

Turkey military action in Syria: Urgent Question opening statement

On 9 October, following the US announcement that it would withdraw its troops from the region, Turkey launched a military operation in north east Syria. Turkish troops have pushed into northern Syrian towns and villages, clashing with the Kurdish fighters over a stretch of now 125 miles. The UN estimates that at least 160,000 people have been displaced in less than a week.

From the outset, the UK Government has warned Turkey against taking this military action. And as we feared it has seriously undermined the stability and the security of the region. It risks worsening the humanitarian crisis and increasing the suffering of millions of refugees. And it also undermines the international effort that should be focused on defeating Daesh.

I can tell the house, Mr Speaker, on Thursday, 10 October, I spoke to Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu and expressed the UK's grave concerns. On Saturday, 12 October, the Prime Minister spoke to President Erdogan to reinforce those concerns and urge restraint. I also addressed the issue at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on Saturday. And yesterday, the EU released a statement which we joined, condemning Turkey's unilateral military action, and calling on it to withdraw its forces.

The UK Government takes its arms export control responsibilities very seriously and in this case of course we will keep our defence exports to Turkey under very careful and continual review. And I can tell the house that no further export licences to Turkey for items which might be used in military operations in Syria will be granted while we conduct that review.

And yesterday, the honourable members will know the US signed an executive order to impose limited sanctions on Turkey, including against senior members of Turkey's government. The EU considered this, and on balance, decided against sanctions at this stage. However, we will keep the position under careful review.

It is only right, Mr Speaker, as we condemn this military intervention, that we also recognise some of the legitimate concerns that Turkey has – in relation to the 3.6 million refugees that it has taken from Syria. And its concerns around the threat to its security from the PKK at its southern border with Syria.

For decades, Turkey has been a staunch ally in NATO – one of the largest contributors of military personnel. But with close partners, Mr Speaker, we must at times be candid and clear. This is not the action we expected from an ally. It is reckless, it is counterproductive, and it plays straight into the hands of Russia and indeed the Assad regime.

So the UK Government calls on Turkey to exercise maximum restraint and to bring an end to the unilateral military action. I commend this statement to

the house

[Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab – Urgent Question on Turkey & Syria](#)

[Corporate information: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs – Research at Defra](#)

An overview of research and analysis undertaken by Defra.

[New chair for Government Property Agency appointed](#)

- Government Property Agency appoints Pat Ritchie, Chief Executive at Newcastle City Council, as its new Chair
- Ms Ritchie will be charged with realising GPA's ambitious target of delivering £1.4bn savings over the next decade
- Launched in 2018, the GPA manages a property portfolio valued at £195m

The government has today announced the appointment of Pat Ritchie for a four-year term as the new Chair of the Government Property Agency (GPA). The appointment has been made with the approval of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Secretary.

The GPA acts as the government's landlord, providing strategic advice on its property estate. Launched in 2018 and managing property assets for over 60 departments and public sector bodies, it has been tasked with delivering savings worth £1.4bn to the public purse over the next 10 years.

Ms Ritchie will take up the position alongside her role as Chief Executive at Newcastle City Council where she has overseen successful regeneration projects in the north-east.

As chair of the GPA, she will drive efficiency and modernisation across a government estate spanning 210,000m2 and valued at £195m, taking the reins from current Chair Liz Peace on 1 January 2020.

On her new role, Pat Ritchie said:

The GPA is having a real impact already by implementing greater commercial thinking to government property. Through revitalising and modernising the public estate we can help drive regeneration and economic growth.

I am looking forward to joining the GPA as Chair in the new year and would like to thank Liz Peace for her work in establishing the agency. Building on Liz's legacy, I will bring my own background, experience and knowledge to help continue the GPA's mission and create a brilliant Civil Service.

Minister for Implementation Simon Hart said:

Pat's knowledge and expertise make her the ideal person to realise the GPA's ambitious agenda.

Through this work we can help spread growth around the UK and free up more money to spend on people's priorities, like schools, the NHS and the police.

A key pillar of Ms Ritchie's new brief will be the Government Hubs Programme. Hubs bring together different departments under one roof – moving civil servants to inner-city sites across the UK located near to transport links, amenities and shops, and will boost the economy through savings, inner-city regeneration and increasing trade for local businesses.

Mike Parsons, Director General of the Office of Government Property, said:

I am delighted to welcome Pat to the GPA Board. I am confident that her knowledge and experience will greatly benefit GPA in its important work in managing the property portfolio and ensure civil servants have fit for purpose accommodation that supports smarter working and promotes productivity.

GPA Chief Executive, Steven Boyd, said:

This is an exciting time for the GPA and a great moment for Pat to join us as we move into the second phase of our Hubs Programme and continue to grow our portfolio of government assets. Pat brings a wealth of knowledge and experience, and I am looking forward to working with her.

I would also like, on behalf of everyone at GPA, to thank Liz Peace for her contribution as Chair. Under Liz's leadership and guidance, GPA has set a clear strategy and direction of travel, and we look forward to seeing the momentum that we are beginning to build continue when Pat joins us in January.

About ODP

As a member of Operational Delivery Profession (ODP), you are often the public face of public service. If you don't have a role delivering direct to the public, you support those that do. In both cases, you make a real difference to people's lives and make government policies, strategies and plans a reality.

People are our thing. Whether you call them customers, claimants, citizens or colleagues. Whether you deal with them directly or indirectly and whether they are individual or business. We deliver for people. We understand them, help them and support them.

Find out more about your profession by watching our short film, [Proud To Be ODP](#)

About the ODP

You are part of the largest profession in government and our people make our profession. Together, we create and deliver exceptional services to citizens. We develop effective leaders who are inspiring, confident and empowering and who live our values. Our profession is inclusive, flexible, modern and connected, sitting at the heart of public service delivery.

Working in ODP you can do a huge range of jobs. Below are just a selection of the many hundreds of roles we have in ODP:

- Employer Adviser
- Consular Assistance caseworker
- Insolvency clerk
- Compliance Officer
- Data Analyst
- Jobcentre Manager
- Service Design Manager
- Communications Designer
- Passport Officer
- Call Centre Agent
- Customer Service Officer
- Debt Manager

Skills families

There are hundreds of different roles within the profession so to make it easier to identify your role and choose the most relevant learning resources available, we have broken the profession down into six skills families. A skills family is a term we use to group certain job roles together.

By doing this, we can then offer the right learning and development to the right person, so it's easier for you to find what you need.

Our skills families are:

- Help and Advice
- Case Ownership
- Safety and Enforcement
- Validation and Compliance
- Design and Support
- Leadership and Management

You may be able to identify your skills family really easily, or you might feel like your job role covers more than one family. There's no right or wrong answer, but we recommend you start by looking at the skills family you relate to the most, and work through the recommended resources from there.

[Workforce and volunteers at heart of #StationsDay celebrations](#)

Stations Day celebrates the work of staff and volunteers who keep Britain's railways running.