Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Gifting of equipment to the 3rd Land Border Regiment of the Lebanese Armed Forces

2014-10-14

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Tobias Ellwood): Contagion from the worsening crisis in Syria is having a direct effect on its neighbours, particularly in areas adjacent to Lebanon's eastern border. The UK remains firmly committed to Lebanon's stability, and in supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to minimise contagion from the Syrian conflict, and to combat the spread of ISIL. As part of this commitment, since 2012, the UK has been assisting the LAF to establish and mentor the LAF Land Border Regiments (LBRs). The mission of the LBRs is to observe, identify, deter and interdict activities by illegal armed actors in the near border areas, in line with agreed international human rights standards. Between 2012 and 2014 around £14m of Conflict Pool funds was allocated to enhance the capabilities of 1 and 2 LBRs. These efforts have resulted in the construction of 12 Protected Border Observation Posts along 140km of the border, and the deployment of the two LBRs.

Recent ISIL actions in the Arsal area, and the threat that ISIL poses to UK interests, now make it imperative that the LAF expands the presence of the LBRs southwards, as part of an overall strategy to bring the entire eastern border with Syria back under the authority of the State. The Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces has recently authorised the establishment of 3LBR to cover a further 70km of the border south from Arsal to Tfail. He has requested UK assistance consistent with that already provided to 1 and 2 LBRs.

The Departmental Minute laid today therefore sets out our intention to gift a package of £3,596,844 of equipment to support the establishment of the 3rd Land Border Regiment of the Lebanese Armed Forces. The proposed gift will be funded by the Government's Conflict Pool Programme and will consist of the following UK sourced equipment:

800 sets of Personal Protective Equipment, including body armour, helmets, gloves, belts, first aid kits, camouflage clothing and protective glasses: £793,600

14 Land Rover Defenders and additional equipment to enable them to operate in difficult terrain: £408,244

5 Protected Border Observation Posts and 6 Mobile Observation Platforms, with observation aids and ballistic protection for fixed 3LBR positions: £1,395,000

Radio equipment to allow the command elements of 3LBR to link back to LAF HQ in Beirut: £1,000,000

Alongside the gift, the UK is expanding its existing package of training and mentoring with additional operational and engineering expertise worth £1,402,197.

The proposed gift has been assessed against the consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria. The proposed gift has been scrutinised and approved by a senior, cross-Whitehall Conflict Pool Approval Board, which has confirmed that it fits with the Government's strategic and delivery objectives. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials also assessed the project for human rights risks, using the Overseas Security and Justice Assistance guidelines established by the Foreign Secretary in 2011. They concluded that the risk of human rights violations arising from the project's delivery could be successfully mitigated.

The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of fourteen parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which the minute was laid before the House of Commons, a Member signifies an objection by giving notice of a Parliamentary Question or a Motion relating to the minute, or by otherwise raising the matter in the House, final approval of the gift will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/gifting-of-equipment-to-the-3rd-land-border-regiment-of-the-lebanese-armed-forces