



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
Secretary of State for Foreign,
Commonwealth and Development Affairs

King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH
Tel: 0207 008 5000

Email: fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk

Alicia Kearns MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

31 July 2023

Dear Alicia,

Thank you for your letter of 7 July about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Kosovo, and for the very helpful call on these and other subjects on 28 July.

Thank you for your contribution to the Remembering Srebrenica debate, and for your continuing efforts to support the families and survivors of Srebrenica in their fight for justice. I am proud that the UK is one of the few countries that commemorate the genocide at national level. Thank you also for the ideas in your letter for how we can preserve peace and drive greater stability and prosperity across the Western Balkans region. Whilst we recognise the risk of contagion, recent tensions have so far been locally contained. Addressing these and ensuring they do not drive wider instability across the Western Balkans remains a priority for me and for the UK Government.

I agree that the dangerous, divisive and secessionist moves from Milorad Dodik poses the most serious threat to peace and stability in the region for decades. We must not allow his actions go unanswered.

That is why the UK supported the High Representative's use of his executive powers to annul the laws adopted by the Republika Srpska Parliament and to give BiH's judicial authorities the tools they need to address attempts to undermine the constitutional framework. We continue to discuss with international partners how we can best use our full range of levers to increase the cost to Dodik and other Republika Sprska actors of secessionist activity, ensure safety and security, and support political leaders within BiH who are working for a more secure and better functioning country.

EUFOR, as the only mission with a UN Mandate to operate in BiH, continues to play a vital role in contributing to a safe and secure environment. That was why the UK led international efforts last year to secure renewal of the Mission's UNSC mandate. While I do not expect the UK to re-join EUFOR in the near future, any UK contribution would depend on a number of factors, including the need for alignment with our commitments to NATO's Force Model and would require agreement by EU Member States.

The UK continues to support the NATO HQ in Sarajevo, alongside our support for strengthening the capabilities of the BiH armed forces. At the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting on 4-5 April, I announced an additional £2 million of support for NATO's Tailored

Support Packages, to bolster existing UK Government funding for NATO's vulnerable partners. BiH will receive £1 million of these funds, for defence capacity building.

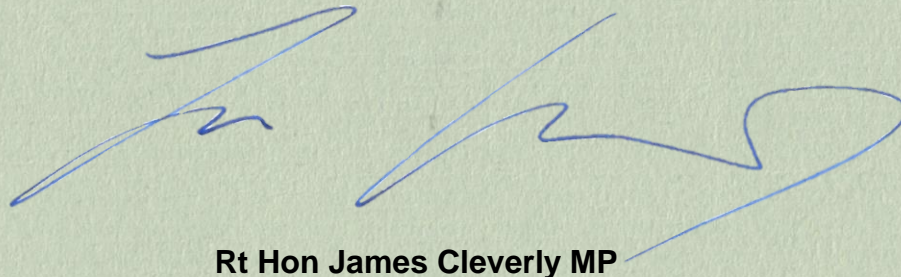
The UK Government supports the statement by the Principal Deputy High Representative and Brčko Supervisor, Jonathan Mennuti, on 6 July, making clear that the entities of BiH are obligated to support Brčko's unique status and that Brčko must not be instrumentalised by political actions or rhetoric. Any force deployment to Brčko would be an operational decision for Commander EUFOR, but the UK would certainly encourage a visible, deterrent presence from ALTHEA.

As I noted in our call, in recent meetings with the Prime Ministers of Kosovo and Serbia, I underlined their shared responsibility to act now to de-escalate tensions in northern Kosovo, refrain from further inflammatory rhetoric, and return to the EU-facilitated Dialogue. Both Lord Peach and I have had, and will continue to have, direct conversations with Serbia's leadership about the need for Serbia to promote good neighbourly relations and play a constructive role in the region. This includes taking action to prevent the smuggling of arms across the border into northern Kosovo.

We have full confidence in KFOR's efforts to contribute to a safe and secure environment in Kosovo. When I met Prime Minister Kurti, I encouraged him to refrain from criticising KFOR and to focus instead on strengthening Kosovo's cooperation with the Mission. The UK has long contributed substantially to KFOR capability.

You suggest that KFOR's mandate be expanded to enable additional proactive measures against arms smuggling and illegal militia activity. The UK Government shares your concerns about armed militia and paramilitary groups in northern Kosovo, but nonetheless remain confident that KFOR can respond effectively within its current mandate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized first name and a more complex surname, positioned above the printed name.

Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Secretary



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles St
SW1A 2AH

7th July 2023

Dear James,

I hope you are well. I am writing to follow-up on my speech in the Remembering Srebrenica debate earlier this week. Firstly, I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with President Becirovic, Bosniak Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The UK is held in high regard in the Western Balkans and your meeting with the President sends a strong message that we remain engaged.

The situation in the region is a security threat. There are several countries where the conditions are present for violence and, as you know, any eruption of violence would likely spread across borders and engulf the entire region. The situation is particularly acute in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo but there are some simple, proactive steps we could take to preserve peace and avoid a repeat of the 1990's.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The UK has led the way in promoting peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The sanctioning of Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik and Serb Member of the Bosnian Presidency Zeljka Cvijanovic, the ending of Republika Srpska's fundraising on the LSE, the dispatch of UK counter-disinformation specialists to BiH and multiple Ministerial visits are all testament to our investment in maintaining peace and stability in BiH.

Whilst I welcome all the actions taken thus far, the situation is now critical and requires the UK to lead internationally, as we have done in Ukraine and historically in the Balkans. Dodik has publicly stated that Republika Srpska will no longer accept the decisions of the Office of the High Representative or the Constitutional Court of BiH. This is a clear indication of his intention to attempt to secede from BiH itself.

To demonstrate our commitment to defending BiH's territorial sovereignty and to deter Dodik from this course I am asking for the UK to formally re-join EUFOR. There are many members who are not in the EU, so this should not be used as an excuse for our absence. As a signatory of the Dayton Agreement and a member of the Peace Implementation Council we must be represented in the EUFOR peace-keeping mission.

We should also work with NATO allies to send a NATO peace keeping force to the strategic and self-governing Brcko district, which separates the two main areas of Republika Srpska. A small strategic NATO force in Brcko would be sufficient to deter any attempt at secession by force. There is already a legal precedent for NATO peacekeepers in the Dayton Agreement and the Government of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation would likely welcome such a move.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

In the longer term we must recognise that EUFOR is no longer a sustainable guarantor of peace in BiH. Russia holds a veto over EUFOR and can block its UN mandate on an annual basis. Given Putin's incentive to incite violence in the Balkans and his close relationship with Dodik, the two could easily conspire to time the ending of the EUFOR mandate with an attempt at secession by Republika Srpska.

Therefore, we must work with NATO allies to transition to a NATO led peacekeeping mission, free from Russian involvement and a Russian veto. Whilst Dodik would protest this, there are legal precedents in the Dayton Agreement and by rejecting the legitimacy of the Office of the High Representative and Constitutional Court he has rejected the legitimacy of the Bosnian State, thus losing a right to determine security arrangements. We can not allow those who threaten security to determine how best to defend peace.

The situation in BiH is critical and we could feasibly see an attempt at secession by Republika Srpska within the next year. We must, working with allies, create a set of conditions that makes this unthinkable. To summarise we can create these conditions by:

- Re-joining EUFOR.
- Deploying a NATO peacekeeping force to Brcko district.
- Transitioning to a NATO peacekeeping mission instead of EUFOR, which Russia holds a VETO over.

Kosovo

As you know I have been highly critical of the approach taken by our allies towards Kosovo over the last few months. The recent crisis over the boycott of municipal elections by the Serbia List party was engineered by President Vucic, who publicly called for Kosovan Serbs not to exercise their democratic right and vote. The United Kingdom and our allies endorsed the elections yet after their conclusion have punished Kosovo for implementing the results and allowing the elected mayors to work.

I am particularly concerned by the US ban on Kosovo joining defence exercises and the suggestion by the American Ambassador to Kosovo that the US would no longer promote Kosovan recognition around the world. Following the kidnap of three Kosovan police officers within Kosovo by Serbian police forces the criticism of Serbia was restrained. We need to adopt a fairer approach to Kosovan and Serb relations that prioritises the protection of democratic voices and sovereignty.

There are widespread reports of weapon smuggling into Kosovo from Serbia and of armed militias operating in the north of Kosovo. This is greatly concerning given the tensions in the region. As such, I would ask that the UK use its influence within KFOR to expand KFOR's mandate to allow a more proactive approach to tackling arms smuggling and militia activity. I understand there have been examples of weapons stashes being discovered but permission from NATO being too slow, allowing them to be moved before seizure, with this movement having been observed.

We have a special responsibility to Kosovo, and I hope that the Government will work with our allies to ensure that we, collectively, take an even-handed and fair approach. This includes clear



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

punishments should Serbia be found to be interfering in and undermining Kosovan democracy and sovereignty.

The Western Balkans are now a serious security risk and require strong proactive actions to block the possibility of escalation, both in BiH and Kosovo. This can be achieved with these five policies:

- Re-joining EUFOR.
- Deploying a NATO peacekeeping force to Brcko district.
- Transitioning to a NATO peacekeeping mission instead of EUFOR, which Russia holds a VETO over.
- Expand KFOR mandate to allow proactive measures against arms smuggling into Kosovo and illegal militia activity in the north of Kosovo.
- Adopt an even-handed approach to Kosovo and Serbian relations that prioritises the protection of democratic voices and sovereignty.

I would be grateful if we could meet to discuss this further and I look forward to hearing your views on this proposal shortly.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alicia Kearns'.

Alicia Kearns MP
Member of Parliament for Rutland and Melton
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee