

THE LORD COAKER
MINISTER FOR THE HOUSE OF LORDS

MSU/4/8/1/4

17 December 2024

Dear Lord Goldsmith,

The Government welcomes the report of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee. As the Committee noted, the Mutual Defense Agreement (MDA) has been described as the cornerstone of the UK-US defence and security relationship. We are pleased that the IAC acknowledges the importance of the agreement for mutual cooperation with the United States of America.

As the Committee noted in paragraph 24 of its report, there was an expectation that the US process for ratification of the amending agreement would be completed within the terms of the current Administration and Congress. We are pleased to report that following the completion of both the US Congressional review period and the requirements under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRaG), the amendments to the MDA entered into force on 14 November 2024.

The Government notes the request made by the Committee in paragraph 42 of the report for a commitment to report on the progress and operation of the MDA every ten years. We understand the request for a report every ten years is to keep it in line with the provisions that existed in the Agreement until 2024. As the Committee heard during both the evidence session on 8 October 2024 and in my response given during the debate on 23 October 2024, there was no clear programmatic or operational reason in either the UK or the US that drove this particular renewal period, which at times has varied from five to ten years.

On that basis the Government commits to ensuring that Parliament is provided with a more regular update on the MDA as part of our annual update to Parliament on the Defence Nuclear Enterprise (DNE). We are also considering more widely how we ensure proper parliamentary scrutiny of the work of the DNE.

The Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith KC
Chair
International Agreements Committee
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Finally, we would like to reassure the Committee that any future amendments to the MDA that fall within the scope of CRaG would be subject to parliamentary scrutiny in the usual way.

Vernon Coaker

THE LORD COAKER