



Foreign &
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Office

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Secretary of State

27 March 2016

Crispin Blunt MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee
Committee Office
House of Commons
London
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Dear Crispin

Thank you for your letter of 15 March regarding your recent visit to Egypt and Tunisia in connection with your Committee's ongoing inquiry on Libya.

In your letter you assert that the UK, with allies, is preparing to deploy ground troops to Libya and that the Government of National Accord (GNA) intend to request UK airstrikes against Daesh in Libya.

You suggest that the Foreign Affairs Committee's discussions on your recent visit led you to these conclusions about the deployment of UK military force to Libya. I have taken the precaution of checking with our Embassies in Cairo and Tunis. They have confirmed that at no point did British diplomats brief you to this effect. Your assertions are wrong on a number of counts.

The UK continues to work with international partners on how best to support the new Libyan Government. This includes discussions about a Libyan International Assistance Mission (LIAM). We are also engaging directly with the Libyan authorities in Libya which involves diplomatic visits and providing military advisers. Any provision of support will be in response to a clear request made by the GNA. All planning has been focused on training Libyan security forces to provide their own security to the new Libyan government and Libyan people: not on airstrikes nor on directly providing security to the GNA. No decisions have been made about the future deployment of any British military forces for this purpose. It is therefore incorrect to suggest that the Defence Secretary will imminently agree any UK contribution.

Further to the Prime Minister's response to the question asked by Angus Robertson MP during Prime Minister's Questions on 16 March it is important to clarify that the convention enshrined in the Cabinet Manual relates to the Prime Minister coming to the House of Commons for debate on conflict deployments rather than routine deployments around the world. In a statement released on 16 March, the Defence Select Committee made clear it is satisfied that the UK is not going to deploy troops to support the new Libyan government imminently.

You are right to highlight recent developments in the formation of the GNA. It is now clear that Prime Minister Serraj has the support of the majority of both the House of Representatives and the Libyan Political Dialogue. This is an important milestone. I spoke with Prime Minister Serraj on 19 March. I welcomed his decision to convene the government and assured him of the UK's full support. The UK, along with our international partners, intends to work closely with the GNA as the only legitimate government in Libya, to address the difficult challenges Libya faces, including the fight against Daesh and people traffickers, as well as restoring vital public services for the Libyan people.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Philip Hammond', written in a cursive style.

THE RT HON PHILIP HAMMOND MP