Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

UK will help Lebanese Armed Forces train over 2,000 troops in the coming year

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The Foreign Secretary William Hague gave a statement to the media following his meeting with the Lebanese President Michel Sleiman today. He said:

It is a pleasure to be here in Lebanon on my first visit as Foreign Secretary. This is a hugely important country, because of its diversity, its democracy, and its role in the region. Lebanon is a very important partner for the UK as we seek to work together to address the region's problems and to also take up its opportunities. We are committed to doing everything we can, to support peace and stability here and more widely.

President Sleiman and I had a very warm and productive meeting this morning. We our discussed bilateral relations and of course we discussed the situation in the region. On behalf of the Prime Minister, I handed the President a letter setting out an enhanced offer of support for Lebanon's stability.

The UK recognises in particular the critical role played by the Lebanese Armed Forces in maintaining stability. That is why we are increasing our training assistance package. We will help the Lebanese Armed Forces train over 2,000 troops in the coming year. This is in addition to the joint activities we already have planned with the armed forces, including equipment and training support, part of the ever closer work the UK is doing with the Lebanese army and the Internal Security Forces. I shall shortly be meeting senior officers of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

President Sleiman and I discussed internal political developments. We noted the Parliamentary process on a draft election law. In these difficult times, it is important that political forces in Lebanon come together in a spirit of dialogue and consensus to agree a process that respects the constitutional timetable for this year's elections.

We also discussed our trade relationship. I am delighted that trade between the UK and Lebanon increased by 11% last year. British and Lebanese companies can benefit considerably from working together and we stand ready to help develop transparent mechanisms for oil and gas revenue.

Yesterday evening I also met Prime Minister Mikati. We discussed the importance of both stability in Lebanon and inclusive dialogue in the run-up to elections. We agreed, as I have with the president today, on the urgent need to make progress in the Middle East Peace Process, and I welcomed Lebanon's commitment to cooperate with the Bulgarian investigation into the bombing of a bus in Bourgas.

The situation in Syria remains of enormous concern. The appalling humanitarian crisis, the loss of life, and the threat to regional security cannot be ignored or underestimated. As we have always said, the senseless killing must be brought to an end through a credible political process leading to transition.

Lebanon has taken in Syrian refugees and is giving support and shelter to hundreds of thousands. Lebanon and those who have sought refuge here should not have to stand alone. Later on today I will be announcing UK aid allocated to helping Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Our friendship with Lebanon, in the face of these challenges, remains staunch and unquestionable.

Further Information

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Before arriving in Lebanon the

Foreign Secretary visited Qatar

British

Embassy in Beirut website

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-will-help-lebanese-armed-forces-train-over-2-000-troops-in-the-coming-year