



HOUSE OF LORDS

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The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence

25 April 2024

Dear Secretary of State

MoD engagement with the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee

I am writing as Chair of the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee to put on record the Committee's unhappiness with the way your Department has dealt with a couple of its recent requests.

First, we were extremely disappointed that Brigadier Paul Tedman, incoming Commander of UK Space Command, was refused clearance to brief the Committee on 17 April. Since the date of the session would have been close to the date of his taking up his new role, MoD officials apparently judged that his presence might cause confusion. It is difficult to see what confusion could arise, particularly as the Committee was only expecting to hear from him in private, and we believe that any risks associated with his appearance could have been mitigated easily. We are very grateful to Brigadier Tedman, who has been keen to emphasise his willingness to speak to us once in post, and we would request that you use your good offices to make him available to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

Secondly, as you may know, we are finalising our short inquiry into the implications of the war in Ukraine for UK Defence. A request for an MoD Minister to give evidence was made via officials on 12 March, and it was subsequently made clear that we were planning to finish our inquiry by mid-June. While we appreciate the offer made yesterday for the Minister for the Armed Forces to appear before the Committee on either 17 or 18 July, our inquiry will have reported by then. We are sympathetic to the challenges created by recent ministerial changes, but the new Minister for the Armed Forces has now been in post for about a month, was previously a minister in your department, and we would welcome it if he could attend at an earlier date.

Again, we would be grateful if you could encourage his office to schedule a date as soon as possible, so his evidence does not come too late for us to incorporate into our report. I am very keen that we do not have to include in our report that the MoD was unwilling to speak to a Select Committee of Parliament in good time.

The recent lack of constructive engagement contrasts unfavourably with the attitude of FCDO, which has made the Foreign Secretary available to talk to us on 30 April. We will be raising some questions on the war in Ukraine with him. Nonetheless, we are still very keen



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to hear from the Minister for the Armed Forces as the inquiry centres on questions closer to his portfolio but would also welcome your presence at the Committee either with MinAF or in lieu.

I do hope you will ensure that the MoD gives proper attention to the Committee's requests, so we can return to the positive experience we have had with the Department in previous inquiries.

Many thanks in anticipation and I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Henry Ashton

The Rt Hon the Lord Ashton of Hyde
Chair, International Relations and Defence Committee