



Select Committee on the European Union

External Affairs Sub-Committee

Uncorrected oral evidence: Brexit: Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions

Thursday 25 January 2018

10.55 am

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Members present: Baroness Verma (The Chairman); Baroness Armstrong of Hill Tops; Lord Dubs; Lord Horam; Baroness Manzoor; The Earl of Oxford and Asquith; Lord Risby; Lord Stirrup; Baroness Suttie.

Evidence Session No. 3

Heard in Public

Questions 26 - 39

Witness

I: General Sir Adrian Bradshaw, Former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR).

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Examination of witness

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw.

Q26 The Chairman: Good morning, General Sir Adrian Bradshaw. Welcome to this morning's evidence session. We are very pleased that you are joining us this morning. This is a public evidence session. It will be transcribed and we will give you the opportunity to correct any errors afterwards.

You will have seen the questions that will be asked, but I cannot guarantee that colleagues will stick to them; they might fire one or two other questions at you that you might not have expected. Perhaps you would like to start by making a few opening remarks before we go into questions.

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Thank you, Lord Chairman. I am very honoured to be called to give evidence to this Committee. I retired from the regular service in the summer. Before that, my last job for the last three years was as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe. As part of that role, I was the Operational Commander of Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was the only EU operation facilitated by NATO under the Berlin Plus arrangements. It gave me an opportunity to see both the NATO and European structures in action and to see a little of how they interact. I hope I will be able to give you some useful evidence.

Q27 Lord Stirrup: Good morning. It is very nice to see you. Could you go into that in a little more detail and to explain to the Committee precisely what your role in your last appointment entailed, how it fitted in with the EU, how the connections worked with NATO, the mechanics of it all and the position that you, and therefore the UK through you, held in relation to EU decision-making and execution in relation to the Common Security and Defence Policy?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Thank you, Air Marshal. My role with respect to the EU was as the strategic co-ordinator between NATO and the EU, but specifically I had a command role as the Operational Commander of Operation Althea. As I just mentioned, it is the only EU operation that is facilitated by NATO through the Berlin Plus arrangements. These arrangements allow the EU to ask for NATO to carry out operational command and utilise NATO staff, NATO communications and NATO support for operations, thus avoiding the need to duplicate structures within the EU that already exist and that are already resourced by most of the nations that are members of the EU in NATO.

As the Operational Commander, I gave operational direction to the theatre commander, an Austrian major general working in Sarajevo commanding the force, and I took political strategic direction from the EU through the Political and Security Committee, to which I reported on this operation, which delivered that direction on behalf of the EU Council.

Lord Stirrup: You have described the typical hierarchical chain of command, but what was your locus in the strategic thinking and the



formulation of policy? In other words, how did the two-way flow of thinking and information work?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: The policy direction for the operation came out of the deliberations of the Political and Security Committee. The ambassadors of all the EU nations sat on that committee. I would report to them on how the operation was going, and how it was meeting its mandate and its objectives, and I would give military advice on the direction that it might give. Very often, my feedback and the feedback from the theatre was instrumental in tempering the direction of travel of policy at the higher level, particularly with respect to the desire of certain nations to see the operation scaled down and to see the removal of the executive mandate, which is the mandate under the general framework for peace, the Dayton accord, which gives us a right to do things in Bosnia-Herzegovina without asking the Government for permission.

Nations quite often suggested to the Political and Security Committee that it was time for that mandate to be removed. Our advice from theatre, and my advice specifically, was that it was not time to do that because of the situation on the ground. Of course, members of the committee took account of that in their deliberations and decisions, so the role has considerable influence on policy.

Q28 **Lord Horam:** You had your role as the Operational Commander of Althea, General. What input did the UK have, as such?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: The input of the UK was one-removed through me, because I was a NATO officer representing NATO, but I am, of course, also from the UK, so I am aware of UK policy. To the extent that I believed that UK policy was in the interests of NATO and the EU, I would be a conduit for that policy, although, of course, if the policy was not, in my view, in the interests of those two organisations, I would seek to defer. I never had to do so. There is an indirect influence through the position of the DSACEUR, which I have no doubt we will come on to.

There were also UK officers involved in the staffing of the operation, though a very modest number. There are four staff in theatre out of a force of 600, but they tend to be good-quality people who have an influence. Absolutely key is one of the staff officers in Naples, through which the NATO chain of command goes, who was instrumental in defining the operational path of the force and keeping it on the right track. Through high-quality staff officers with the right sort of experience, having commanded UK forces in a variety of circumstances, the UK tends to exert influence beyond the numbers.

Lord Horam: So it was quite a British-led operation in terms of personnel.

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: I would not say that, but we had people who had a profound influence on the way it progressed.

Lord Horam: Where did the troops come from?



General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: They did not come from the UK. As I say, our in-theatre manning was four out of 600. The majority of the troops came from Austria, Turkey and Hungary, and a variety of other nations.

Lord Horam: Did that work satisfactorily?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: It worked entirely satisfactorily.

Q29 **Lord Horam:** Why do some countries want to pare down the remit?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: That is a very interesting question. On the surface, the reasons that are most obviously stated are that this operation has been going on for a couple of decades now, since the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The country appears to be relatively stable and people question whether it is necessary to continue to have armed forces with an executive mandate in the country. I have spent a lot of time in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I see the situation on the ground and I would say that, until there are changes at the political level, the dangers from inter-ethnic tension remain very real. In fact, they have emerged at times recently, in possibly dangerous ways, but have not exploded into actual ethnic conflict. As I say, there is the view that it is time for a change, because we have been doing it for long enough. I would argue that the equilibrium that exists is a satisfactory equilibrium and it is necessary until there is political change.

The other factor that comes in presumably is resourcing from the EU nations. It is about €10 million for a year, and clearly in tight economic times people are looking to cut costs, particularly when certain nations have heavy commitments elsewhere. I would argue that, for what is delivered by a comparatively modest force, it is worth the money at the moment.

The danger is that until we have political change in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is going to be extremely difficult, the nation is in effect locked into a post-Dayton stasis at the political level, whereby members representing the three factions in the presidency are required to make decisions collectively. Decision-making is very difficult, so the politics do not work particularly well.

Lord Horam: It sounds a bit like Northern Ireland.

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: I hesitate to compare it with anywhere else. The difficulty is that the population sees its political leaders resort to ethnic matters when they are put under pressure and constantly partake in the political process in a partial manner. It does not deliver what the population needs or expects. This exploded into some violent activity in February 2014. It was interesting for us to observe that this was an explosion of frustration among the population across all ethnic groups. It was frustration with the political class and its inability to deliver economic improvement and to improve the way of life.



This was quickly taken into the ethnic domain by the politicians, because that is where they go when they are under pressure, but the central cause was a lack of effective governance. As I say, that is because of the political stasis that is locked in around Dayton. My view is that if you are going to get beyond that, some sort of constitutional change might be necessary. That would be extremely difficult, so the equilibrium may be preferable. The implication is that you will require a continued modest security presence on the ground.

That security presence does a number of things. It acts as a deterrent to those who would resort to violence, because they know that we are on the spot and can do something about it, and it boosts the confidence of the population to know that the international community is sufficiently interested in continued security to commit our troops to that country. Everybody knows that although the force is relatively modest on the ground it can call on reinforcements very rapidly.

I am happy to say that the UK is one of the nations that, although it does not contribute a lot on the ground, contributes fairly constantly to the reinforcements. People expect the UK to be one of the nations that will react rapidly to a deterioration in the security situation and do something about it. We have had a company on standby at short notice for quite a number of years. Right now, we have a high-readiness standby battalion committed to the Balkans. It is double-hatted for NATO in Kosovo, but it also could do duty in Bosnia-Herzegovina. That reassurance for people is very important.

Q30 Baroness Manzoor: What are your objectives for Althea? Could these objectives be achieved by other means, particularly given that you are a NATO officer, as you said, but they are EU-led missions?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: The mandate is not a peace support mandate but a peace enforcement mandate under Chapter VII of the UN charter. UNSCR 2183 is the authority for it. The objectives are to contribute capacity-building and training of the armed forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. That contribution has been extremely important in building the armed forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina certainly into one of the really national institutions in the country, and possibly the only one.

Although the ethnic contributions are evident, when they operate collectively, either contributing to overseas peace support operations or to resolving civil emergencies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they act as the armed forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. There is a real sense of identity. Dare I say it but there is even a pride in nation among the people who are part of it. That is hugely important in a country that in most other respects seems to revert to these ethnic divisions. The capacity-building and training that Operation Althea contributes to has been really important in building that sense of national identity for the armed forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Another thing that we do as part of the peace enforcement mandate—it is one of the operational streams—is maintaining the safe and secure



environment through monitoring the situation on the ground. We have a series of so-called liaison observation teams out and about in Bosnia-Herzegovina, feeding back information on the local situation. If we had information that tensions were starting to build up and might explode into ethnic tension, we could deploy part of the force.

In other respects, we contribute to the safe and secure environment by supporting and pushing progress on things like mine clearance, the reduction in stocks of excess ammunition, the bringing together of ammunition stockpiles from dispersed storage sites that are not well secured into better, more secure, safer storage sites, and getting rid of excess weapons. In a number of ways we are contributing to the safe and secure environment.

The third stated objective is to contribute to the EU comprehensive approach in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We have an integrated approach between our military, economic, political, developmental and other strategies. It is the sort of thing that we need to achieve in all sorts of other respects in the defence field. Actually, it is achieved in Bosnia-Herzegovina through the EU.

The answer to the second part of the question on whether it could be achieved in another way is yes, it could. NATO could deliver what the EU does by a reversion to NATO. Of course, it started with NATO in the first place and was handed over in 2004 to an EU force. We could revert. There would be a certain logic to that, since NATO provides the forces in Kosovo, just over the border. There would be scope for some synergy between them, such as drawing on higher-level resources and reserves in particular.

The question is how you integrate all the strategic lines of development in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This points to a deeper problem, which affects us in so many other ways, which in the field of defence is the absolute requirement for us to be able to integrate strategic effects from the different levers of national capability and collective capability. We have been very poor at that in campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am sorry; I am going away a little from the central theme.

That requires people to be able to integrate military strategy with political, economic, diplomatic, developmental and informational strategies. Members of this Committee might be rather surprised to hear that, despite all the talk about successful progress in NATO EU co-operation, it is still not possible to have EU staffers on one side of a table and NATO staffers on the other side of the table at a formal minuted meeting to integrate strategy.

In my view, that is a fundamental requirement if we are going to achieve proper grand strategy with respect to deterrence of Russia and dealing with the problem of Islamist extremism. It applies equally well in this narrower context in Bosnia-Herzegovina. If we were to revert to NATO



leadership on the military side, you would need that integration. You need the processes to get people together to integrate strategy.

- Q31 The Earl of Oxford and Asquith:** Thank you very much for coming in, General Bradshaw. You probably answered most of what I wanted to ask, particularly about the formula of the Berlin Plus arrangements, in what you said to Lord Stirrup and Lord Horam.

From your experience, carrying on from what you have been saying here, do you see that interaction between NATO and the EU as susceptible to forward-planning, if you see what I mean? You have described a stasis in the political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Is it not susceptible to forward-planning—that kind of Berlin Plus formula—without a very clear idea of the political situation that has to be addressed? Could this formula be used, for example, in the Sahel or north Africa, or is it possible to deploy this kind of interaction only when the political situation on the ground is reasonably obvious?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: I understand your question to be about potential broader use of the Berlin Plus mandate. Berlin Plus has huge potential. That is why, nationally, we were strongly supportive of this as a mechanism. The problem is that formal integration of EU and NATO efforts is currently prevented by the veto of a couple of nations, one of which is a member of NATO but not of the EU, and one of which is a member of the EU and not of NATO. That is not well understood and it is the reason for the inability to get staffs together formally.

This relates to certain local difficulties in the Mediterranean region that mean that national interests of two or three nations affect the ability for sensible collective activity by 30-odd nations. I would question whether that does not deserve closer attention at the political and diplomatic levels. One can see lines of persuasion that could be applied to encourage nations to allow co-operation on things that are manifestly in their own interests as well as everybody else's. Allowing that situation to continue is rather unacceptable.

That is why Berlin Plus is not allowed to be applied to future situations. Berlin Plus is eminently suitable for existing EU operations and future ones. The mechanism works extremely well. The EU decides on the political-level and strategic-level requirements. They make those known, and NATO staffs and NATO command structures are more than capable of turning that into operational activity on the ground. That is what we are in business for.

- Q32 Lord Stirrup:** If the EU wanted to do Operation Althea without using Berlin Plus, what would it have to do? If it is not using NATO assets, what would it need to do instead? Could you give the Committee some idea of the scale of that?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: It would have to set up an operational-level commander and staff to carry out the function that I used to carry out as the Operational Commander through NATO staffs. There would be some duplication of effort. It would have to mirror what it



has for other EU operations that are not done through Berlin Plus. The bill is not huge, but NATO exists to be able to deliver those sorts of effects. There is a logic in NATO doing these things on behalf of the EU, because synergy is deliverable between that and other aspects of NATO's business. When we come to big defence and deterrence, NATO is Europe's deliverer.

Lord Stirrup: Just to be clear, when we are talking about setting up this parallel structure, it is not about a commander and a few staff officers, is it? You would have to duplicate secure communications, logistic lines of support and all the rest of it.

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Correct.

Lord Stirrup: I just want to be clear about the effort that would be involved to support even an important but relatively modest operation like Althea without using NATO assets.

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: That is correct. If you look at what the EU have for their other operations, that is what would have to be replicated. The fact is that Bosnia-Herzegovina, in its current state, with a very modest force, does not draw too heavily on the logistical assets of NATO. If things exploded in Bosnia-Herzegovina and we had to resort to putting in a sizeable force to stabilise a situation that was going out of control, it is NATO's ability to be able to respond that would be important.

If it were an EU-led operation I suspect that very quickly, if things got out of hand, NATO assets would come into play. The nations who contribute to the EU effort are putting significant resources into NATO and would wish those resources to be used. I think NATO, bearing in mind the crossover of the vast majority of nations, would be supportive of the need to do something about an emerging problem in the heart of Europe.

Q33 **The Chairman:** How effective is the co-operation between EUFOR Althea and other missions and actors, such as the OSCE mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: The co-operation is really good, for instance in de-mining. EUFOR is not actually doing de-mining—it is being done by other people—but we push the agenda forward. We have influence; we influence decisions at the political level to allow that sort of activity to happen. The credibility and position at the political level of the commander of EUFOR in theatre, and of the DSACEUR as the Operational Commander, help enormously.

There is also very close integration and co-operation on the disposal of excess weapons and ammunition. Indeed, EUFOR is about to carry out another round of remapping mined areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina and updating the hazard maps. That will be for the benefit of all the players in the region as well as the civilian population. The close co-operation is facilitated by the close proximity of all these actors and the fact that the Commander in theatre spends a lot of his time going round talking to



these people and getting together for a collective effort and collective persuasion at the political level.

Q34 Lord Risby: You explained very well the interface with the EU and NATO, as well as Berlin Plus and your role advising ambassadors and indicating to them how to marry up the situation, based upon your experience on the ground. You also mentioned that different countries are involved, including Turkey, which of course is not a member of the EU but a member of NATO. I understand that countries outside the geographic area are involved. Is Chile also involved? If so, what would be the basis for a non-EU country to come in and be involved? What would the contribution be?

Secondly, I am very interested to know whether, in determining the level of participation of any of the countries in this, it is primarily a NATO decision that Turkey will provide X or Y or whatever? I am curious to know how it actually works.

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: No, it is an EU decision as to who contributes to the force. Any nation that wishes to contribute can bid through the EU to contribute to the force. Chile, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Switzerland and Turkey are non-EU members that contribute.

Lord Risby: How would the invitation work to a non-EU country, for example?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: I am not actually aware of how Chile became involved, for example. If a nation were keen to gain experience in a peace enforcement operation, for example, and they had a capability that would be very useful, then, either informally or formally, they might make an approach to the EU. Of course, the ability of that nation to work within a higher NATO command structure is important. It would also have to be a nation with which NATO would be prepared to work. That throws things pretty wide, bearing in mind the sort of nations that we have worked with all over the world in multiple theatres. There were 50 different nations operating in a NATO operation in Afghanistan, for example.

Lord Risby: You are telling us that there is no inhibition, which is the key point.

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: If the forces are of the right capability and are delivering something that is required by Althea, one would imagine that the EU would welcome that contribution. Indeed, presumably if the UK wishes to continue to contribute post Brexit, we will do as these other nations do and contribute from outside the EU.

Lord Risby: That is exactly the point.

Q35 Baroness Suttie: You have just touched on the question I was going to ask. It is whether you would recommend that the UK continues to



participate in Operation Althea after Brexit. If so, at what level of participation or contribution?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: The answer is pretty simple: if it remains in our defence and security interests to contribute, we should of course continue to contribute. It self-evidently remains in our interests, but at what level? We should continue to contribute at a similar level to today. There is no suggestion right now that the DSACEUR will no longer be the Operational Commander. That may be a subject for debate in the future, but there is no intrinsic reason why he should not continue to do so as a Brit, because he is a NATO officer in that post. There are alternatives, if the EU took a hard view about that. We should continue to contribute the key staff that we do, because by that means we have influence on the force, which is extremely beneficial and keeps it on track.

We should continue to contribute to the reserve forces, because they are the forces that act if things get out of hand. While there is an equilibrium in Bosnia-Herzegovina, we may be content not to have quite such an input. If things started unwinding, we would want to be there very quickly and having influence on how the thing was resolved. It would be very important to act robustly and quickly and to do the right things if the thing is not to unwind and expand into a wider conflict.

Q36 **Baroness Manzoor:** I think you have already answered my question in answer to a previous question. It was about the role that you have held as DSACEUR. In fact, you have just said that there is no reason why this role cannot continue once we have left the EU, because obviously the DSACEUR is a NATO officer.

If I may, I will ask a different question, unless you want to expand on that answer a bit more. Once we leave the EU and the transitional arrangements, will there be any great impact both on this role and indeed on our relationship with the EU in moving forward?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Provided that our policy for Britain outside the EU continues to be one of a readiness to continue to contribute to the defence and security interests of Europe, of which we are a part, whether we are part of the EU or not I see no particular problems in the transition process. We should make it very clear from the beginning that we intend to contribute to EU operations in the future, despite the fact that we are not a member. We should continue to contribute, as I have said, to Althea. We should be ready to contribute forces to future operations if they are quite obviously in our interests and in the collective interests of Europe.

Clearly, we will not have as much influence on the strategic direction for those forces if we are no longer a member of the EU. That is a regrettable but obvious consequence of leaving. Nevertheless, if we are content that the objectives are correct, we should be ready to contribute. During the transition period we should continue to contribute, with a policy that is as it is today, as far as that is possible.



Q37 Lord Stirrup: I just wanted to follow up on a couple of questions, if I may. First, will you speculate a little on the DSACEUR post? Of course, it will be informed speculation. Our French colleagues, who are very important to us in a defence relationship, have for a long time aspired to fill that particular post—at least on a rotational basis, if nothing else. You have said that the UK leaving the EU should have no significant bearing on whether a Brit can fill the DSACEUR post because they are acting as a NATO officer. Within NATO and the NATO staffs-to-posts allocation, will a significant argument be advanced that this should be an officer from a country that is a member of the EU as well as of NATO?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Actually, I said that I did not think that leaving the EU need affect the position of the DSACEUR as the Commander of Operation Althea—as the Commander of an EU operation. I absolutely do not think that us leaving the EU should affect our position in holding the DSACEUR post itself, quite apart from the EU responsibilities. If you look at the spread, the command group is five officers, three four-stars and two three-stars. There is an American commander, who is the primus inter pares. There is a Brit deputy. There is a German chief of staff. There is a French vice chief of staff, a post they were given when they came back on board the military structure, having of course left under de Gaulle. There is a civilian political representative, who is an American three-star diplomat.

That gives the key contributors to NATO a seat in that command group. If we were to relinquish a seat on that command group, our influence in NATO would be seriously diminished. That command group commands the forces, but it also draws up the military strategy for NATO, which is then approved at the political level in Brussels. Of course, we would retain our considerable influence through the UK mission in Brussels, which happens to be a high-quality mission that delivers really first-class think-piece papers and ideas and is a leading light in taking the NATO policy forward. We would still have that influence, but we would lose the absolutely key influence on how the plans are formulated for the execution of operations by our forces and by our contribution.

We should continue to contribute to the degree that we do as a member of the P5 and as a nation with our responsibilities. Provided that we continue to contribute as we do now, it would be incredibly irresponsible nationally to relinquish that influence on how they are employed. There is the fundamental principle of no taxation without representation.

Lord Stirrup: That influence, of course, would not just apply to specific NATO operations but would apply if, for example, reinforcements were activated for Operation Althea in the Balkans.

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Yes, absolutely. There might well be a discussion as to whether our commitment to NATO and contributions to NATO have diminished, to the extent that we relinquish by right the deputy command. We should be aspiring to sustain a position as the second contributor of forces and operational input. As I said, that goes



with our responsibility as a nation that is a member of the P5, an independent nuclear-weapons state and a big player in world affairs.

Q38 Lord Stirrup: Could I just follow up on an answer you gave to an earlier question about Althea? I think you said that some nations were anxious to scale down commitment because of the cost, which I think you said was €10 million a year.

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: It is around that.

Lord Stirrup: Was that the total cost or the common cost?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: That is the common cost.

Lord Stirrup: The UK is contributing 18%, is it, of this common cost?¹ I think that was the evidence that we heard. The UK's financial contribution is presumably quite important to other members, as well as the provision of a reserve and the four officers you mentioned.

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Yes, it is a significant contribution.

Q39 The Chairman: Listening to what you have just said, would you be very worried if the Government decided to decide not to contribute? Would that be a major setback for us in influence and all the other benefits that are added to our presence in EUFOR Althea?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: The main cost to us nationally is the potential cost of not contributing to something that is important to the future stability of Europe. I am happy to say that I do not think it is particularly likely, but it is perfectly possible that things will blow up again in Bosnia-Herzegovina. If they did, our involvement in the operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina would be a significant factor in getting a grip on that, because I happen to think that we are rather good at doing those sorts of things.

Some of the nations that contribute forces are less experienced in dealing with demanding stabilisation operations at the operational command level, despite the fact that they are very willing and professional contributors. We have something particular to bring to that operation because of our wide experience. If we chose not to be a part of it, the risk is that our national interest would suffer through less effective response to a deteriorating situation.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. That has been a really interesting session. I am certainly taking away a lot that I was not aware of. Thank you very much for coming in this morning. It has been very helpful to all of us. We will send you a copy of the transcript. If there are any corrections, please make them and send it back to us.

¹ The UK contribution to the common funding of military CSDP missions is approximately 17% Letter from Sir Alan Duncan to Lord Boswell of Aynho, 31 October 2017: <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/eu-external-affairs-subcommittee/CSDP-missions/CSDP-missions-letter.pdf>



General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Thank you very much for the opportunity to address the Committee. Could I perhaps politely recommend that the Committee also call to give evidence my successor, General Sir James Everard, the current DSACEUR? He is on top of the current situation.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for that suggestion.