation, of course Libya is really the source of that, although obviously the migrants come from many places. There have been reports of very poor treatment of migrants trying to make the crossing, and some very violent treatment of them by whomsoever. The EU has a programme of humanitarian aid. How is it being deployed in this particular context and can it be improved? If I could add something in supplement, given our look at Operation Sophia, how do the GNA view the activities of vessels deployed in the name of the EU dealing with migratory flows in their territorial or non-territorial waters? What is their view of that particular aspect of what is essentially Operation Sophia?

Mr Peter Millett: I have seen many reports of very poor treatment of migrants. Basically, they fall into the hands of criminal gangs. They are forced to work. The conditions they live in while they wait for a boat are very poor. The EU has programmes of up to €100 million. Some of that focuses on law enforcement, border reinforcement and so forth. Some of it is humanitarian. They are one of the main donors to humanitarian organisations.

From the UK point of view, DfID contributed £4 million of humanitarian assistance to Libya last year. Some of it went to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), some of it to the ICRC¹ and some of it to UNHCR². Much of it was focused on the plight of Libyan internally displaced people; there are 417,000 Libyans who are displaced. As far as the migrants are concerned, much of the funding for the IOM, for example, relates to the conditions in detention centres, but those are official centres. It is very difficult to have access to the centres where the criminal gangs hold people. Certainly, we are all very aware of the need for humanitarian help. The United Nations organisation devoted to Libya, UNSMIL³, has a humanitarian response programme, which looks both at Libyan displaced

¹ International Committee of the Red Cross

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

³ United Nations Support Mission in Libya

people and at migrants—their conditions, their shelter, their health conditions, medicine and so forth.

Operation Sophia is not operating in territorial waters at the moment, as you know. The extension to training the coastguard is probably the best way to save the lives of the migrants, so that the boats can be prevented from getting so far out to sea. The Libyans themselves have the capacity to return those boats to Libya, but part of that has to be to ensure that we can reinforce or improve the conditions under which people will be treated once they get back to their own shores.

Q10 Baroness Brown of Cambridge: I would be interested in your comments about the success or otherwise of the EU and UN sanctions, and indeed about whether extending them would be a good idea.

Mr Peter Millett: We have had a long debate over sanctions for quite a number of months. Many people tell us that, if we sanction someone, they become a hero. Within Libya, many of those people do not plan to travel and do not have assets overseas, so what is the point? That is one side of the argument. The other side of the argument is that we cannot stand by and do nothing when people are flouting international law or are clearly posing a significant obstacle to political progress and the political transition in Libya.

We have imposed EU sanctions, not UN sanctions, against three individuals. One is the president of the House of Representatives. The other two were in Tripoli. One was the Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord—the mandated government. The other was the president of the Government of National Accord. I am sorry; the other was the National Congress. It was the Prime Minister and the president of that Parliament.

That body has virtually disappeared now. In a way, you can see that sanctions perhaps made a bit of a difference. The threat of sanctions is actually more significant than the act of sanctions. I will not go into individual cases, but where names were being circulated in the media, it actually changed people's conduct. It is a useful tool, but we have to use it with great care.

The Chairman: Some people would argue that the freezing of certain Libyan national assets overseas was a legitimate step to take but that some of them could now be unfrozen. What is your view?

Mr Peter Millett: They were frozen more than five years ago, during the revolution. We have had that discussion with the Presidency Council, with Prime Minister Serraj. The Central Bank still has significant assets, although they have been reduced a lot. The Central Bank used to have \$100 billion-worth of reserves and has been drawing down on those because of the oil price reduction and the production reduction; they are now down to about \$50 billion. The advice that the government are getting is, "Don't touch your long-term sovereign wealth fund. Let's plan to use the existing reserves and at the same time increase oil production, so that we don't need to touch our frozen assets". We are saying to the government, "If you want to use your frozen assets, it needs to come as a request from the Government of National Accord, clearly attached to a plan as to how you are going to use them". It would need to be a specific request to use a certain amount, for example for humanitarian assistance. We are open to such requests, but the priority is for them to plan and increase oil production as a better way to provide the resources that they need for their many different tasks and the expenditure that they are looking for.

Lord Risby: Are they able to increase oil production? What is happening on that?

Mr Peter Millett: I believe that oil production is now down to less than 200,000 barrels a day, from a capacity of 1.5 million barrels a day. There are at least two pipelines, one in the west going via the town of Zintan and one going from the east, up to the oil facilities around Ra's Lanuf, which could bring production up to about 750,000 barrels a day within about a month. A bit of maintenance is needed, but they could very quickly increase that production. The obstacles are political. Are the people who are in control of those pipelines ready to allow that to happen, and, to be frank, what is the price they are going to receive for doing so?

Q11 Lord Balfe: I see you have had some 35 years' experience in the Arab world. My concern is that Prime Minister Serraj is not a strong enough character and that the Arab world and many Muslim states are characterised by strong central leadership. The regional and tribal background of Libya makes it very unlikely that they would be able to pull it together in the democratic structure that is foreseen. As I have noted from our briefing, the treasury and the Central Bank "are in an impossible position, juggling competing demands for money from actors including the armed groups. European governments should consider imposing an external constraint on spending on salaries". If there is a position where we have to consider imposing a restraint, that leads me to wonder whether we have got the thing right or whether we should be looking for a person who may not be as clearly committed to democracy as many of us would like but who could hold the country together.

Mr Peter Millett: Of course, Libya had a strong leader for 42 years.

Lord Balfe: And we got rid of him. We caused this problem.

Mr Peter Millett: Fayez Serraj is the head of a Presidency Council of nine men, who all come from different parts of Libya. Those posts were allocated three from the west, three from the east and three from the south. Bringing them together into a national Presidency Council has been a major and very challenging task. I believe that he is succeeding. I have got to know him quite well over the last six to nine months. I think he knows where he wants to go.

There has been slow progress for this government to win the confidence of the people. It has been slower than we would like and much slower than I know Prime Minister Serraj would like, but I am sure that changing horses now would not be the right thing; you would reopen a lot of questions, and there is no guarantee that you would end up with anything better than we have now. I am convinced that we should be working with Prime Minister Serraj and the other members of the Presidency Council and, increasingly, working with the ministers who are now in their ministries, ensuring that they have the budgets they need through the Central Bank. The relationship between the Government of National Accord and the Central Bank is good. We now have unity within the National Oil Corporation, which was divided. It has come together in the past week, so there is no dispute as to there being one national oil company. All the exports are coming from one recognised institution under the Government of National Accord, and the revenues are going back to the Central Bank under the Government of National Accord. It is heading in the right direction, and I do not think that changing horses now is the right way forward.

Lord Stirrup: May I follow up on that very interesting question? For the vast majority of its history, Libya has not existed. It has been three separate provinces—Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan—under first an Islamic and then an Ottoman empire. Libya as we think of it is a very recent construct. Do you think that there are sufficient unifying ideas, whether it be internal cohesion or external pressure, to keep the place together, whatever wiring diagram you put over the top of it?

Mr Peter Millett: That is a really long-term challenge. You are right that there are three regions. Libyans tend to identify, first and foremost, with their family, and their tribe, their city and their region. Senses of national interest and national identity are not unifying factors at the moment. The Government of National Accord and the Presidency Council have individuals from the different parts, but they need to bring them together and demonstrate that they are working on behalf of all Libyans. Mr Serraj has been saying that consistently, but it is going to take quite a while for Libyans to come back to a situation where they back their nation, rather than the tribe or city they come from.

Q12 Baroness Brown of Cambridge: I am interested to know whether the Brexit vote has any implications for your relationships with EU activities. Do you sense that it has had any impact? Are there any things that the UK does particularly well in this area that our European colleagues would lose out on if they did not have the close connection with us that they have at the moment?

Mr Peter Millett: I reassured Mr Serraj last week that it would make no difference. In Tunisia, we work primarily with the United Nations. Martin Kobler, the Secretary-General's special representative, brings us together regularly—me, my EU colleague and the French, German, American and Italian ambassadors. We work very closely together. We collaborate on and share information very closely, but it is under United Nations leadership. At the Security Council, the UK holds the pen on drafting the resolutions. All the most recent resolutions were drafted initially by the UK and then negotiated under UK leadership. There is a very specific role based on our permanent membership of the Security Council.

Within Libya we have a bit of a niche, because they listen to us. We have very good access. In many parts of Libya, there is still a historical relationship. We established the constitution back in 1951, and we were very present in the 1950s and 1960s, before Libya discovered its oil. In parts of Libya, in the east, even the fact that there are large cemeteries of British soldiers is still a very visible presence of the commitment we gave that country.

That is the foundation. I do not like talking too much about the historical relationship, because we need to look at what we can do now, and they look to the UK to play a significant role, with our European and American partners and particularly with the United Nations, in driving forward the political, humanitarian and security agenda.

Q13 Lord Dubs: I think you have partly answered my question, but let me put it anyway. How do you assess the UK's contribution to EUBAM⁴ and UNSMIL? Have the two missions proved effective? Are they satisfactory in furthering UK interests? As regards EUBAM, what is our future there?

Mr Peter Millett: I think that the UK contribution in UNSMIL is strong. As I said, as far as the UN Security Council resolutions are concerned, just four weeks ago we renewed the mandate of UNSMIL, but I discussed with the UN what sort of factors it wanted within that and whether it needed to adjust the mandate. We did not change the mandate. Collaboration with and support for UNSMIL is very strong.

EUBAM, like all of us, evacuated from Libya in August 2014, so it has been ticking over for the past two years. Now that we have the Government of National Accord, EUBAM is much more involved in planning how it can work in the future and is looking in particular at law enforcement, police training and the borders as a whole. It is likely that the mandate will be renewed, but we need to look at exactly what sort of activity it will look for in the future as

⁴ EU Border Assistance Mission Libya

regards the precise delivery of assistance, so that we can ensure that any future programme supports our collective objectives in bringing security to Libya.

Q14 Baroness Suttie: My question has largely been answered, but perhaps I could ask a more general question. How would you assess co-operation between the various international players? Do you think it could be improved, or do you think it works effectively?

Mr Peter Millett: There is a remarkable degree of international consensus on Libya: for example, the Rome communiqué of 13 December last year, and the Vienna meeting in May. The P5 countries, including Russia and China, the regional countries from Morocco to Egypt, the Gulf countries and the southern neighbours of Libya all signed up to supporting the Libyan Political Agreement, the Presidency Council and the Government of National Accord as the sole legitimate government of Libya. We have an extraordinary degree of international support and consensus. Of course, different countries may back different groups and support different people, and devote time to different regions and parts of the country, but I think we are all heading in the same direction, and the degree of collaboration is remarkable, in my experience.

Q15 Lord Risby: It is comforting to know that there is this very high level of co-operation between all the interested parties, one way or another. From a purely UK point of view, to what extent are you supported in your very important role?

Mr Peter Millett: I have very strong support from my colleagues in the Foreign Office, and very strong support from the Ministry of Defence, the Cabinet Office and so on. I have a good team in the Libya office in Tunis at the moment. I have CSSF⁵ programmes of £10 million, which we are looking at for security, justice, defence, economic reform and political reform, which we are busy trying to implement effectively.

I can see in the future, as we slowly move back to Tripoli, that there is already very strong demand from British companies for support for the massive opportunities that are on the horizon in Libya, so I think I will need additional help from UKTI⁶ and elsewhere, not only to provide a service to British companies but to deliver both economic benefit to the United Kingdom from export-led growth and the renewal of the oil and gas industry, the electricity industry, infrastructure and so forth that the Libyans will need to rebuild their country.

Lord Risby: We know that in a number of countries right across North Africa some of our fellow European countries are very well advanced in that matter. You were saying that there will be reconstruction and all sorts of opportunities in times of stability. Do you have any observations about what other countries are currently doing in this regard?

Mr Peter Millett: The Turks have had a very deep involvement in construction—in the electricity sector, electricity generating stations and in construction generally. The Italians obviously have a very close interest in the oil industry, as well as involvement, but British companies have been very successful there as well. It depends on the security situation. I go back to the link between economic regeneration and security. The two have to go hand in hand, and British companies, including British security companies, are well placed to be involved in that.

Lord Dubs: What about the Germans and the French?

⁵ Conflict, Security and Stabilisation Fund

⁶ UK Trade and Investment

Mr Peter Millett: There are certainly German and French companies; I am sure we are all going to be actively involved, both in Tripoli and elsewhere.

Q16 The Chairman: Do you have a hypothetical timescale within which you might move back to Tripoli? It obviously depends on security, and you cannot answer on that, but you must be planning for it in some way.

Mr Peter Millett: I am planning for me and members of my team. Every week, one or two of us will be in Tripoli. As the situation improves, as I hope and expect it will, we can spend a bit longer there, but I think we will be coming back to Tunis for the next few months. I am not putting a date on when we might roll up the flag and reopen.

Q17 Baroness Suttie: Could you say a little more about Russian involvement in Libya?

Mr Peter Millett: Within the P5, and in all the Security Council resolutions, the Russians were on board. They accepted the Government of National Accord and they were at the Rome conference, which underlined the point about the sole legitimate government of Libya. Members of the Presidency Council, and even General Haftar, have been in Moscow recently. They have declared that they will continue to respect the arms embargo, as all of us must and will. We have to wait and see, as the country opens up, quite what their interests are going to be.

There has also been an issue in that Russia has had some consular problems with some Russian sailors who were detained from a vessel. My Russian colleague has been concentrating very much more on what he does about his sailors while also trying to follow some of the political issues.

Q18 Lord Dubs: You mentioned your position in Tunis and your frequent visits to Tripoli and so on. Are any missions already back in Libya, or are they all outside the country?

Mr Peter Millett: The Serbian ambassador stayed. Two of his staff were kidnapped and killed, unfortunately. Some of the other African countries may have stayed. I do not have precise information on that. We are all slowly working on plans to go back, but I do not think that anybody has physically opened an embassy. As you say, we are all trying to judge where the security situation will go.

Q19 The Chairman: Thank you very much. That was very helpful. You have given us a picture of rather more unity, in the Government of National Accord, than we were looking at six months ago, with rather encouraging developments in the number of real operational executive governmental programmes going forward between the EU, ourselves and other countries with the Government of National Accord, and with the Presidency Council playing a positive part.

What still remains a little unclear for me is the extent of the tension with the head of the House of Representatives that you described. In your assessment, is that going to cause a sort of blockage on the legislative or legal aspects, or will the Government of National Accord push through various programmes none the less?

Mr Peter Millett: The Presidency Council has passed a number of decrees that enable it to establish some legal parameters. Ultimately, if it wants to pass legislation it will need the House of Representatives to operate as a legislative body. That does not look likely in the short term. Many of us are encouraging Prime Minister Serraj to work with the president of the House of Representatives. There are many members of the House of Representatives

who are very unhappy about the current situation. Whether they hold a vote in Tobruk or somewhere else, that is still something that we must encourage, because it would solve some of the problems and uncertainty. It would also enable the government to present a proper budget, which would enable more spending.

I should also point out that the Government of National Accord and the Libyan Political Agreement are supposed to have a shelf life of only one year, or a maximum of two years. In parallel, there is a process to draft a brand new constitution, which should then go to a referendum, with new elections in the space of two years. That constitution is almost finalised. They do not quite have the majority that they need in the constitutional drafting assembly to adopt it. There is a horizon for something that will be very different from the situation we are working on at the moment.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed for coming in. It was very helpful and very useful, and we wish you all success.

Mr Peter Millett: Thank you very much.