



Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

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Tom Tugendhat
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S November 2020

Dear Tom,

I was pleased to be able to give evidence to the Committee on 6 October. During the session there were a few points on which I agreed to provide further information in writing.

Q139. Belarus

Stewart Malcolm McDonald asked who the UK considers to be the President of Belarus. As I said during the evidence session, the UK's longstanding policy is that we recognise States, not governments. Therefore, as a matter of policy, the UK Government refrains from giving a view on whether we do or do not recognise Lukashenko as President. The people of Belarus are entitled to free and fair elections to decide on the direction of their country. As I have made clear, Lukashenko's claim to be President on the basis of the vote on 9 August lacks legitimacy, as there is strong evidence that these were fraudulent and illegitimate elections.

Q143. ISC Report

Stewart Malcolm McDonald asked about the finding from the ISC report that Russian businesses and intelligence are completely intertwined and what threat this poses to political parties in the UK. It is, and always will be, an absolute priority to protect our democratic and electoral processes. That is why the Government has robust systems in place to protect the UK against malign influence, whether from Russia or any other state. These systems bring together government, civil society and private sector organisations to monitor and respond to interference, in whatever form it takes, to ensure our democracy stays open, vibrant and transparent. The Government is aware that individuals with links to the Russian state may seek to further their reputation and influence within the UK through strategic investments. The Government continues to address this issue under the HMG Russia Strategy through bringing together the UK's diplomatic, intelligence and law enforcement capability to maximum effect.

All registered political parties are subject to spending and donations controls and transparency measures. The legislation is clear. Only individuals on the UK electoral roll (or UK registered companies) are allowed to make political donations. It is an offence for political parties and campaigners to receive donations from 'impermissible' sources and they are required by law to take all reasonable steps to verify the identity of donors and determine whether they are permissible. Any breaches of the law are a matter for the Electoral Commission to investigate. The UK has a robust legal framework in place that bans foreign donations. All MPs are required to declare donations so that there is full transparency. But where people have come to this country, made it their adopted home and taken British citizenship there is rightly no bar to their full engagement in our democracy on the basis of where they come from.

We will continue to safeguard against future risks, strengthen our resilience and ensure that the regulatory framework is robust. The Government's 2019 manifesto committed to take measures to prevent any future foreign interference in elections. As announced in the Queen's Speech, we are bringing forward new legislation to provide the security services and law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to disrupt hostile state activity, including the Registration of Overseas Entities Bill, Espionage Bill and National Security and Investment Bill. The Government remains committed to ensuring elections are secure and fit for the modern age. As part of this, we will introduce a digital imprints regime to display the source of funding for online political advertisements and launched our technical consultation on this proposed regime in August 2020. These proposals represent a significant step forward and will make UK politics even more transparent. Interference in any democracy is also an international issue. That is why the UK will continue to call out and respond to malign activity, including any attempts to interfere in our democratic processes, alongside our international partners including the Five Eyes and NATO.

Q153. Haitian Migrants

Henry Smith asked what support the UK is providing to the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) in handling Haitian migrants. The UK Government is committed to supporting the TCI in protecting their borders, particularly in the face of the ongoing challenge from illegal migration and people trafficking, seen most prominently through sloops bringing illegal migrants from Haiti. Since September 2019, the UK has funded a National Security Adviser to be seconded to TCI to strengthen National Security capability in the territory. This has led to the launch of TCI's first National Security Strategy, which addresses irregular migration as a key threat.

As part of the UK's wider COVID-19 support to the Territories, we funded several military deployments to assist TCI with their COVID-19 planning and response, including their management of illegal migration. These included deployments of Royal Marines who augmented TCI's Maritime Police Force in Patrol Boats. The Royal Marines participated in over 130 hours of joint patrols and formal training was provided to twenty-five local security personnel. Further to this, the deployment of a military helicopter to TCI for over a month was instrumental in detecting sloops involved in people smuggling and deterring further attempts. Overall, this support was critical in bolstering TCI's ability to prevent illegal migration from Haiti during a period of increased risk. This is in addition to the significant UK support to TCI to help ensure its health system is able to respond to the pandemic and handle any imported cases. As part of this, the FCDO helped TCI to establish local testing facilities, increase hospital capacity and funded deployments of Public Health England (PHE) specialists to support the local health system.

It is clear that TCI will require ongoing support and expertise from across UK Government to improve and maintain its border security and protection in the long-term. Therefore, in addition to the National Security Adviser, the UK Government, through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), is also funding a Border Security Lead to provide

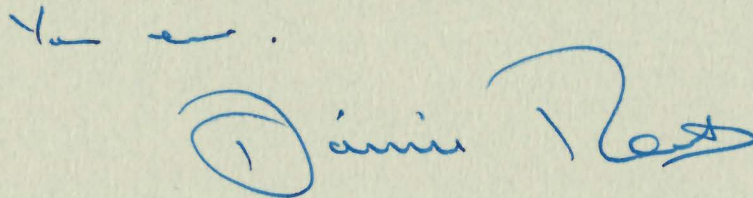
further expertise in TCI, including on Border Protection transformation and driving the formation of a Counter Illegal Migration Strategy. As part of our ongoing commitment, the UK continues to provide training and capability to TCI's Maritime Police and financial and technical assistance for investigations into human trafficking. We are also supporting TCI to establish a Reserve Defence Regiment which will assist the Maritime Police in protecting the Territory's borders. The FCDO has this year also been providing significant support to help bolster the capacity and capability of the Royal Turks and Caicos Police Force at a time when the Territory is facing rising crime levels. We will continue to engage with TCI to understand how we can further support their border security and bolster their ability to manage the challenges from illegal migration and people trafficking.

Q174. FCDO Merger

Neil Coyle asked for a timeframe for giving permanency to staff following the merger. We are working through several resourcing issues to ensure that the FCDO has the right structures, size and shape to deliver its objectives over the coming years. Those resourcing decisions will flow from structural changes, some of which are not yet settled, not least because we do not yet have the outcome of the Spending Review. We are therefore taking an approach which seeks to balance business need with keeping options open for talented staff. Individuals on Fixed Term Contracts may bid for opportunities within the FCDO, both in the UK and overseas. Some in business-critical roles will be granted short-term contract extensions. If any individuals on Fixed-Term Contracts are not successful in bidding for other roles, we will help them in seeking permanent opportunities in other government departments.

Q189. Integrated Review

Stewart Malcolm McDonald requested to see the list of countries which had been consulted as part of the Integrated Review (IR) and asked why this had been declined on the grounds of diplomatic sensitivities. The FCDO is engaging with a broad range of stakeholders, helping ensure that the IR is evidence-based. Obviously, as an international department, a large focus of our engagement is with foreign governments and other international partners. As you would expect, the Government has been engaging extensively with our closest international allies. In addition to this, our overseas missions have briefed their host governments on the IR and we are briefing Diplomatic Missions in London. The Prime Minister and senior officials from the Cabinet Office are also engaging extensively with international partners. The effective conduct of the UK's international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence with other governments and publishing details of the countries consulted on the IR whilst the review is still underway could risk undermining this.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Dominic Raab', is written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

THE RT HON DOMINIC RAAB MP