

# Minister for the Armed Forces statement on the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Mali

West Africa is an important region for the United Kingdom and our allies across Europe. And the UK is strongly committed to supporting the UN to deliver its peacekeeping commitments around the world. That is why since 2018 we had been supporting the French-led counter-terrorism mission in Mali with CH-47 Chinook helicopters under Operation BARKHANE and more recently, since 2020, through the deployment of a Long Range Reconnaissance Group as part of the UN's MINUSMA peacekeeping mission.

The House will be aware, however, that in February, President Macron announced the drawdown of French troops in Mali and was joined in that announcement by all other European nations, as well as Canada, that were contributing to the French-led Operations BARKHANE and TAKUBA. In March, Sweden announced that it would be leaving the UN's MINUSMA mission.

Today, Mr Speaker, I can announce that the UK contingent will also now be leaving the MINUSMA mission earlier than planned.

Mr Speaker, we should be clear that responsibility for all of this sits in Bamako. Two coups in three years have undermined international efforts to advance peace. On my most recent visit last November, I met with the Malian Defence Minister and implored him to see the huge value of the French-led international effort in his country.

However, soon afterwards, the Malian Government began working with the Russian mercenary group Wagner and actively sought to interfere with the work of both the French-led and UN missions. The Wagner group is linked to mass human rights abuses. The Malian government's partnership with Wagner group is counterproductive to lasting stability and security in their region.

Mr Speaker, this Government cannot deploy our nation's military to provide security when the host country's Government is not willing to work with us to deliver lasting stability and security.

However, our commitment to West Africa and the important work of the UN is undiminished. We've been working closely with our allies to consider options for rebalancing our deployment alongside France, the EU and other like-minded allies. On Monday and Tuesday next week, Mr Speaker, I will join colleagues from across Europe and West Africa in Accra to co-ordinate our renewed response to instability in the Sahel.

This will be the first major gathering in support of the Accra Initiative – a West African-led solution focussed initially on preventing further contagion of the insurgency into Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Niger and tackling the growing levels of violence in Burkina Faso as well as Mali –

making this a very timely conference indeed.

And of course, Mr Speaker, it is not just the UK military that will remain committed in West Africa – the UK will continue its commitment to Mali and the Sahel through our humanitarian, stabilisation and development assistance, working in close coordination with partners.

Nor, Mr Speaker, is this a reduction in our commitment to the United Nations. The UK remains an important contributor of troops through Operation TOSCA in Cyprus, and staff officers across several missions, and provide training to around 10,000 military, police and civilian peacekeepers from a range of countries annually. We remain the fifth largest financial contributor and will continue to drive reform in New York. Indeed we are working with New York on developing a pilot – to be delivered through the British Peace Support Team based in Nairobi – to develop the capacity of UN troop contributing nations across Africa.

Mr Speaker, we will of course co-ordinate with allies as we drawdown from Gao and have been sharing our plans with them over recent months. The Army will be issuing orders imminently to reconfigure the next deployment to drawdown our presence. We are leaving the MINUSMA mission earlier than planned and are, of course, saddened by the way the Government in Bamako has made it so difficult for well-meaning nations to remain there.

The work of our troops has been outstanding, and they should be proud of what they've achieved there. But through the Chilcott Report and our wider experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, we – like so many allies – are clear that the military instrument should not be deployed on counterinsurgency or countering violent extremism missions unless there is a clear and compelling commitment towards political progress.

We will work quickly with allies in the region and across Europe to support the Accra Initiative to deliver security, stability and prosperity in West Africa. Our commitment to that region is undiminished.

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## **EU-US-UK Joint Statement on global food security and Russia sanctions: 14 November 2022**

The world faces acute food and nutrition challenges. Conflict, climate change and the lasting impacts of COVID-19 are having devastating effects on local and global food systems and the people who rely on them. Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine has significantly worsened these challenges and vulnerabilities.

The European Union, the United States of America and the United Kingdom, alongside other G7 members and our international partners, are at the forefront of global efforts to address food insecurity that is affecting millions of vulnerable people in developing countries, whilst also driving up living costs in our own countries.

We have always been clear that the target of our sanctions is Russia's war machine and not the food or fertiliser sectors. To that end, we have provided clarity to industry and partners. This includes the [UK's publication of a General Licence](#), the [US General Licence 6B](#); as well as [updated and detailed EU guidance](#). These provisions make clear that banks, insurers, shippers, and other actors can continue to bring Russian food and fertiliser to the world.

We call on our global partners, and on the actors, industries and services involved in agricultural trade, to take note of these provisions; to act in accordance with them; to bring Ukrainian and Russian food and fertiliser to meet acute demand; and to continue to advance the accessibility of food to all.

We reiterate our call on all countries to demonstrate their support for the Black Sea Grain Initiative. We call on the parties to the Initiative to extend its term and scale up its operations to meet the evident demand. And we reiterate our support for other efforts by the United Nations to facilitate access to food and fertiliser in global markets.

Overall, we are united in our commitment and resolve to address food insecurity. We are working to meet humanitarian needs, keep food and fertilisers moving, provide emergency funding, improve resilience, and to accelerate the transition to sustainable food systems to withstand future challenges. We are taking action alongside partners to mobilise the international community, including through the UN-led Global Crisis Response Group (GCRG) on Food, Energy and Finance, the G7 Global Alliance for Food Security (GAFS), the Roadmap – Call to Action and the EU-led Solidarity Lanes.

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## [Foreign Secretary statement: Direct flights between Tel Aviv and Doha for the World Cup – 14 November](#)

News story

The Foreign Secretary has welcomed an agreement between Qatar and Israel to allow direct flights between Tel Aviv and Doha for the World Cup.



Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said:

The UK congratulates Israel and Qatar for reaching an important deal to open direct flights between Tel Aviv and Doha for the World Cup.

We welcome the commitment that this will benefit football fans in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and foster stronger people-to-people links across the Middle East.

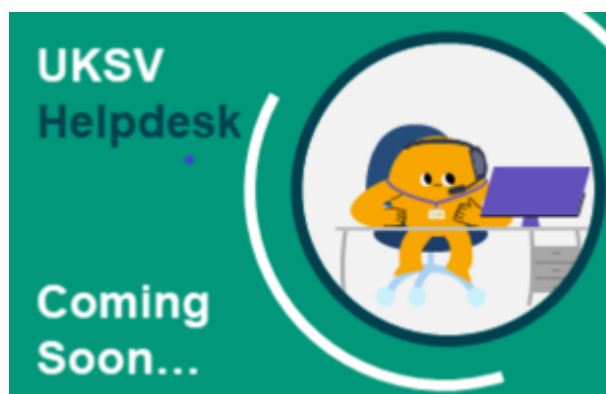
Published 14 November 2022

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## [New UKSV Helpdesk service: Contact details and launch dates](#)

News story

The current Enquiry Centre service for all vetting queries will be replaced by a new UKSV Helpdesk service by the end of 2022.



UKSV left MOD to become part of Cabinet Office in April 2020 and this move to

our own in-house enquiries and complaints service is a key element in completing our transition away from legacy MOD services.

We can now share more information about the timeline for the changeover as well as the contact details for the new UKSV Helpdesk service. The new email contact details should be used from Monday December 12 2022 and not before. The current Enquiry Centre details on the gov.uk [Contact Us](#) page remain valid until that date and will be updated once the changeover has taken place.

Please note that there will be an email-only service for an interim period between the closure of the current Enquiry Centre phone lines and the launch of the full UKSV Helpdesk telephone service in early 2023.

## **UKSV Helpdesk contact details: email service from December 12**

The contact address for the new UKSV Helpdesk is [uksv-helpdesk@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:uksv-helpdesk@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) and you should start to use this address for all email enquiries from Monday December 12. This includes those enquiries which are currently sent to the [UKSV-TechSupport-Grp@mod.gov.uk](mailto:UKSV-TechSupport-Grp@mod.gov.uk) mailbox.

### **Key dates to be aware of:**

#### **Friday, December 8, 16:00: The Enquiry Centre phone service closes.**

- The lines will be deactivated following close of business at 4pm on December 8.
- The current email enquiry service will continue to operate from the MOD mailbox [UKSV-ContactUs@mod.gov.uk](mailto:UKSV-ContactUs@mod.gov.uk) and [UKSV-TechSupport-Grp@mod.gov.uk](mailto:UKSV-TechSupport-Grp@mod.gov.uk) until December 12, when this service will also close.
- Any enquiries which are received into the MOD mailboxes by December 12 will be actioned before the mailboxes finally close on December 29.

#### **Monday, December 12: The new UKSV Helpdesk email service will launch.**

From this date onwards, all new enquiries and any replies to ongoing enquiries should be sent to the new Helpdesk mailbox [uksv-helpdesk@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:uksv-helpdesk@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

#### **Thursday, December 29: The [UKSV-ContactUs@mod.gov.uk](mailto:UKSV-ContactUs@mod.gov.uk) and [UKSV-TechSupport-Grp@mod.gov.uk](mailto:UKSV-TechSupport-Grp@mod.gov.uk) MOD mailboxes will be deactivated.**

There will be an automatic response giving advance notice of the mailbox closure, and anyone emailing these addresses from 12 December will be prompted to forward their enquiry to the new Helpdesk mailbox.

The email-only service is an interim measure during the period of transition and the new Helpdesk phone service will launch during the first quarter of 2023. The new UKSV Helpdesk will offer a modern, multi-channel digital service for customers, sponsors and applicants to communicate and engage with UKSV, making use of new systems and technology to create a positive customer experience.

## [UK and international partners announce further sanctions against Iranian officials](#)

The UK and international partners have announced coordinated sanctions on Iranian officials who are leading the violent repression of protests in Iran.

Protests continue across Iran following the tragic death of 22 year old Mahsa Amini, in the custody of Iran's so-called [Morality Police, who were sanctioned by the UK on 10 October](#). The Iranian authorities have responded to the protests with violence, reportedly killing hundreds and injuring thousands of others.

The Foreign Secretary has announced the UK will designate Communications Minister Issa Zarepour and a range of local law enforcement and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officials who have been involved in and ordered the crackdown on protests.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said:

These sanctions target officials within the Iranian regime who are responsible for heinous human rights violations.

Together with our partners, we have sent a clear message to the Iranian regime – the violent crackdown on protests must stop and freedom of expression must be respected.

The Iranian people could not be clearer. It's time for the regime to stop blaming external actors and start listening to the voices of their people.

Zarepour and Vahid Mohammad Naser Majid (chief of Iran's Cyber Police) have been designated for shutting down the internet in Iran, including disabling Whatsapp and Instagram, and banning the use of the Google Play app and virtual private networks (VPNs).

Their actions are part of a wider clampdown on freedom of expression in Iran which has included the arrest and detention of more than 40 journalists and Iranian girls being sent to 'psychological centres' for protesting for their right to choose what to wear, according to regime officials.

Twenty two other Iranian political and security officials are designated

today in response to the continued brutal violence aimed at protestors, in provinces including:

- Sistan and Baluchestan: on 30 September, over 80 people were reportedly killed in the city of Zahedan. Today the UK has sanctioned:
  - Ahmad Taheri (former chief of the Law Enforcement Force in Sistan and Baluchestan)
  - Mahmoud Saadati (former chief of the Law Enforcement Force in Zahedan)
  - Hossein Maroufi (deputy co-ordinator of mobilization of the IRGC in Sistan and Baluchestan)
  - Ahmad Shafahi (commander of the IRGC Salman Corps in Sistan and Baluchestan)
  - Hossein Modarres Khiabani (governor of Sistan and Baluchestan)
- Kurdistan: protests have been brutally cracked down across the province, including in the cities of Sanandaj and Mahsa Amini's hometown of Saqqez. Today the UK has sanctioned:
  - Ali Azadi (chief of the Law Enforcement Force in Kurdistan)
  - Ali Reza Moradi (chief of the Law Enforcement Force in Sanandaj)
  - Ali Sayd Safari (chief of the Law Enforcement Force in Saqqez)
  - Abbas Abdi (chief of the Law Enforcement Force in Divandarreh)
  - Sereng Hossein Rajabpour (Basij commander in Bijar)
  - Morteza Mir Aghaei (Basij commander in Sanandaj)
  - Esmail Zarei Kousha (governor of Kurdistan)
  - Sardar Seyed Sadegh Hosseini (senior commander of the IRGC in Kurdistan)
- Tehran: at Sharif University in Tehran, Iranian security services used live rounds and tear gas against students, barricading them inside the university building. Today the UK has sanctioned:
  - Hossein Rahimi (chief of the Law Enforcement Force in Tehran)
  - Hasan Hassanzadeh (senior commander of the IRGC in Tehran)

These sanctions will ensure that the individuals on the list cannot travel to the UK and any of their assets held in the UK will be frozen.

The [UK has already designated a number of high-ranking security and political figures](#), as well as the Morality Police, for their roles in protests in Iran.

The [Foreign Secretary also summoned the Iranian Chargé d'Affaires](#) last week to make clear that the UK does not tolerate threats from foreign nations against individuals here.