



Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Migration crisis, HC 427

Tuesday 8 September 2015

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Members present: Keith Vaz (Chair); Victoria Atkins, James Berry, Mr David Burrowes, Nusrat Ghani, Mr Ranil Jayawardena, Tim Loughton, Stuart C. McDonald, Keir Starmer, Anna Turley, Mr David Winnick

Questions 1 – 92

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Natacha Bouchart**, Mayor of Calais, **Philippe Mignonet**, Deputy Mayor of Calais, and **Emmanuel Agius**, Deputy Mayor of Calais, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Bonjour, Madam Mayor and Deputy Mayors. That is the limit to the French I will try today.

Thank you very much. We are most grateful to you for coming all the way from Calais to update us on the situation there. We are looking at developments since you last appeared before this Committee on 28 October 2014, and we have followed your comments in the media, of course.

Last month you said this in a very famous quote: “David Cameron is mocking us, he holds our territory in contempt and he is imposing his own laws on Calais. The President of the Republic must thump the table, once and for all, on behalf of all of us, we must make this into a diplomatic incident”. Following this the British Home Secretary, the French Interior Minister, Mr Cazeneuve, and what looked like a lot of people, descended on Calais and signed a new agreement to help your town, and your Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, said that Calais is now a cul-de-sac.

Since you appeared before the Committee a year ago, have things improved in Calais? Have they got worse? Are you happy with the agreement that has been reached between Britain and France?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): Thank you very much for this second invitation, ladies and gentlemen of the Committee. This is the only forum where elected representatives can meet to express their opinions, and this creates a very strong relationship between us. I am going to give you some practical information about what has happened since our last meeting here.

Chair: Please.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): A year ago I made some proposals to the French Government to improve the situation for the people of Calais and at the same time to have a humanitarian response to help the refugees there. So far all the humanitarian security initiatives that have been taken have been at the initiative of the Mayor of Calais. So far there have not been any initiatives from the French Government or the British Government to improve the situation. I have made available a day centre for migrants there so that they can have decent conditions.

Q2 Chair: Indeed. If I may stop you there: on the question of the day centre, the French Government has now agreed to build a refugee camp at the cost of €5 million, paid for by the EU for the refugees. Do you not feel that the building of this camp will be a magnet, so more people might come to Calais?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): I would say that for a year I have been alerting people that it is not a day centre that is going to attract people. It is the national and international situation that is causing the attraction; it is not the day centre.

Q3 Chair: Sorry, the translator and the Mayor need to speak up a little bit louder for the recordings in this room, I am afraid.

If we accept that, do you believe that the new €5 million centre might be a magnet for people, as some people have suggested?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): No. At the moment the refugees are there; they are in a sort of shanty town.

Q4 Chair: When we went to see this—Mr Loughton, Mr Winnick and I—there were 2,400 migrants in Calais. The last time we looked there were 5,000 migrants in Calais. So the numbers appear to be increasing, not decreasing. Do you agree with that?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): Yes, there are more people there but it is not the day centre that is creating it. When you look at any newspaper and the situation around the world, it is the increase of the problem generally.

Q5 Chair: The French Government has agreed to take 24,000 refugees as part of the agreement made with other EU countries. As we know, our Prime Minister has agreed to take 20,000. Not necessarily all going to Calais, but do you not feel that it would be most appropriate, given that these people are in Calais, that they should be allowed to claim asylum in France and therefore remain in France, thus easing the tension between the borders; between Britain and France?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): Today there are 3,500 migrants in Calais and they demonstrate every day outside the town hall. My deputies and I say to them every day that Calais is a cul-de-sac and that if they want to stay in France they must claim asylum here. Less than 10% want to claim asylum in France. All the others want to come to England

and we are going round and round in this circle. Even if we opened up 50,000 places in France, they would not claim asylum in France.

Q6 Chair: On the people who get to Calais—some of whom I have met and many of whom you as Mayor, along with your deputies, Mr Mignonet and Mr Agius, have met—is it still your view that they want to come to Britain because of the benefit system, because that is what you said to us last October?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): That contributes to it. We have also heard a lot that there is a lack of regulation about combating illegal employment practices in this country. The migrants say that when they get to England they can easily find work here, “We are not supervised; we are not controlled and we can find accommodation. We can have some kind of benefit every week”.

Q7 Chair: Finally from me—I am going to bring in colleagues—what more would you like the French and British Governments to do? British Ministers have said they have spent £18 million now on Calais, and the new centre has been built. What more would you like? If you were putting further measures to this Committee, what would your top three measures be?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): I understand and I accept that there have been a lot of new investments in security arrangements at the port and participation in the running costs of the Jules Ferry Centre, the day centre.

What I would like to ask the British Government to do is to put in some kind of measure to regulate the migratory flow, on the one hand in Calais and on the one hand in Kent, so that we are not taken hostage as Calais in this situation. We need to continue to assert and confirm that the United Kingdom is not an El Dorado for these migrants.

We need to take into account the population, the people of Calais, the townspeople and the surrounding areas. There are about 100,000 people living in our area and they are suffering day and night from these problems and the image from this international problem that is focused on Calais. So I ask for economic aid from the British Government so that we can develop our projects and avoid blocking the port and the tunnel and create better economic relationships between Calais and the United Kingdom.

Q8 Chair: What is the figure that you are looking for?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): I am looking for about €50 million from the national authorities and from European authorities.

Chair: Thank you very much. I am now going to bring in Mr Tim Loughton.

Q9 Tim Loughton: Madam Mayor, I think we all sympathise with the huge stresses and problems that your citizens and businesses are facing in Calais. We saw that when we visited. What I do not understand is why your argument, and particularly that of Deputy Agius, appears to be more with the British Government than with your own central French Government.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): Because the British Government imposes the British border control on the territory in Calais.

Q10 Tim Loughton: That was not imposed, was it? That was a joint agreement in Toulouse between the British and French Governments. It would not exist if the French Government did not agree to it.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): It was an agreement that dates to 2003, in Le Touquet, not in Toulouse. I am asking for it to be revised because when it was conceived, written and agreed in 2003 the situation was very different, so it does not correspond to the situation now.

Q11 Tim Loughton: Can I just make three further points? Do you not agree that if the British Border Force were not doing such a thorough and good job in Calais, it would not be 3,500 to 5,000 migrants trying to get through; it may be many times that, and that is because we have the Le Touquet Treaty? Without that your problem would be even worse.

May I just add two further points? Why are you still claiming this business about benefits? The figures—I had a very friendly conversation with Mr Mignonet on BBC television—show the benefit for an asylum seeker in the UK is £36.95; in France it is £56.82. The black market in France is estimated by the OECD as three times the level it is in the United Kingdom; that is, it is much easier to get illegal employment.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): It is not me who is speaking. I am reporting what the migrants are saying. They are all unanimous. They all say the same thing. It is the families who are in England who pass the message to the migrants in Calais. I am just a witness. It is the French police authorities who are doing the job of the Border Force in Calais; so the Border Force is not very present in Calais. You need to come and see.

Q12 Tim Loughton: We did, and the Border Force have detained or apprehended over 37,000 people by the end of July, and if they were not as efficient at doing that and we had a reputation for it being a weak point, many, many more people would be in Calais attempting to get through the tunnel.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): But you are operating the law on our territory. Operate the law in your territory; then you will be able to control your border better.

Q13 Tim Loughton: When our Border Force hand over people who have been caught having committed criminal damage to fences—people trying to get through the tunnel—you do not process them. Your police—you are not responsible for your police—take no identification; they are not held and detained, they are simply let go.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): That is true.

Tim Loughton: That would not happen in Dover.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): That is what I am saying; it would not happen in Dover.

Tim Loughton: That is not our fault.

Chair: Anyway, we must end this and bring in other colleagues.

Q14 Mr David Burrowes: I am confused about the pull for asylum seekers to this country. You mentioned El Dorado, benefits and employment, but I cannot understand. You said that less than 10% wanted to claim asylum in France, but let's look at one person. In June this Eritrean man died while trying to get on a train at Coquelles. No doubt from Eritrea, fleeing persecution, his life was at risk. I am trying to understand how that individual would put his life at risk to get over to this country to claim asylum rather than in France.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): I answered you. It is the welcome conditions available from the Government and the ease of life for immigrants in England. That is why they are ready to die to come and claim asylum here. People are dying. We have to bury the people who are dying in Calais. We have had nine people who have died in Calais, including a baby, since July. You need to come and have a look and see what is going on. You need to come and meet and listen and talk to the migrants in Calais. I am determined, and I am in good faith in terms of this situation. The messages that I have come to present to you, and I thank you for the opportunity to do it, are the messages that I am getting from the migrants themselves. The French Government, Mr Cazeneuve, the French Home Secretary, has put arrangements in place to give priority to people who claim asylum in Calais. Today there are 3,500 migrants. Could Mr Cameron take 3,500 migrants from Calais in the message that he gave to welcome the migrants, the refugees who are risking their lives?

Q15 Chair: But, Madam Mayor, would that not be the worst message? If he took the 3,500 another 3,500 would come.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): Does that mean that the people of Calais are going to be condemned to live in this situation forever?

Chair: That is a point we will explore further with other members.

Q16 Keir Starmer: Yesterday our Prime Minister indicated that we would take 20,000 refugees from Syria over five years, but he also indicated that he did not think it was right to take anybody who had already arrived in Europe. Focusing for the moment on refugees, what is your view of that attitude?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): I am revolted by that.¹ You understand the position we have been in for the last 15 years. I say that Mr Cameron despises, is contemptuous of, Calais, so if he does not take refugees from Calais, that is proof that he is contemptuous of the population in Calais.

¹ Note by witness: The Mayor of Calais has indicated that she said “révoltée” and not “dégoutée”. The transcript has been amended and now reads “revolted” and not “disgusted”.

The number of people that are trying to get through—there are 30 million passengers per year through the port and tunnel, so that is 50% of the population of England. So above and beyond the problem of migration we should have our population taken into consideration in these Committees.

Q17 Mr Ranil Jayawardena: Thank you for attending today and for your candour. I agree that there is a shared problem here. Do you not think that as part of regulating the migratory patterns, the key role for both our countries is to push the European Union and other member states to uphold their own international commitments?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): I agree, and I made a proposal last year for an overall European plan, so that there would be a refugee centre in each country to regulate migratory flows, with supporting arrangements in the countries of origin where these people are coming from. Within these arrangements France and Britain must find some kind of agreement, to step up measures but also to better regulate and better manage the problems of flows of migrants in this particular place, and it depends on your capacity to absorb more migrants.

Q18 Mr Ranil Jayawardena: Is it not also true that international commitments would say that any EU member state is a safe country and therefore any refugee entering any EU member state should be processed in the country in which they enter first?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): Yes.

Q19 Mr Ranil Jayawardena: Therefore the follow-on is that we need to ensure together, our two countries, that countries like Italy are fingerprinting migrants when they enter Italian shores, so that we can track where they entered and enforce international commitments, which would resolve problems for both our countries.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): We agree with that.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena: Thank you.

Q20 Victoria Atkins: Thank you, Madam Mayor. As the Mayor of Calais you must be very familiar with the Dublin Regulation. For those who do not know it is the regulation that allows that a person who goes through a European member state, when they go to the next member state, to be returned to the first member state. In other words France to England, back to France. To enable this to happen the proof has to be taken of entry to that first member state; in other words, France. Usually that is by way of fingerprints. You have talked to us about the demonstrations in front of the town hall in Calais, every day I think you said, and we know from your evidence, we can tell, that you have spent a great deal of time speaking to migrants to try to find out why they are there. Are those people being fingerprinted?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): Yes. They have been fingerprinted.

Q21 Victoria Atkins: So the people demonstrating outside the town hall and the people that you are talking to are all being fingerprinted?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): I understand where you are coming from, but it is not quite as simple as that. The migrants who arrive do not necessarily have identity. They have got over the border from Italy. They might not have been recorded there. The people who have been recorded have been recorded in detention centres and because of their nationality cannot be expelled. So when I go and see the migrants it is to tell them that they can claim asylum. I am a mayor in France, and in France a mayor does not have state authority. I am not a Minister. So I am suffering from this situation. What I am doing is I am defending my population, the people who voted for me.

Q22 Victoria Atkins: I have a couple more questions, if I may. The reason I asked very specifically about fingerprints is because if a person is fingerprinted, unless of course they have had some horrific injury where they have lost all their fingers, you are going to be able to identify them in Calais. If they are fingerprinted they are registered by the French authorities as having sought asylum in France and they can be moved around France.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): Yes. That is true and I confirm that they do not claim asylum in France.

Q23 Victoria Atkins: Just as you were disgusted by David Cameron's refusal to accept the migrants in Calais as part of the 20,000 people he talked about yesterday, presumably you are disgusted by the fact you are not getting help from your Government to help you process these claims in France.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): Yes, I am disgusted by both Governments, and I invite you personally to come and spend 15 days in Calais and see what it is like and what it would be like for your children if they had to live in this situation.

Chair: Thank you. We must move on. Mrs Atkins will ponder on that invitation.

Q24 James Berry: Madam Mayor, I would like to return to a point raised by Mr Loughton about the Le Touquet agreement. Clearly you do not agree with that agreement, but you have to deal with the law as it is, not with the law as you might like it to be. Would you agree on sober reflection that your comments in early August that you would open the border to the UK if our Prime Minister did not take action were neither helpful nor appropriate?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): If the British Government continues to hold the population of Calais in contempt, if we do not get some kind of economic return, if we cannot negotiate a centre in Calais and a centre in England to regulate these flows of people, it is not blackmail, it is a moral obligation to open the border.

Q25 James Berry: So you are maintaining the position that you will unilaterally open the border to the UK. Do you therefore disagree with your own Prime Minister that your comments and your views in that regard are irresponsible?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): The Prime Minister is not responsible for this situation in France either. We live this situation every day. The French Government is not capable of opening a refugee centre, and we cannot accept that the population of Calais is forever suffering from this situation. The French Government accepts that the migrants are in a shanty town. My Government is not responsible

Chair: Merci. Let us go to three final questions, first from Stuart McDonald, then Nusrat Ghani, then Anna Turley. Then we must close this session.

Q26 Stuart C. McDonald: Thank you, Madam Mayor. When you were speaking earlier about the pull factors that might motivate people to come to Britain I was very struck by the fact that you said this is what people in Calais have heard from families in England. Is it the case that some of these people, or many of these people, have family members themselves here, or friends here? Is that possibly one of the pull factors?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): Yes. We think there are lot of migrants who have family members or friends or people they know already in England.

Q27 Nusrat Ghani: Thank you, Madam Mayor. You talked about the situation that the refugees are living in and the impact that is having on the rest of the population in Calais. My question is this: if the EU is prepared to pay to relocate asylum applicants from Calais to other places in France, how are you encouraging this?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): It is a question of wait and see. At the moment it is just a matter of words, but I do not know what concrete measures are being taken to give effect to that.

Q28 Nusrat Ghani: So no funding has been available and no process has been put in place.

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): No.

Q29 Chair: Thank you. France signed the Schengen Agreement, of course, and it may well be that the problem is not with Britain but in fact with an agreement that allows freedom of movement throughout the EU. Many people have expressed concern that people arriving in Italy are able to just cross the border from Italy into France without being stopped. Do you think we need a fundamental look at the way in which Schengen operates?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): Yes, we completely need to re-look at the Schengen Agreement.

Q30 Chair: So you would like to stop the freedom of movement in those respects?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): We need to have arrangements today to look at this question, because the number of migrants has increased so much that the situation today is different.

Chair: That is very helpful.

Q31 Anna Turley: Thank you for coming to spend time with us today. We have talked a lot about the situation of refugees claiming asylum in the first country that they come to. This is why, obviously, Calais becomes the buffer for England. So what pressure are you putting on the French Government to have decent negotiations with other European countries to ensure that they have the systems in place to prevent the flow that ends up in a cul-de-sac?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): I am putting very strong pressure on my Government and I have been doing so for the last year, on Europe as well and also on the British Government. The people in control, the governing bodies, need to understand better what these migratory flows are and need to understand better about the wars in the countries of origin, because these wars are not going to stop overnight. We need better organisation and better means to organise the pathways of the migrants, so that we can regulate the migratory flows and not be constantly in the situation of having to welcome them in emergency situations that are uncontrolled and in conditions that are disturbing the everyday life of ordinary citizens. That is my proposal.

Q32 Chair: Madam Mayor, thank you for coming here today. We understand that you are speaking up on behalf of your citizens of Calais along with your Deputy Mayors, and we understand also that at the moment you, as individuals, are facing great challenges from the National Front in France who of course offer a different solution from the one that you have asked of us. For five weeks in the summer Calais dominated the front pages of our newspapers here in the United Kingdom. Now of course thousands, hundreds of thousands, of migrants have entered the EU, some of whom will be coming to Calais, and I can assure you this Committee will keep this situation under review and we will take up your generous offer inviting us to come to Calais in the near future.

One final question. You said you have lived with this problem for 15 years: how much longer do you think you will be having to live with it?

Natacha Bouchard (Translation): I would say that depends on the quality of the relationship and the determination of our Governments. The danger is that the population is less and less patient, so that is why I am counting on you to relieve us and help us with these 3,500 migrants we have in Calais, to rework the Le Touquet agreements and to create strong economic ties with our British allies.

Chair: Indeed. Thank you for coming.

Our next witnesses are the Minister, James Brokenshire and the head of the UK Border Force. You are very welcome to stay and listen to their evidence, because we will be putting some of your evidence to them. Thank you.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, Minister for Immigration, and Sir Charles Montgomery, Director General, Border Force, gave evidence.

Q33 Chair: Welcome, Minister. We know you have had a very tough afternoon in the Chamber with the Standing Order No. 24 debate that was granted earlier today, and no doubt you are going to be speaking in the debate tomorrow. You are the Minister for Immigration, so migration is going to be top of your agenda in any case, but we are very grateful to you for coming here despite your busy schedule. Sir Charles, welcome back.

There is a whole range of issues we want to talk about. I have divided them into two. The first is the Prime Minister's welcome statement yesterday about refugees. Then we will go on to Calais. I will try to complete this session by about 5.50 pm, slightly earlier than we anticipated, because you obviously know others have other issues to attend to. So we will be very brief, and we know that your answers will also be brief. We are all very big pros here. Let me start.

James Brokenshire: Chairman, it is good to be back, because I know we were discussing this just before the recess, and no doubt we will be able to pick up on some of the points that we were discussing then.

Q34 Chair: Indeed.

In the recess you visited the Hook of Holland—we will come on to that a little later—and you have been involved in the decision made by the Prime Minister yesterday. When was that decision made? We know the announcement was made to Parliament yesterday. When did Ministers make that decision?

James Brokenshire: We have obviously been looking at this issue of the support and contribution that we provide for some time—we obviously have had the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme in place—but I think that the events of the last week have put things into stark focus, such as the pressures that have been seen and the clear desire for the UK Government to do more. I think it was that reflection on the continuing situation that we saw last week—

Q35 Chair: Sure. When was the decision actually made?

James Brokenshire: The final decision was obviously made over the course of the weekend in terms of finalising the policy, and therefore the Prime Minister making his announcement in his statement yesterday.

Q36 Chair: We are not trying to flag ourselves as the people who discovered this crisis, but two years ago when members of this Committee went over to the Greek-Turkish border we did warn that there was a real crisis brewing. It has become worse because of the situation in Syria, clearly. The decision has now been made. It is 20,000 over the next five years. I know the Prime Minister was put under pressure and asked, "How many will we let in this year?" I know you are not going to give me the answer to this question. I don't know why I am asking it, but let me ask you, what is your anticipation? If you came back before us on 31

December—it would be new year’s eve, of course, but if you were here—how many would you want to have seen arrive this year?

James Brokenshire: I think this was a question that was posed to both the Prime Minister and also the Home Secretary in the House earlier today. We are reluctant to give numbers, but not in the sense of not wanting to act quickly. We do want to act with all due expedition, and I have had discussions this morning with the Local Government Association, the UNHCR, and I have spoken to the Scottish Government, to really see that we are acting with momentum. But we want to get this right, and therefore that may take time—

Chair: Of course. I understand that, but —

James Brokenshire: —so unfortunately I can’t give that sort of hard number on what we would expect.

Q37 Chair: No, I understand. I am going to press you on this because it is important and other members of the Committee, I am sure, will want to press you. You have had targets before, of course, that you have not met, namely the net migration target. We have had the regulator’s figures out over the summer. But you must have some kind of a target where you say to officials, “We don’t expect you to process the case”, or where you have said to your officials, “Look, by the end of this year we need to have had 500, 400 in”. Is there a target that you have set them or is there no target?

James Brokenshire: We have not set it in that way. The announcement yesterday clearly said that we are looking at 20,000 over the course of this Parliament. It is about those factors of the UNHCR, the people that they put forward pursuant to the scheme, and ensuring that we have the proper arrangements with local authorities and others to make sure that those who come here are welcomed and receive that support.

Q38 Chair: Of course. So there is no target for this year?

James Brokenshire: No, there is not.

Q39 Chair: No. But there is a target for the general election in five years’ time?

James Brokenshire: As we have said, the aim is to have up to 20,000 people through this scheme resettled into this country.

Q40 Chair: Sure. Now many in the Chamber—in particular the Scottish National Party, who should be given credit for the way in which they have pursued this issue—have pointed out that so far only 216 Syrian refugees have qualified under the Government’s relocation programme. You made a funny face in the Chamber when this was mentioned. You have made another funny face today. Is that figure wrong? Is it more than that?

James Brokenshire: No. The reason I was in any way frowning or making any comment was the fact that when we announced the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, we said

that that would relocate several hundred people over the course of three years. It is doing that and it continued to do that. Therefore some suggestions that have been made that, “Well, that number was highlighting that there were problems in the way that it was operating”. That is not the case. It has been delivering what we intended it to do, but what we are doing now is reflecting on the need and reflecting on the situation that we see. That is why we are now saying we need to scale up to the 20,000 over the course of this Parliament.

Q41 Chair: Sure. You are quite satisfied that the 216 who have come in represents the hundreds on the way to several hundred in three years?

James Brokenshire: Under the original terms of the VPR, the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, it is fulfilling the criteria that it was set for. But obviously that is aside from the 5,000 people that we have granted asylum to through the normal processes in country. There is always an emphasis on that number rather than the larger number for asylum in considering what we can achieve.

Q42 Chair: So for completeness, what are the numbers of Syrians that we have given asylum to?

James Brokenshire: The number is around 5,000 people since the crisis began. The numbers last year were around 1,200, and in terms of the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme obviously you have that number, and we report on that on a quarterly basis through our transparency and other reports.

Chair: Sure. Sir Charles, we will come to you on Calais, do not worry.

Sir Charles Montgomery: No, no.

Chair: We will come to you a little later on. David Winnick.

Q43 Mr David Winnick: The role of this Committee, like other Select Committees, is to probe what the Government is doing, obviously, but also how it has come to decisions, so I am going to ask you one or two questions. When the House broke up for the recess the indications were that we were not going to take any of the refugees, and the emphasis was on overseas aid and what was being done financially to help. The situation obviously changed last week. Would it be right to say that the photograph that so horrified people in this country, as elsewhere, of the Turkish policeman carrying the body of a young child who had drowned did influence the Government, because of public opinion?

James Brokenshire: We have been keeping this issue under close review, but anyone would be moved by that appalling image that we all saw in the newspapers and the television last week. It was horrific and heartbreaking, but it also indicated some of the challenges and pressures in the camps. That is why we are investing £100 million more into our programme to support Syrians who have been dislocated as a consequence of the ongoing conflict. Therefore, it is the combination of the review of what we have seen on people leaving camps, the support in the camps and the risks that are attached there, but obviously it is also about that sort of human tragedy that we all saw in the picture, which I

think is one example of something that has been going on for some time. But it is about that broader issue on the situation that we see in Syria and in the camps themselves.

Q44 Mr David Winnick: I hesitate to pursue this particular point, but I think it is important that people should understand how Governments make decisions. It is no disgrace if the Government came to the view that because of the pressure of public opinion, and seeing that photograph in the way in which you have described it—it was the same for myself—decided on the decision that was made yesterday, or announced by the Prime Minister yesterday, I should say, about the 20,000 during the course of this Parliament. That really would be the position, would it not—that that photograph did, in fact, lead to a situation where public opinion was telling the Government that some action must be taken?

James Brokenshire: The Prime Minister and others have said that we would keep this issue under review. That is what we have been doing. We have equally been clear, though—I suspect this will be something you will want to probe as well—that we simply do not see relocating people around Europe as the answer. Therefore it was about looking at these issues of the pressures in the camps, and indeed, looking at the tragic examples—and this was one that I think really underlined that. We have a sense of a moral obligation to act, and we are acting in that way with what I think is a very serious, a very meaningful response to what we are seeing in Syria and the surrounding countries and the people that are leaving as a consequence of that ongoing conflict.

Q45 Mr David Winnick: Since we cannot be in both places at the same time, rather unfortunately—given what was happening today downstairs in the Chamber, and the fact that we were in the Committee—as far as the 20,000 figure is concerned, over the period leading to the next election expected in 2020, on which you were obviously pressed in the Chamber, is that figure so fixed that there is no flexibility about it? Obviously, as the Opposition parties were saying today, there is a case for increasing the figure.

James Brokenshire: We believe that that figure is appropriate in the context of the support that we are providing through our aid and humanitarian programme in Syria—up to £1 billion and the specific support that that is giving literally to hundreds of thousands of people. Indeed, the provision of education is a key facet of some of the additional uplift in finance that is being provided. But it is about looking at what is deliverable, what is practically deliverable through the UNHCR, and also in terms of our communities. Given that this is intended to be focused on people with real need and vulnerability, the support and care that will be required means that it needs to be done effectively and properly, and that is why we judge that is the appropriate number over the course of this Parliament.

Chair: Thank you.

Q46 Mr David Winnick: One more question, if I may, Chair? In the course of EU negotiations on this subject, is there not a possibility that other countries—certainly Germany, for instance— will be pressing for an increased number coming in to the EU countries? That is a possibility, is it not, Minister?

James Brokenshire: We need to look at what the UNHCR themselves are saying, a point that was raised in the Chamber this afternoon by Mr Burrowes from this Committee before he came up to this session, on the levels that the UNHCR is looking at and saying are required from the camps to be resettled from the region through until the end of 2016. Therefore, I think our contribution is entirely consistent with that build that the UNHCR are providing. What I think a lot of European countries are looking at is relocation within the EU for people who have already arrived, whereas we argue that the greatest need is in those camps in the region. That is why we have framed our response in the way that we have.

Chair: Thank you. David Burrowes.

Q47 Mr David Burrowes: In fact, you have just answered the question I was going to ask. I just want to clarify that. The focus of the relocation programme has been and continues to be on vulnerable Syrian refugees, and the UNHCR estimates that 10% of the Syrian refugee population are particularly vulnerable, which amounts, they say, to 130,000 needing to be relocated by the end of 2016. The places made available to date are 104,410. So what the Minister is saying is that it is entirely in line with the 20,000 anticipated over the course of Parliament to be able to relocate a sufficient amount of that to come within that framework.

James Brokenshire: I spoke to the UNCHR earlier today, and obviously they very much welcomed the response that we have given. They do see it as a serious contribution, and it is therefore now getting very close to meeting the needs and the requirements that they have specified are required through until 2016. But obviously the UNHCR will be, I am sure, commenting. We are working very closely with them to fulfil this commitment and to move forward with them, to make sure that it is appropriately focused on those with the greatest need who cannot be supported in the region.

Q48 Mr David Burrowes: The other line that NGOs in particular have been looking at is humanitarian visas and there are a number of NGOs, not least those that are based in this country such as the Barnabas Fund Operation Safe Haven, that are looking to work with the Government to try to find ways that refugees can be accommodated and financed, not least by church communities and others, whether it is in this country or in other countries. Do you perceive whether there is any focus or scope in relation to that?

James Brokenshire: I know that organisations like Citizens UK have been looking at this issue for some time. I have met with them and discussed some of their initial thoughts. Clearly we want to work not simply with governmental organisations and structures such as local authorities but also with the charitable, voluntary and NGO sector, because I think that there is a great deal that they can contribute. I am sure that will be part of the solutions at a community level. We look forward to continuing with that engagement.

Q49 Nusrat Ghani: Minister, you mentioned working with local authorities and third-party agencies. I welcome the news that we will be supporting 20,000 refugees. Do you think it is enough just to have enough funding in place for one year with the local authorities, or can we really reassess our aid budget and put some of that money back home?

James Brokenshire: We are looking closely at the funding support. Obviously the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme has been operated on the basis of the one-year support and the fact that the overseas development aid budget will be to support that. That clearly provides a number of different elements of support to those who come here, but we are in discussions with the Local Government Association. When we are scaling this up and looking at, for example, larger numbers of children within that cohort, there may be further specific needs that we need to work with local authorities and with the LGA to understand those points. That is something that will be taken up by the new Committee that is being chaired by the Home Secretary and the Communities Secretary as well, to ensure that this is effective and delivers on the things that we needed to.

Q50 Nusrat Ghani: Two further very short questions. It is Aylan's body that has moved us so much over the weekend. At Aylan's funeral his father mentioned two things. One was that he did not feel welcome in Turkey because they are Syrian Kurds. Is there any way you could speak to your counterpart in Turkey to address that?

James Brokenshire: I think there are real issues in the camps where some people do not necessarily feel safe. Some of the tensions that you describe between different communities are recognised and are why that sense of vulnerability in the camps is very pertinent. Obviously we do, and will continue to, work with UNHCR on the arrangements in the camps and see that a sense of safety and protection is provided, but also a sense of hope.

I highlighted the issue of education. For example, of the additional £100 million of aid that is being committed, £20 million of that is for education in Lebanon this year in preparation for school enrolment. That will include education for more than 120,000 children inside Syria as well, providing teaching and learning materials, so it is about that sense of not just safety but also hope and the future, which is obviously what we really want to see for Syria.

Q51 James Berry: Minister, the European refugee crisis shows no sign of abating, while the twin evils of Daesh and Assad operate in Syria in particular. How will the Home Office use next week's Europe-wide meetings to secure a comprehensive response on the issues of the safety of children and vulnerable adults arriving in Europe? This is separate to the 20,000 refugees we are hosting.

James Brokenshire: You are right to highlight the Justice and Home Affairs meeting next week, the exceptional meeting that the Home Secretary and her counterparts from Germany and France have specifically requested. That is to inject momentum into a number of proposals, in particular what is described as the hot spots proposal. In other words, that those who are arriving in places like Italy and Greece are being properly screened and properly supported in those countries. Therefore the analysis needs to be undertaken and the screening work done to see those who are in need of humanitarian protection as against those who are coming here for reasons of betterment of life rather than as refugees fleeing conflict. That is a key part of that, and the sense of vulnerability within those groups is obviously redolent to it.

James Berry: Can I just have one supplementary?

Chair: If it is very quick, because we really must move on to Calais.

Q52 James Berry: Yes. You mentioned Citizens UK. My local authority, Kingston Council, offered to take 50 Syrian refugees, not last week after the photo that Mr Winnick referred to but last October. We have had a number of offers to my email account recently from constituents offering to host Syrian refugees. Is there anything the Home Office is going to do to support councils in enabling families to host refugees?

James Brokenshire: These offers of help are really important, both the support and help that individual councils will be providing and the offers, for example, of accommodation. It is precisely these issues that we have been and are discussing with the Local Government Association to make sure that we get the systems and processes right. I think it is really moving to see the individual offers that people are making. At this stage the most effective way to do that is through donations and volunteering to help local refugee support groups, but we are looking at ways people could sponsor refugees alongside those supported by the Government. It is complicated. It is that issue of the support that will be needed for a number of people with real vulnerability. There is the issue of fostering as well, for children.

Q53 Chair: Minister, what James Berry has said is that the offer came a year ago. Isn't what we need not a Committee chaired by the Home Secretary but a resettlement board, as we had, for example, for the Ugandan Asians that allowed them to come to Leicester and other centres? This cannot really be done in Whitehall. The point he is making is that it needs to be done by an organisation that matches the offer to the person. Are we not looking at creating a resettlement board? It sounds a bit jigsawish at the moment.

James Brokenshire: The Home Secretary will be making a statement to Parliament next week on the detail of—

Q54 Chair: Right. Which day?

James Brokenshire: I can't confirm for the Committee the day, but as you will appreciate, that is often not necessarily within the gift of individual Departments on the business of the House. But what I can say is that we are looking very carefully at the appropriate delivery mechanisms for this; using, for example, strategic migration partnerships that already exist to provide co-ordination.

Q55 Chair: So you may look at creating a resettlement board or some organisation?

James Brokenshire: We are looking at this Home Secretary and Communities Secretary-chaired board providing that direction across Government, but also at how we deliver this effectively. It is these details that we are analysing closely, and the Home Secretary will report back next week.

Q56 Mr Ranil Jayawardena: Minister, last time you were in front of our Committee I asked you about fingerprinting. It cuts across this issue and Calais. At this meeting with European Ministers, will the point again be put that we must have fingerprinting on entry to the European Union of anyone who does not have documents, so that we can track where they entered and, indeed, return them to their country of entry? I am sure you would agree with me that any country in the European Union is a safe country.

James Brokenshire: I know this was a point that you raised at the last session and equally on some of the questioning today. Absolutely. We do want to press countries at the external Schengen border to do that screening. We stand ready, through the European Asylum Support Office, to make contributions to that, and we have done more than virtually any other EU country in supporting that activity to see that the screening takes place, including fingerprinting as people arrive. It is important that is done, equally, on things like returns for those who are not refugees, who are not fleeing persecution and war. We need a strong returns agenda that sees that people who are not entitled to asylum are returned to their countries of origin.

Chair: Thank you. Stuart McDonald to ask a few questions, then we will move on to Calais.

Q57 Stuart C. McDonald: Thank you, Chairman. Just very briefly, obviously we are talking about EU relocation tomorrow, but I want to raise again, as I did earlier in the Chamber, the issue of family reunion. Organisations such as the Red Cross make a perfect case for looking again at these rules and perhaps expanding them. A 19-year-old Syrian girl in Turkey, for example, a recognised refugee, couldn't use those rules to come here with her father under family reunion. Isn't it about time we looked again at opening up, reviewing and expanding the family reunion rules?

James Brokenshire: I know you raised this point earlier, Mr McDonald, in the Chamber to the Home Secretary. We do have existing arrangements for family resettlement. Under the current family reunion provisions within the immigration rules it is possible for those who are granted asylum or humanitarian protection—so this would equally apply to the arrangements that we are talking about in relation to the 20,000—to come to the UK to be rejoined, provided that it is as part of a family unit from before the refugee fled their country. So there are rules and requirements that exist here. There are obviously some other arrangements that we have, so, for example, our mandate resettlement scheme is again about family reunion, so existing arrangements that are in place, and certainly at this stage we judge that that is appropriate.

Q58 Stuart C. McDonald: I am quite aware of the existing arrangements, but that example of a 19-year-old woman, for example, on her own in Turkey or Lebanon, does that not give you any concern? Does it not seem appropriate that the United Kingdom is the best place for her to be?

James Brokenshire: It comes down to the family unit issues and the existing immigration rules that I have highlighted. The arrangements are there for those who have been granted asylum or humanitarian protection, and therefore there is a mechanism, where there is—

Stuart C. McDonald: Not for a 19-year-old though, for example.

James Brokenshire: I am happy look at any specific example that you may have, Mr McDonald, either through this Committee or directly, but there are mechanisms that are in place through the existing immigration rules that we believe are appropriate. But I am happy to look at any individual example.

Q59 Chair: Very good. We have just taken evidence from Mayor Bouchart, who has given evidence to us twice. We have been to Calais. You have been to Calais. You have met her over there. As a gesture of good will, is there any way in which the Government can relocate some of the Syrians who have made it to Calais as part of this scheme? I understand fully why the Prime Minister has said we have to recruit directly from the camps, otherwise the message to the people traffickers is very clear: “Come into Europe and we will then be able to take you to the United Kingdom”. I understand that. But exceptionally there may be cases, for example in Calais, where we could take people. Is that completely off the table, or is there a possibility of looking at those exceptional cases?

James Brokenshire: I think our focus, as the Prime Minister has indicated, is resettlement in the camps directly from the region. What we are doing—this was part of the joint declaration that we signed with the French Government on 20 August—is to see that if people are in need of humanitarian protection, they have their asylum claims processed efficiently and effectively and speedily, and that they receive that help and assistance quickly. That is why we have committed the funding in the declaration to achieve that, and indeed to see that people are moved away from Calais to take the pressures off there, and to see that those claims are dealt with speedily. We judge that is the appropriate way to support the activity.

Q60 Chair: We will come on to that in a minute, but Sir Charles, you have been sitting patiently. Sir Charles, impress the Committee by giving us some good figures as to the numbers of people the Border Force intercepted before they arrived in the United Kingdom for last year.

Sir Charles Montgomery: At the end of the last year we had, as a collective effort from both of the juxtaposed controls, prevented 40,000 people from making the journey across to the United Kingdom. That in itself was a doubling of the previous year, and so far this year, between April and July we have already intercepted 30,000 attempts.

Chair: From January this year?

Sir Charles Montgomery: From April this year.

Q61 Chair: Are those figures up to the end of March?

Sir Charles Montgomery: Those are business-year.

Chair: Those are financial-year figures?

Sir Charles Montgomery: Those are financial business-year figures.

Q62 Chair: Last year was 40,000?

Sir Charles Montgomery: Last year was very nearly 40,000.

Q63 Chair: This year is a huge increase in numbers attempting to come and numbers that you are catching?

Sir Charles Montgomery: Correct.

Q64 Chair: Yes. But the trouble with these 30,000, as I have seen and the Committee has seen, is that most of them are just released by the French back into the community to try again. Do you know how many of them, in parliamentary parlance, are “retreads”, people who have tried and therefore come back again?

Sir Charles Montgomery: I can’t give you an accurate figure, simply because, to us, the doctrine, as you well know, is to make these interceptions and to return them to the police and the French authorities, and for the French authorities to do with them as is required by French law. We do see, as you will know, Chair, even on a daily basis, regular reattempts from any one individual, but I do not have a figure that can quantify that.

Q65 Chair: But that is a very large increase. In just three months you are going to meet the target for the whole of the year. Are there more people coming or are you getting better at your job?

Sir Charles Montgomery: A combination, Chair, if I may say so. Let me give credit also—it is not just Border Force. I do not want to leave the Committee with the impression that Border Force is standing as a single wall. We are operating very, very closely with the French authorities in both Coquelles and the port of Calais, and we have very good relationships with both Eurotunnel in Coquelles and the Chamber of Commerce in Calais. So between the commercial sector, the French authorities and ourselves we are, I believe, getting better at finding individuals who are attempting to cross the border. But the simple fact is, Chair, as you will well appreciate, that the numbers coming through from both the central Mediterranean basin and the eastern Mediterranean basin have been increasing quite markedly during the course of this year, and we saw this very significant surge over the summer months. I would also point out, if I may, that those numbers have reduced quite markedly as the security measures we have taken in the port of Calais, and increasingly in Coquelles, are taking effect. Perhaps we may come back to that later.

Q66 Chair: Indeed. We will come back to that, but on the numbers of people who you have arrested once they have arrived in the UK, we have seen the ones that are highlighted in the media, but I am sure there are many more. Maybe you can give us figures as to the number of lorry drivers who have been arrested bringing illegal migrants into the country? Do you have any figures on that?

Sir Charles Montgomery: I do not. I don’t have figures on that, Chair, and—

Q67 Chair: Would you be able to give the Committee those figures? They are quite important, aren't they?

Sir Charles Montgomery: It is a very difficult figure to quantify, Chair. I am not obfuscating here.

Chair: No.

Sir Charles Montgomery: It is a very difficult figure to quantify, not least because, of course, the evidence comes from the clandestines themselves, who by their clandestine nature wish to hide the means by which they enter the country. There is no question that there are a significant number of people who claim, once detained, that they arrived and were "lorry-dropped" who indeed were not. So providing a figure would be entirely speculative.

Q68 Chair: But finding people in a lorry and then arresting the lorry driver is pretty much a done deal.

Sir Charles Montgomery: It is, and we do that.

Q69 Chair: Do you have figures on those?

Sir Charles Montgomery: I don't with me, Chair. No, I don't.

Q70 Chair: But you can send us those?

Sir Charles Montgomery: Perhaps I might do so out of Committee.

Q71 Chair: I will tell you why I am asking you these questions. There were three cases of a Romanian lorry driver who was given unrestricted bail, who was arrested in Warsaw and then never answered to bail. He left the country. There were two Polish lorry drivers, one arrested in Harwich in June and the other arrested in August with 18 Vietnamese migrants in his lorry. Again, they were both given bail, but they do not appear to have answered to bail. Do you think the policy of arresting EU citizens then giving them bail is the right one given that they then disappear and they do not have to answer to bail? Do you recognise those cases?

Sir Charles Montgomery: I recognise both of those cases. One of them is very close to my own heart because it was indeed a Border Force detention in Harwich—the second of the incidents that you mentioned—where we conducted the find, the detention and then passed over these individuals to the police for subsequent investigation and potential prosecution.

Q72 Chair: So are you disappointed that these people, who you have done some much work on, suddenly disappeared, having gone through that whole process, presumably to offend again? Because they are going to come back, aren't they?

Sir Charles Montgomery: Again, I cannot speculate to what they may do in the future, but my job is very clear. There is a very routine process within the criminal justice system that the police will consider bail and what the terms of that bail may be. That is not, I am afraid, an issue for me to—

Q73 Chair: Would you like that to be changed in some way, given the fact that you are doing a job of work and you need to satisfy Ministers that people are coming in? For someone to come in with 18 Vietnamese migrants in his lorry and then to be suddenly given bail and then run away defeats the purpose of arresting him in the first place.

Sir Charles Montgomery: Perhaps I could just say, Chair, that in all these circumstances I naturally want people who have offended to be brought to justice.

Chair: But this has not happened in these cases?

Sir Charles Montgomery: It is not to say that it will not happen, but it has not happened so far.

James Brokenshire: I think it is fair to say, Mr Chairman, that as I understand it, investigations are ongoing in relation to this. Therefore it may be that charges are brought at an appropriate time, and that those who are responding to bail may come back to this county at that time on their bail conditions.

Chair: Sure, we know all that.

James Brokenshire: If not, then we have the option of using the European arrest warrants or the European investigation order to support those enquiries. But these are operational issues and, as you will appreciate, this is an operational matter for the police and those who are charged with the investigative response.

Chair: I know that is a Ministerial response, but I am not naming the person concerned. Of course this Committee is interested, when the director general responsible comes and says what a good job he is doing. But people are arrested and they should be brought to justice—not least to convince our visitors, who think we are not doing as much as we should be doing, that we are doing our job.

Q74 Tim Loughton: Sir Charles, you heard the mayor earlier criticise the Le Touquet Treaty arrangements, which are the juxtaposed border forces that you operate. I think if she had her way, which she cannot, she would get rid of that arrangement. What would be the implication if that were to happen, do you think, in terms of people first being attracted to Calais and, secondly, succeeding in getting through the tunnel?

Sir Charles Montgomery: The first thing is that I believe that this is, if I may say so, a hypothetical question, since both Governments are absolutely committed to keeping the Le Touquet Treaty in place. Both Governments are committed to doing it for very sound, good reasons. The first, of course, is security. There is a strategic interest, absolutely aligned between the UK and the French Governments, in maintaining the integrity of the border between France and the United Kingdom, not least to act as a very clear deterrent

for those who may wish to come to the northern French coast to make that journey. There is a very clear strategic alignment.

There is a very clear commercial business need to keep the positions in place, because it facilitates legitimate flow. It is important to make that point because, by doing these checks on departure from France, it means the flows over the United Kingdom border, the physical border, are much smoother. Exactly the same is the case on trade returning back to France as well. To dismantle the existing juxtaposed controls would require a very, very, very significant redesign and reinvestment in both the Port of Dover and the Port of Calais—huge investment there—and I do not believe that that is either appropriate or right.

Q75 Tim Loughton: Hypothetically, is it your view that if such an arrangement were to happen and the mayor got her way, that more illegals would make it to the UK?

Sir Charles Montgomery: Clearly our controls are more rigorous than they were in yesteryear, but the evidence from the days before we had juxtaposed controls is that that would increase the leakage across the United Kingdom border and act as a pull for more people coming through Europe to the northern French border.

Q76 Tim Loughton: That is exactly the answer I wanted, thank you. Clearly things appear to be improving a bit in terms of those scenes of up to 2,000 people storming the tunnel. What has caused that improvement and, again hypothetically, do we think that some of those people are looking elsewhere and we may just be displacing rather than solving the problem?

Sir Charles Montgomery: There are a number of things that have resulted in the very improved situation. First of all, going back to earlier this year, within two days of this problem manifesting, Ministers of both countries had reached an agreement that we would be investing in fencing at the Coquelles railhead. That proceeded very quickly, and the two kilometres of fencing along both of the platforms in Coquelles and the kilometre from the tunnel entrance has now been completed. So there is already very significantly improved physical security and infrastructure at Coquelles.

The Border Force response has increased; we have put more people on the ground there, of course, from our perspective. Perhaps even more significantly, there has been a massive investment from the French Government in security in the Coquelles area. It is now one of the most heavily policed sites in France, and that is at a time when France has quite significant security issues elsewhere around the country as well, which I think demonstrates the priority that the French Government is giving.

So the two biggest components here are the changes to infrastructure and the very significantly increased security presence there, on top of which we have improved the rigour of the search regimes between the French authorities, the Eurotunnel and ourselves and we have made changes in the command and control arrangements. For example, there is a Border Force officer within the Eurotunnel command and control centre alongside the Police aux Frontières who has the ability, with the Eurotunnel, to keep a very close watch over migrant flows and if necessary to simply say, “That train is not going to go”.

Chair: Thank you very much. I think we have all appreciated and noted the fact that Ministers have been fully focused and officials have done a great job in sealing off Calais. I will come to the consequences of that in a second, after we deal with a question from Victoria Atkins.

Q77 Victoria Atkins: It is a very quick query about disruption, because part of your job is disruption as well as investigation and prosecution. The lorries that the drivers drive over that contain the 20 Vietnamese immigrants or whatever, what happens to those lorries when you have arrested the driver?

Sir Charles Montgomery: They are seized.

Q78 Victoria Atkins: They are seized. So the message should go out to the criminal fraternity and to the hauliers who may be tempted to help the criminal fraternity that if they get stopped with illegal immigrants in the back of their lorry, they will lose their lorry.

Sir Charles Montgomery: They will be seized and, of course, there will then be a combination of either a criminal or a civil penalty imposed.

Q79 Chair: Are we improving the rate of collecting civil penalties, Minister? Following on from Victoria Atkins's very sensible and pertinent question, we are taking effective enforcement action, but as far as fines are concerned, we are not getting the fines off those who have committed these offences.

James Brokenshire: I am looking at the figures I have before me for 2014-15. There is an issue of correlation to previous years, but I am looking at the amount paid for that period and that is showing me £4 million, as contrasted with £2.2 million the previous year.

Q80 Chair: What is the £4 million a percentage of? Is it 50%?

James Brokenshire: The number of civil penalties in 2013-14 were 1,625. The number of civil penalties in 2014/2015 were 1,426. But the issue is that the money is normally what is the booked within that particular year, so there is always a slight lag in terms of how you reconcile the amount reflected in a particular year to whether it was payment of a penalty in that year or not. But certainly for 2014-15 we did see that £4 million being paid.

Chair: Yes. What is the percentage uncollected? That is what I asked, not reconciliation.

James Brokenshire: The imposed penalties were £6.6 million, the penalties paid were £4 million, contrasted with £4.2 million in the previous year and £2.2 million in the year previous. This issue of collection, sometimes where we have businesses that go out of business, is obviously something that I am concerned about. We need to ensure that we are getting the money in that is being levied. It is certainly something that shows in the figures that we are continuing to see, that we are getting the money in where we possibly can.

Q81 Chair: This is good news. I have not heard this before in all the evidence sessions, that lorries are seized. Is there some big lorry park that we have with all these lorries that have been seized?

Sir Charles Montgomery: There is not a single big lorry park, Chair, as you could imagine. There are a number of lorry parks where they are seized.

Q82 Chair: Do they just sit there for the rest of their lorry life or do we sell them?

Sir Charles Montgomery: They sit there until the case has been terminated. There is obviously a period of either going through the criminal justice system or appeals against a civilian, but thereafter they are disposed of.

Q83 Chair: Do we know how much was raised by the disposal of these lorries?

Sir Charles Montgomery: I do not.

Chair: Maybe you could write to us.

Sir Charles Montgomery: Perhaps I might come back.

Q84 James Berry: Sir Charles, you were generous in your compliments of the French police's operations in Coquelles. The Mayor of Calais was slightly less generous in her assessment of your operations in Calais. Can you tell us if you are facing any difficulties in discharging your obligations in Calais?

Sir Charles Montgomery: No. Yes, I can tell you, and the answer is no.

Q85 James Berry: So as far as you are concerned, you are doing everything you are meant to be doing. You are fulfilling your statutory obligations.

Sir Charles Montgomery: Absolutely, and indeed I know a number of members of the Committee I have visited Calais recently and will have seen the complete transformation that has taken place in the Port of Calais with British Government investment. My people are now working in top-class facilities with state-of-the-art detection equipment.

James Berry: Paid for the British Government?

Sir Charles Montgomery: Paid for by the British Government.

Q86 James Berry: It follows, therefore, that you do not accept the criticism levied by the Mayor of Calais.

Sir Charles Montgomery: I cannot honestly testify to the criticism because I did not hear it, but you asked me a straight question and I have given you a straight answer.

Q87 Chair: Manuel Valls, the Prime Minister of France, said that Calais is now a cul-de-sac. The trouble is that once you close off one port of exit, others open up. You and I spent the summer looking at the Hook of Holland and other ports north of Calais. I do not know whether the Border Force is involved in Ostend in the Hook, but there has been a 100% increase in the number of illegals apparently going from those smaller ports, because they are not as intensively watched as Calais is. Clearly Calais is much more of a success, because more people stay in Calais, and the mayor is clearly concerned that they are not leaving, they are just staying. What are we doing about this domino principle? What are doing to help the ports of northern Europe?

James Brokenshire: It is important to understand that these are different ports in terms of their volume and the character of the traffic that is passing from them to the UK. We are working very closely with the Belgian and the Dutch authorities. As you mentioned, I went out to Holland to visit the Hook of Holland to see the arrangements there for myself, as well as having a meeting with my counterpart there to discuss further joint working, and therefore from a political standpoint how that can translate into further operational aspects. So we are looking at how we share information and how we can work closely together. It is something we are vigilant on.

The numbers that you talk about, I think, are from a relatively small base. It is something that we are conscious of, but we have not seen a significant lift in numbers. It is something that I am watchful of and Border Force are watchful of, and it is why we have had the discussions with our opposite numbers and will continue to do so. I hope that that will lead to a future trilateral meeting between myself and the Dutch and the Belgians to re-cement that activity.

Q88 Chair: One thing that surprised me is that the in the whole of Holland there were only two trained dogs that would be able to deal with drugs and trafficking. Is there not a way that we can introduce the Dutch to Wagtail, which has been so successful in the way in which it has operated in Calais?

Sir Charles Montgomery: As the Minister indicated, Chair, I have had sessions with my opposite numbers in both Belgium and in Holland to tee up, in support of ministerial intent, more co-operation between the two countries at the operational level. There are a number of work strands underway. The most powerful and productive so far has been the intelligence exchange that has been instituted as a result of this initiative.

The Minister is right, those percentage increases are from a low base. We are now using much better intelligence and targeting to increase those numbers, which were probably always there. I am not suggesting, therefore, that there is quite the same rise that the figures might indicate. That is the first point.

The second point is that among the lines of operation with the Dutch and the Belgians, we are advising them on how they might change their legislation to enable more dog searching on a proactive basis, which they cannot do at the moment, and to provide advice on the operational deployment of dogs to help with those searches. So the specific line of enquiry you raised is being taken forward with both the Dutch and the Belgians.

Q89 Chair: Excellent. Finally, in the summer, you went to Europol, an organisation that this Committee has praised in the past for its work. We have heard over the weekend an offer made by people smugglers of kids going free. If two adults get on to a boat then the kids can go free as part of the smuggling arrangement. This is getting worse, is it not? I know the Government has announced that it is to put in a unit in Sicily, or contribute to a unit in Sicily, but the budget of Europol remains fixed to what it was before. Do you agree with me that it is a very important organisation in dealing with the different police authorities, and, therefore it should be given more help in doing its work?

James Brokenshire: You are right, I visited Europol and had a very productive meeting with Rob Wainwright, the head of Europol, to talk about what is known as JOT Mare. The terminology, effectively, means this joint operation to fuse intelligence from the Mediterranean and the end-to-end analysis of organised crime linked to the trafficking and smuggling of people, and indeed the movement of vessels as well. It is something on which we are feeding intelligence into Europol through our joint border intelligence unit. I do see the importance of Europol in fusing information that is being provided by police and border units from across the EU, to give us the best picture of the criminal activity that is transferring all the way across from the Mediterranean up through Europe to the UK and other northern European countries.

In terms of the funding and the support to Europol, clearly I think it is right for Europol itself to set out some proposals or set out a budget request if there are further activities that they judge are needed in respect of this important work. But it is also about other European countries putting intelligence into Europol. We are certainly doing that. We are seeing the benefit of that mutual exchange between Europol and ourselves, and we are also wanting to encourage other European partners to do the same so that collectively we have the best possible picture.

Q90 Chair: There were newspaper reports that the Home Secretary and you were looking at proposals that EU migrants could only enter the country if they had an offer of a job. Are they just newspaper reports, or is this proper thinking coming from the Home Office? Is this something you are pursuing?

James Brokenshire: The Home Secretary underlined the issue of EU migration and the issues of free movement and the pressures that that is building in terms of the numbers that we have seen. I think that has been a key part of the driver of the net migration statistics. Around 63,000, on the last figures, came to the UK in search of work rather than having an actual job here. It is the focus on how we deal with that through the benefit measures that you will be equally familiar with, but whether that is sufficient is what the Home Secretary highlighted in her newspaper article on thinking through what will be sufficient to deal with the pressures of EU migration as we move through on the renegotiations that are taking place.

Q91 Chair: Finally, how disappointed were you at the net migration figures that were reasserted by the Home Secretary when she came to us in July? A month later they had reached 200,000—I think that was the gap. Were you disappointed or were you expecting it?

James Brokenshire: I am hugely disappointed. When you look at those numbers the two things that stand out for me are these issues of the pressure of EU migration, which has blown us off course, and one other number—I know this is something that the Committee took time last year to look at—which was the net impact of student migration. On the ONS data that accounted for around 96,000 of the non-EU net migration number. Therefore it is right that we continue to bear down on abuse, and the removal of the sponsorship of now 900 colleges, which have either had their licences taken back or we have judged that they are inappropriate, shows how we have been routing out abuse. Equally, if students come to this country we must ensure that they leave at the end of their studies if they do not have graduate-level employment or other appropriate lawful routes to remain. We will continue to examine what more needs to be done around that, because I think that is clearly an important factor when looking at those figures.

Q92 Chair: Will you also write to us about the statement that you made to the House about English language testing—you announced that there was widespread fraud in a number of the providers—and tell us figures as to who many have finally been prosecuted?

James Brokenshire: Certainly, as you know, Mr Chairman, we update on a quarterly basis the figures on the removals, and we will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. There are ongoing investigations that I cannot comment on in detail in terms of criminal investigations that are being pursued. Obviously if there is further detail on that, then no doubt that will be reported as and when there are further updates to provide. We are continuing that work on removals and also pursuing those responsible for any criminal activity.

Chair: Thank you. Sir Charles, Minister, thank you very much for coming in on what is a very, very busy day. We are most grateful. That concludes the session.