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The Home Affairs Select Committee
The House of Commons
London
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By email

5th March 2019

Response to Home Affairs Select Committee:
Migrant Boats in the Channel

Dear Chair,

At the session last week, you asked for information about the number of boats carrying migrants attempting to cross the Channel.

I attach tables (broken down by year and month) at Annex A to this letter which set out the following information:

- **Table 1** provides a response to your question on the number of events involving small boat crossings and the point at which they were encountered.

- **Table 2** sets out number of migrants found in those incidents.

- **Table 3** sets out the agencies that have undertaken the interceptions, rescues and escorts that have taken place at sea.

These figures have been collated from a range of sources given the number of agencies involved and represent management information that is the subject of on-going assurance activity. We are committed to ensuring that this information is as accurate as possible and, as such, figures may change as we continue to review and reconcile data from the range of partner agencies.
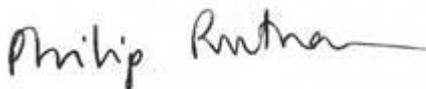
With that in mind, this letter represents the first time that my department has released detailed figures on the migrant crossings issue, and I am clear that all data published in this way should go through an assurance process in order to provide the Committee with confidence in the figures provided. In providing these figures, we have therefore double-checked our reconciliation of the data held across all the partner agencies involved in responding to small boat crossings, re-confirming the circumstances of each individual event and how those events should be classified, hence why I did not provide this information immediately following the Committee session on 27 February.

I must also emphasise that recording of data on some of these incidents is not straightforward. For example, we have encountered some instances where migrants have denied entering on a small boat, despite evidence to the contrary, in order to frustrate the efforts of Border Force and Immigration Enforcement to establish the circumstances of their entry. Other events have seen Border Force, RNLI and HM Coastguard all involved, rather than just a single agency – in these cases we have identified the lead as the agency that first intercepted.

The information presented needs therefore to be interpreted with those caveats in mind, but I hope that you find the information useful.

Since the session you have asked how many migrants claim to have familial ties in the UK on arrival/during the asylum or debriefing process, we will respond to this request in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Philip Rutnam
Permanent Secretary

Annex A: Breakdown of migrant crossings figures

Table 1: Number of events and the point at which they were encountered

Month	UK Arrivals without interception	Intercepted and brought to UK	Intercepted and returned to France	Aborted departure from France
Jan-18		1	1	
Feb-18				
Mar-18				
Apr-18				1
May-18			3	
Jun-18	1		1	1
Jul-18				
Aug-18	2	1	1	1
Sep-18	1	1	1	
Oct-18	2	2	1	
Nov-18	4	9	4	4
Dec-18	6	14	7	6
Total 2018	**16**	**28**	**19**	**13**
Jan-19	3	3		5
Feb-19	2	6		3
Total 2019	**5**	**9**	**0**	**8**
Overall Total	**21**	**37**	**19**	**21**

Total figure for 2018:   76

Total figure for 2019:   22

Overall Total: 98

Table 2: Number of people encountered, and the point at which they were encountered

Month	UK Arrivals without interception	Intercepted and brought to UK	Intercepted and returned to France	Aborted departure from France
Jan-18		7	6	
Feb-18				
Mar-18				
Apr-18				11
May-18			8	
Jun-18	4		3	10
Jul-18				
Aug-18	6	4	12	3
Sep-18	3	4	6	
Oct-18	12	11	4	
Nov-18	40	68	33	30
Dec-18	41	97	72	67
Total 2018	**106**	**191**	**144**	**121**
Jan-19	16	31		32
Feb-19	13	71		14
Total 2019	**29**	**102**	**0**	**46**
Overall Total	**135**	**293**	**144**	**167**

Total figure for 2018:   562

Total figure for 2019:   177

Overall Total: 739

Table 3: Agencies undertaking the interceptions, rescues and escorts that have taken place at sea

Month	Border Force[1]	French Law Enforcement	Coastguard and RNLI	Non-law enforcement[2]
Jan-18		1	1	
Feb-18				
Mar-18				
Apr-18				
May-18		3		
Jun-18		1		
Jul-18				
Aug-18		1	1	
Sep-18		1		1
Oct-18	2	1		
Nov-18	7	4	1	1
Dec-18	14	7		
Total 2018	**23**	**19**	**3**	**2**
Jan-19	3			
Feb-19	6			
Total 2019	**9**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Overall Total	**32**	**19**	**3**	**2**

1. HMS Mersey (3 January 2019 to 21 January 2019) and HMS Enterprise (21 January 2019 to 10 February 2019) operated in the English Channel under a MACA arrangement but were not the primary lead on an interception.

2. Non-law enforcement refers to commercial, merchant and other vessels intercepting events

Total figure for 2018:   47

Total figure for 2019:   9

Overall Total: 56

Notes and caveats:

- The tables show the number of events involving migrants attempting to cross the Channel. A single event can involve multiple boats, although this only occurred on one occasion within the events reported here, when two boats were involved.

- Only those events where one or more migrants attempting or succeeding in a Channel crossing by small boat, which were encountered by UK or French authorities, are included in the counts. Facilitators are excluded from the figures.

- The tables only include events where migrants were encountered; incidents reported to or by agencies where no migrants were encountered are not included.

- In the case of an aborted departure, an intervention by the French authorities is taken as evidence that there were reasonable grounds to suspect the people involved were intending to cross by small boat. All such events are included, even when no evidence of a boat is found.

- In the case of a UK landing, if the Police or Border Force have reported suspicion that the migrants did cross in a small boat these cases have been included, even where no boat was found.

- The data used is Management Information and subject to change.

Figures current to midnight February 28th 2019.