

News story: Foreign Office Minister congratulates Lebanon on its Independence Day



Minister of State for the Middle East at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Alistair Burt said:

The UK was among the first countries to recognise Lebanon's independence 75 years ago, and remains a staunch supporter of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The relationship between our two countries has never been stronger. The UK is proud of our partnership with Lebanon, as we work together to build strong, legitimate state institutions, secure Lebanon's borders, support Lebanon with its refugee crisis, and boost our nations' prosperity.

The UK looks forward to the early formation of a Lebanese government, a government with which the UK can continue to strengthen its partnership. On behalf of Her Majesty's Government I am delighted to send my congratulations to President Aoun, Prime Minister-designate Hariri, Parliamentary Speaker Berri, and the Lebanese people as they mark this momentous anniversary.

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Press release: Foreign Secretary

Jeremy Hunt statement on the Matthew Hedges case in UAE

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt has expressed shock and disappointment at the sentencing of British man Matthew Hedges in the United Arab Emirates.

Press release: Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt statement on the Matthew Hedges case in UAE



Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

I am deeply shocked and disappointed by the verdict today. I have personally raised the case of Matthew Hedges at the highest levels of the UAE government, including during my visit to Abu Dhabi on 12 November. On that occasion, I spoke to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed and Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed.

However, today's verdict is not what we expect from a friend and trusted partner of the United Kingdom and runs contrary to earlier assurances. Our consular officials have been in close contact with Matthew Hedges and his family. We will continue to do everything possible to support him.

I have repeatedly made clear that the handling of this case by the UAE authorities will have repercussions for the relationship between our two countries, which has to be built on trust. I regret the fact that we have reached this position and I urge the UAE to reconsider.

Further information

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News story: Maritime training deployments to deepen UK-Ukraine defence partnership

The UK and Ukraine will continue to strengthen their defence partnership in the face of intensifying threats and aggression, the Defence Secretary reaffirmed today.

In a meeting with the visiting Ukrainian Defence Minister General Stepan Poltorak, Gavin Williamson announced a range of forthcoming deployments and exercises that will see the two countries' Armed Forces continue to work together in defence of the international rules-based order.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

As long as Ukraine faces Russian hostilities, it will find a steadfast partner in the United Kingdom. By continuing to work together, whether through training programmes or military exercises, we help Ukraine to stand up for our shared values.

Those values of freedom and democracy cannot be traded. I have witnessed on the frontline the effects of the conflict in the East and this has completely reinforced my support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Minister of Defence of Ukraine General Stepan Poltorak said:

The United Kingdom is a valued partner that has supported Ukraine's Armed Forces for the last four years in the face of Russian aggression. As we fight to defend our territory, the offer of extended support from the UK Armed Forces is vitally important and gratefully received.

The Defence Secretary announced at the meeting that HMS Echo would deploy to the Black Sea in 2019 to demonstrate the UK's support to ensuring freedom of navigation in the region.

It was also confirmed that, in January and February next year, training teams – made up of personnel from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and the Army – will deploy to Ukraine as part of the extension to the UK's military training operation announced by Gavin Williamson on his visit to the country in September.

The UK and Ukrainian Armed Forces will gain another opportunity to develop capability and share expertise when UK contributes to the US-Ukrainian led Exercise Sea Breeze next year.

While visiting Ukraine in September, where he visited the east of the country to see first-hand the effects of the ongoing conflict, the Defence Secretary announced that the UK would be extending its military training programme, delivered through Operation Orbital, until 2020.

Since the start of 2015, British personnel have trained over 9,500 of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

[News story: Fishing company and skipper ordered to pay £37,926 for fisheries offences](#)

Ellie Adhamh (WD206) is an Irish registered 25 metre fishing vessel operated by R & E Fishing Limited (Ireland). The court heard how the Royal Navy boarded the vessel during a routine patrol in the Celtic Sea on 29 April 2018. The Boarding Officer checked the vessel's documentation, fish room and gear and a number of offences were found. The vessel was then detained to Newlyn for further investigation by the MMO.

Six charges were brought before the court, including undersized net offences, incorrect operation of the electronic logbook and under recording of three quota species.

R & E Fishing and skipper Dan Cullimore both pleaded guilty to all charges.

Sentencing the defendants, District Judge (Magistrates Courts) Cooper said that the defendants had been negligent in failing to ensure they had appropriate systems in place to prevent the offences occurring.

R & E Fishing was fined £32,000, ordered to pay £4,416.62 in costs and a victim surcharge of £170. Dan Cullimore was fined £1,100, ordered to pay £200 in costs and a victim surcharge of £40.

A spokesperson for the MMO said:

This offending took place in the Biologically Sensitive Area and using undersized gear not only jeopardises the chance of fish stocks replenishing but gives the vessel an unfair advantage over those fishing in the same area who are compliant with the rules.

The rules on the accuracy of electronic logbook entries are also very important. If vessels fail to record their data accurately this increases the chances of unrecorded catches occurring and risks fish not being taken into account for quota uptake figures, which puts the future of the fishing industry at risk if over fishing occurs.