

[News story: Foreign Secretary statement on an incident involving British nationals in DRC](#)

Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, said:

I am delighted to announce that two British nationals who were held hostage in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been released. I pay tribute to the DRC authorities and the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation for their tireless help during this terrible case.

My thoughts are now with the family of Virunga Park ranger Rachel Makissa Baraka who was killed during the kidnapping, and with the injured driver and the released British nationals as they recover from this traumatic incident.

Further information

- Follow the Foreign Secretary on Twitter [@BorisJohnson](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

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[Press release: Iraq election 2018: statement from Minister for the Middle East](#)

Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt MP said:

Today was an historic day for Iraq. I congratulate the Iraqi people on another successful election.

I also congratulate the Iraqi security forces and electoral authorities for ensuring a peaceful and orderly ballot in a challenging environment including regrettable reports of attacks aimed at disrupting today's vote.

We look forward to the announcement soon of the full and final result and will work with all political groups to encourage formation of an effective, inclusive government that addresses the needs and hopes of all Iraqi citizens.

The UK and Iraq enjoy a strong bilateral relationship, share great hopes for the future and a commitment to work together in our common interest. We look forward to working with the next government to help deliver stability, security and prosperity for all Iraqis.

Further information

- follow the Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt on Twitter [@AlistairBurtUK](#)
- follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

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[Press release: PM call with President](#)

Trump: 11 May 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister held a telephone call with US President Donald Trump this evening.

The Prime Minister began by congratulating the President on the safe return of three US citizens who had been held in prison in North Korea.

The two leaders looked forward to the summit which will take place between President Trump and Kim Jong-un in Singapore. The PM said the UK would continue to work with the US to keep up the pressure on North Korea to denuclearise.

The Prime Minister and the President condemned the Iranian rocket attacks against Israeli forces earlier this week, and strongly supported Israel's right to defend itself against Iranian aggression. They agreed on the need for calm on all sides and on the importance of tackling Iran's destabilising activity in the region.

The Prime Minister reiterated the Government's position on the Iran nuclear deal, noting that we and our European partners remain firmly committed to ensuring the deal is upheld, as the best way of preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

The Prime Minister raised the potential impact of US sanctions on those firms which are currently conducting business in Iran. They agreed for talks to take place between our teams.

Finally, the Prime Minister and the President looked forward to the President's visit to the UK in July.

News story: EU (Withdrawal) Bill: vital for UK market and respects devolution

Scottish Secretary David Mundell has responded to the report of the Scottish Parliament's Finance and Constitution Committee on whether to provide a Legislative Consent Motion to the EU (Withdrawal) Bill.

He said:

We have worked hard over the past year to secure the support of the Scottish Parliament and have put a considerable offer on the table that would see the vast majority of devolved powers automatically flow from the EU to Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh.

While it is disappointing that a majority of MSPs on the Committee recommended that the Scottish Parliament does not give the EU (Withdrawal) Bill legislative consent, the decision is ultimately for individual parliamentarians and we remain hopeful that they will back this important piece of legislation.

Mr Mundell said that he was grateful to the Committee for its time and contribution to the debate, and welcomed the Committee's support for a number of changes the Government has made to the EUWB (including amendments that protect the Scotland Act 1998 from modification).

Through the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, the vast majority of EU powers in devolved areas will go straight from Brussels to Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff when we leave the EU. A small number of specific policy areas will be frozen while we design and implement new common arrangements. This will give essential certainty to businesses at the point we leave the EU and protect the vital UK common market.

Mr Mundell added:

We are clear our approach fully respects devolution, as the Welsh Government has confirmed. We still hope the Scottish Government will come on board, even at this late stage. Our door remains open.

News story: Protecting the vital UK common market – David Lidington speech

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster David Lidington MP today [Friday 11 May] used a major business speech in Edinburgh to call on the Scottish Government to back the EU (Withdrawal) Bill next week, and provide Scottish businesses with the same certainty and clarity as companies in other parts of the UK.

Speaking at a CBI Scotland lunch in the Scottish capital, Mr Lidington said that the “door is still open” for the Scottish Government to sign up to the agreement that has already been reached with Welsh Government and “end any question of lingering legal uncertainty for businesses in all parts of the UK”.

The Minister told the business audience that common UK frameworks will be required in certain areas to help companies all across the UK to do business in all parts of the UK. He will also say that respecting and preserving the UK common market underpins our existence as a union and that any attempt to undermine it would be a “self-inflicted blow” on thousands of Scottish companies.

Mr Lidington said:

It is only by maintaining the coherence of the common UK market – and keeping barriers to trade within it to an absolute minimum – that businesses and consumers in all parts of our union can continue to benefit.

Preserving the common market is exactly what the EU Withdrawal Bill, currently making its way through Parliament, will do.

Put simply, respecting and preserving the United Kingdom common market is to uphold one of the fundamental expressions of the constitutional integrity that underpins our existence as a union.

But put even more simply, any attempt to undermine that common market would represent a self-inflicted blow to the thousands of firms who owe their prosperity to its success.

I am well aware from the conversations I have had with businesses in Scotland and Wales – and indeed Northern Ireland – that what they care about is what all this means for business and whether it provides the certainty they need.

That is why all of us – Westminster, Cardiff and Holyrood – have worked hard to identify only those absolutely essential areas where we agree that UK-wide frameworks are needed and it is worth underlining that we already have UK-wide frameworks in all these areas right now.

So it is also why it is disappointing that the Scottish Government still does not feel able to sign up to our proposals and deliver that certainty for businesses.

Of course, it is rightly for the Scottish Parliament to now decide what view it wants to take on the compromise we have reached, and that we have now agreed with the Welsh Government.

So that is why I say to the Scottish Government: the door is still open.

At a stroke, they can join the Welsh Government – who have also put so much into getting us to this stage – and recommend to the Parliament here in Holyrood that we should end any lingering question of legal uncertainty for businesses in all parts of the UK,

But no matter what, I want to reiterate that the UK Government is committed to acting in accordance with the Intergovernmental Agreement that – even now at this late stage – is open to the Scottish Government to sign up to.

Scottish businesses can see this in black and white: our Intergovernmental Agreement is public for all to see.

You can have that certainty and clarity that we will work to agree the approach needed to protect our vital common market and that we will respect – in full – the devolution settlements as we do so.

The full text of the speech is [here](#). The EU (Withdrawal) Bill returns to the House of Lords next week [Wednesday 16 May) for its third reading.