Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Gifting of equipment to Syria

2014-05-01

Foreign Secretary William Hague:

On 18 November 2013 I laid a Departmental Minute before the House of Commons on the gifting of non-lethal equipment to the Supreme Military Council of the Free Syrian Army, which is closely aligned to the Syrian National Coalition. The gift consists of commercially available communications equipment, such as laptops with satellite internet connection, mobile telephones and push-to-talk radios; commercially available vehicles, such as pick-up trucks; fuel; portable generators less than 3MW in power; logistics supplies such as clothing, rations and tents; and individual medical kits. The total cost of the gift is £1 million, which will be met by the Government's Conflict Pool Fund. Use of these funds has been approved by me and the Secretaries of State for Defence and International Development. During the period of fourteen parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which the Minute was laid before the House of Commons, no Member signified an objection, either by giving notice of a Parliamentary Question or of a Motion in relation to the Minute, or by otherwise raising the matter in the House.

Following fighting at Bab al-Hawa on 7 December 2013, UK Government plans to deliver equipment to the Supreme Military Council in Syria were temporarily put on hold. I am now lifting the hold on those plans to deliver equipment to the Supreme Military Council of the Free Syrian Army in Syria. Both the UK Government and the Supreme Military Council are confident that the equipment can be delivered safely. This resumption of delivery clearly demonstrates our continued and longstanding support for the National Coalition and the Supreme Military Council of the Free Syrian Army, who represent the majority of Syrians who support a political settlement and a democratic, pluralist future for their country. I wrote to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 28 March confirming my intention to resume the delivery of non-lethal equipment to the Supreme Military Council of the Free Syrian Army in Syria. They have raised no objections and deliveries of non-lethal equipment will begin as soon as is practical.

The UK is committed to doing all that it can to alleviate the humanitarian suffering and to promote a political settlement to end the conflict. Our support to the National Coalition and the Supreme Military Council, with their vision for a democratic and pluralistic future for Syria, contributes to these goals. This is the UK's second gift to the Supreme Military Council. In August 2013 we sent them equipment to protect them from chemical weapons attack. This

gift has been scrutinised to ensure that the provision of this equipment is consistent with export controls and complies with our international obligations. Recipients have been carefully selected to prevent equipment being given to those involved in extremist activities or human rights violations.

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