



Ministry
of Defence

JAMES HEAPPEY MP
MINISTER FOR THE ARMED FORCES

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
FLOOR 5, ZONE B, MAIN BUILDING
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone 020 7218 9000 (Switchboard)

MSU/4/8/1/2/is

26th November 2020

Dear Tobias,

Thank you for your letter of 3 November regarding the upcoming UK military deployment to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The deployment will reinforce our commitment to promoting global peace and security, as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council. It will help to deliver the UN mission's objectives to protect civilians, create the conditions to support sustainable peace in Mali and prevent conflict from spilling over to neighbouring states. Acting now will assist long-term stabilisation in a region where the UK has security and economic interests.

In your letter, you asked about the suitability of the vehicles chosen for the deployment; and the availability of UK Chinook helicopters deployed to the French-led counter-terrorism mission, Operation BARKHANE, to provide medical evacuation to UK troops deployed to MINUSMA.

Vehicle Selection

The British Army has carefully assessed which vehicles provide the best blend of mobility, protection and reliability for the mission, and has selected the combination most suited to the terrain within our Area of Operations, and to fulfil their reconnaissance function. The vehicles to be used by the UK's Long-Range Reconnaissance Group (LRRG) provide agility and the route flexibility necessary for the complex and varied conditions in Mali. Such agility is a key factor in reducing risks to vehicle-borne operations. We believe the vehicles to be right for the task, and refute recent media claims that they are not fit for purpose. The crew and operators have been expertly trained and equipped and I am confident they will make a significant impact.

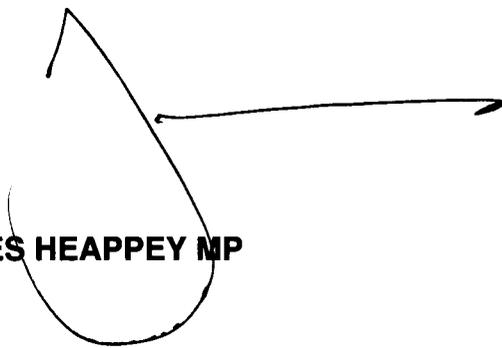
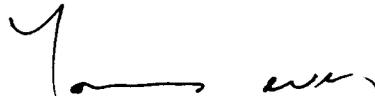
The Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP
Chair, House of Commons Defence Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Access to UK Chinooks deployed to Operation BARKHANE

UK Chinook helicopters currently operating in Mali provide a key logistics function in support of Operation BARKHANE, the French-led counter-terrorism mission in the Sahel. MINUSMA's mandate is distinct from that of BARKHANE: it is to provide support to political processes in support of long term peace in that Mali, with duties including the protection of civilians, supporting national political dialogue and reconciliation, and assisting the reestablishment of State authority, the rebuilding of the security sector, and the promotion and protection of human rights. UN peacekeeping is not suited to counter-terrorism missions, and MINUSMA and BARKHANE are separate operations with separate command structures. While the UK Chinooks will not routinely support UN deployed personnel or the UK contingent, agreements are in place to permit our forces deployed to MINUSMA access to BARKHANE helicopter support if required in extremis, such as a medical emergency. The UK deployment in support of MINUSMA will take place with established medical and logistical support.

Against the background of growing instability in West Africa, our forces will provide a much-needed, world-class specialist reconnaissance capability, serving alongside our partners and allies in MINUSMA's multinational force. Our deployment of the LRRG will offer crucial support to the UN mission to better understand threats, enhance mission performance and achieve a lasting positive impact in Mali.

I hope the above addresses your specific questions. I would welcome the opportunity to brief the Committee on this deployment, and how it contributes to our policy objectives in Africa and to UN Peacekeeping.



JAMES HEAPPEY MP



Defence Committee

Chair, Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP

Committee Office, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

020 7219 6872 defcom@parliament.uk www.parliament.uk/defcom

Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

3 November 2020

Ben Wallace

The Committee is concerned by media reports of inadequate support for UK troops deploying to Mali. In particular, it has been suggested that the Jackals, the main vehicle troops will be using in their sorties, are not suitable for use on sand because of their weight, and that there continue to be questions over the reliability of Foxhounds, the other main vehicle to be deployed. It has also been alleged that the three Chinooks supporting the French forces will not be available to medevac UK casualties. I understand that the deployment is being reviewed, and we would be grateful if you could provide us with reassurance on these points, and set out your plans to ensure that our troops in the Sahel have vehicles appropriate to both the terrain and the threat.

Tobias Ellwood

Rt Hon. Tobias Ellwood MP
Chair of the Defence Committee