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Ministry of Defence

4/8/1/2/ap

13 December 2023

Dear Gavin,

I refer to your letter of 11 September concerning the Government's response to the Defence Sub-Committee's report on defence diplomacy. I note your expression of disappointment with some of the information provided in that response.

Following your letter my Officials contacted the Clerk to the Committee to request more details on the nature of concerns you indicated. My Department is aware there are questions on the responses to four of the HCDC Recommendations. Defence diplomacy encompasses many activities undertaken internally by the MOD. Hence, my Officials have gathered the relevant information to provide an informed response.

I refer, in turn, to each query defined by your Clerk.

**HCDC Recommendation 1**

I can confirm there remains an intention in my Department to replace the Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 1/15. The process began in 2019 but was interrupted by the rigours of the COVID pandemic and the re-prioritisation of UK Defence Doctrine updates following recent world events.

A new study draft to replace JDN 1/15 is in the doctrine preparation plan for Financial Year (FY) 2024-25. It is not possible at this stage to give a precise time before this update will be completed. Other essential work underway and scheduled within the DCDC Doctrine team must be finished first.

**Gavin Robinson MP**
**Chair**
**Defence Sub-Committee (Cultural Defence Diplomacy)**
**House of Commons**
**London**
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**HCDC Recommendation 3**

Naval vessels routinely conduct defence engagement during ship visits and in-country activities across the defence and security, trade and diplomacy sectors. The presence of a Royal Navy ship offers a unique opportunity as a venue for representatives of the UK defence and security industry to be able to meet influential personnel in the country visited. Working with the British Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates both in advance and during port visits, the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) organises Defence and Security Industry Days (DSIDs) involving Royal Navy vessels and encourages maximum attendance by the senior host country decision makers.

By way of an example, HMS DAUNTLESS recently completed an extremely well-received visit to the Dominican Republic, where a DSID was held onboard for UK Industry. The industry engagement plan consisted of high-level meetings with representatives from the Dominican Armed Forces and political leaders. Later, the President of the Dominican Republic attended a capability demonstration and reception onboard the ship, accompanied by senior Dominican Officials and representatives from UK industry.

DBT and other government departments were involved in the initial planning phase of Carrier Strike Group 2021, including involvement in the decision-making process regarding port calls for the group and VIP 'Sea Days' to support the UK prosperity agenda. One of these events involved HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH hosting a VIP 'Sea Day' off the coast of Mumbai. DBT Military Capability Advisors supported the event alongside several UK industry partners.

**HCDC Recommendation 4**

The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo is an impressive event. Whilst the month-long event is planned and staged by a charitable organisation, the Ministry Defence, as a partner, delivers a number of the tactical aspects of the show and military presentations. Ministers are conscious of the significant engagement opportunities the Tattoo affords for public and geopolitical diplomacy and attend regularly. In 2023, the Minister of State for Defence in the House of Lords attended and undertook engagements on 9 August; the Minister for Defence Procurement on 10 August; and the Minister for the Armed Forces on 17 & 18 August.

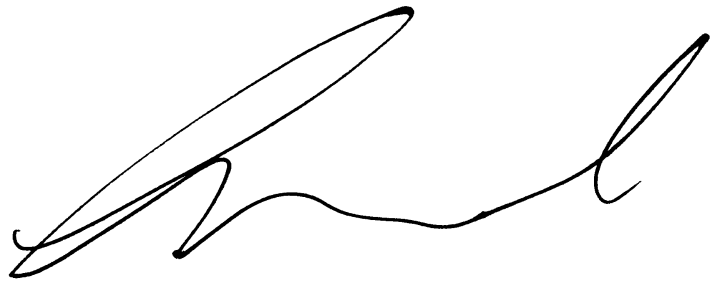
I am aware ministers from across government are invited to attend various events during the Tattoo, upon the organisers' invitation. Appropriate participation is based on the best aligned to matching their departmental objectives, whilst mindful of other diary commitments requiring each Minister's attention.

**HCDC Recommendation 7**

Our initial response to the sub-committee focussed on the anticipated changes to the defence diplomacy career path through enhanced individual development over a sustained period in an officer's career. It has been observed a position as a Defence Attaché often comes at the latter stages of a career, where an officer can draw upon their cumulative military experience and multi-faceted training. Some of those selected for a defence diplomacy role earlier in their career, upon completion of their first overseas rotation, are invited to compete for similar roles elsewhere in the network. Their significant experience is therefore re-seeded through their new positions on another 'One HMG' embassy platform. Others may compete for Strategy and Policy posts in the MOD in Whitehall or return to operational roles in their parent Service.

Defence is also looking into what more it can do to ensure valuable defence diplomacy experience is not lost on the required retirement date from the Services at 55 (unless specific extensions of service are granted). The Global Defence Network (GDN) is pursuing opportunities for continued Service beyond 55 through more effective use of the Reserve Forces. Also, my GDN Officials are working with the Career Management teams of each Service to create a clearer and better incentivised career path into defence diplomacy. This is in line with recommendations from the Haythornthwaite Review of Incentivisation in the Armed Forces.

I trust you find this response helpful.



**THE RT HON GRANT SHAPPS MP**

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Ministry of Defence

MSU/4/8/1/4/is

24 October 2023

Dear Gavin

Thank you for your letter of 11 September concerning the Government's response to the Defence Sub-Committee's report on defence diplomacy. I note you mention your disappointment with some of the information provided in that response.

You make a very valid point that at this crucial time in world events the UK is in an ideal position to present its views globally through our active and expert defence diplomacy.

Following your letter my officials contacted the Clerk to the Committee to request more details on the nature of concerns you have expressed. My department is aware there are questions on the responses to four of the Recommendations. Defence diplomacy encompasses many activities undertaken internally by the MOD. Hence, my officials are working to gather the necessary information to provide a comprehensive response. Unfortunately, world events at this time, centring on the Middle East, mean it will take longer than usual to provide a fuller reply.

I intend to write again on this important matter.

**THE RT HON GRANT SHAPPS MP**

Gavin Robinson MP
Chair
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# Defence Sub-Committee

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Rt Hon. Grant Shapps
Secretary of State
Ministry of Defence
(via email)

11 September 2023

Dear Secretary of State

Can I congratulate you on your appointment as Secretary of State of Defence at a critical juncture for Defence in the UK and across the world. I look forward to engaging with you through the Committee.

You may be aware that the Defence Sub-Committee carried out an inquiry into defence diplomacy. We published our report in May 2023 and received the Government response in July 2023. Unfortunately, I was disappointed in the quality of the Government response which failed to engage with the points presented in our report. Our report set out conclusions and recommendations that could bolster the UK's diplomatic position. However, the Government response appears to disregard the recommendations and fails to recognise that there is always room for improvement.

Can I ask you to reconsider the Government's response and instruct your officials to prepare a better-quality response?

**Gavin Robinson MP**
**Chair of the Defence Sub-Committee (Cultural Defence Diplomacy)**