



Ministry  
of Defence

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*Dan Tobias,*

3 June 2020

Thank you for your letter dated 6 May. The US remains our principal defence partner, with a strong relationship developed over decades. The UK/US intelligence sharing relationship is of strategic benefit to the US and this extends to the US Air Force deployment of F-35 combat aircraft at RAF Lakenheath. This will underpin UK/US interoperability in the air, ensuring that the Royal Air Force remains a 'day one, night one' partner for the US Air Force for decades to come.

As you will know from the recent written evidence provided to your committee by the Ministry of Defence, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport, and the National Cyber Security Centre, the Government conducted a comprehensive, evidence-based review into the telecoms supply chain for 5G and full fibre networks in 2018, with initial conclusions published in July 2019. The Government announced the final conclusions of the Review in relation to high risk vendors (HRVs) on 28 January 2020. The conclusions set out stringent controls on the use of the equipment from HRVs to ensure that we can manage the risk and so that it will not impact on our sensitive networks. These controls are shaped around three principles:

- Exclude HRV equipment from the core of the UK's 5G and full fibre networks;
- Limited to a minority presence in other network functions up to a cap of 35 per cent; and
- Work with our allies to develop market alternatives so that in time we can cut the need to include any HRV remaining within our telecommunications network.

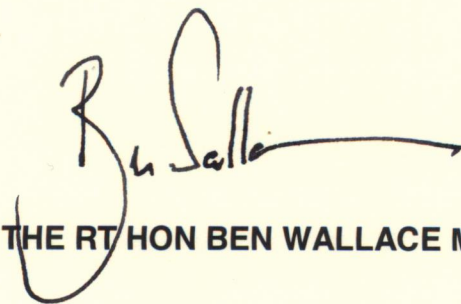
Of course, we would prefer to have a telecommunications network that does not contain any high-risk vendors. So, alongside our tough controls, we are undertaking work to enable us to get to a position where we do not have to use HRVs in our networks.

In the meantime, the Government's decision to allow a limited and tightly-controlled HRV presence in parts of the UK's telecommunications network

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categorically does not affect our ability to share sensitive intelligence data over highly secure networks both within the UK and with our partners, including the United States. We are confident that there is no technical reason for our US allies to reconsider basing F-35 combat aircraft at RAF Lakenheath or for the plans for HMS Queen Elizabeth to carry USMC F-35Bs. We are engaging with our friends both in the Administration and in Congress to understand any concerns, and to offer reassurance.

We look forward to building on the close F-35 partnership between the US Air Force and the Royal Air Force.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Wallace', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**THE RT HON BEN WALLACE MP**