



Foreign Affairs Committee

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From The Chair

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

16 December 2014

Dear Philip

UK involvement in US-led counter-terrorism operations

This Committee and its predecessors have consistently taken a close interest in the UK's involvement in US-led operations to detain and interrogate people thought to have planned or carried out terrorist activity. In 2005, we pressed the Government for a clear statement on whether or not the United Kingdom had received or acted upon information extracted under torture by a third country; and we have repeatedly sought information on whether or not the US had used UK territory or facilities (both within the British Isles and in UK Overseas Territories) during rendition operations.

The Executive Summary of the report by the US Senate Intelligence Committee on the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Programme is deeply disquieting. It lays grave charges at the door of the CIA. It finds that interrogations under the Programme were brutal and were worse than represented to policymakers and others; it finds that CIA claims for the Programme's effectiveness were inaccurate; and it concludes that the CIA avoided or impeded congressional oversight. We believe that there could be profound consequences for the public perception of UK foreign policy if it were to be established that the UK had enabled or been complicit in such practices, or if it had benefited from them directly.

Press reports earlier this year suggested that the Senate Committee had found evidence that the CIA had detained "high-value" suspects on Diego Garcia and that a 'black site' arrangement on the island had been made with the "full co-operation" of the UK Government. The redacted Summary published by the Committee does not, as far as we are aware, include such statements. Nonetheless, in the light of the publication of the Summary and potential implications for UK foreign policy, we seek answers to the following questions:

- Whether the US has held detainees on Diego Garcia or anywhere else in the UK, its Crown Dependencies or Overseas Territories (including territorial waters) since September 2001;
- Whether, apart from the two occasions notified to the House by the then Foreign Secretary in February 2008, the US has rendered detainees through the UK, its Crown Dependencies or its Overseas Territories at any time since 11 September 2001; and

- Whether the UK Government or any of its agencies were aware that “enhanced interrogation techniques”, as described in the US Senate Intelligence Committee’s report, were being employed by the US in the British Indian Ocean Territory or its territorial waters.

The Committee would welcome a reply by Friday 9 January. We would expect to publish both this letter and your reply.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Ottaway', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Sir Richard Ottaway MP
Chairman



Foreign &
Commonwealth
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Secretary of State

6 January 2015

The Rt Hon Sir Richard Ottaway MP
Chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee
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Dear Richard

Your letter of 16 December raises important issues regarding alleged UK involvement in US-led counter-terrorism operations. As you will be aware the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament is already looking into allegations of UK involvement in alleged rendition and mistreatment of detainees. They will report to Government and to Parliament on completion of this work. Nonetheless, allow me to briefly respond here to the questions that you raise.

The US have assured us that, aside from US service personnel confined in accordance with the Uniform Code of Military Justice, they have not held detainees on Diego Garcia (British Indian Ocean Territory) and that, aside from the two cases of rendition through Diego Garcia in 2002 confirmed to Parliament on 21 February 2008, there have been no cases of rendition through the UK, our Overseas Territories or the Crown Dependencies since 9/11.

In February 2008, former US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice underlined the firm US understanding that there will be no rendition through the UK, our Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies or airspace without first receiving our express permission.

We have worked closely with the US to ensure that the assurances they have given us are correct and that we are providing accurate information to Parliament. Our intelligence and counter-terrorism relationship with the US is vital to the national security of the United Kingdom. There must and will continue to be the strongest possible intelligence and counter-terrorism relationship between our two countries, consistent with UK law and our international obligations.

Given the US assurances that no US detainees have been held in the British Indian Ocean Territory or any of its territorial waters since 9/11, I am confident that no "enhanced interrogation techniques", as described in the Senate Intelligence Committee's report, have been employed by the US in this territory.

THE RT HON PHILIP HAMMOND MP

