Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Gifting of non-lethal equipment to the Jordanian Armed Forces

2015-01-27

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Mr Philip Hammond: I have today laid a departmental Minute proposing the gifting of non-lethal equipment to the Jordanian Armed Forces.

My right honourable Friend, the former Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague) informed the House on 6 March 2013 (Official Report, column 961) that he intended to provide additional non-lethal equipment to the Syrian opposition in order to help save lives. He then laid a departmental Minute on 15 April 2013 and issued a Written Ministerial Statement containing details of that gift which included, amongst other equipment, five 4x4 vehicles with ballistic protection. The equipment was due to be donated to the Syrian opposition National Coalition's Assistance Coordination Unit based in Turkey. Although we have been able to deliver some of the equipment, regrettably, we have been unable to deliver the five 4x4 vehicles as planned.

There are two reasons for this:

(1) only the US government and United Nations have been granted permission by the Turkish government to use such vehicles in Turkey; and

(2) the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU) was not a registered entity at the time and therefore the ACU would have only been permitted to store and use the vehicles within Syria.

Our assessment is that delivering the vehicles to Syria carries too much of a risk of them ending up in the wrong hands. For example, on 7 December 2013 the Islamic Front raided the Syrian Military Council's headquarters in Bab al-Hawa and took some of their equipment. We therefore now consider that the best option is to gift the vehicles to the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF). The JAF would use them in their efforts to manage current insecurity on their border with Syria, including cross-border smuggling activity. This option represents the least risk of the vehicles falling into the wrong hands and is most cost-effective to the taxpayer given that the vehicles are already stored in Jordan.

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.

The value of these vehicles is £386,375.70 which will be met by the Government's Conflict Pool Fund.

The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of fourteen parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this 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.

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