

News story: UK and France increase security cooperation in the Channel

The Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, and his French counterpart, Florence Parly, have reaffirmed the strength of British-French defence ties at a meeting at the historic Admiralty House today.

Following an inspection of a Guard of Honour at Horse Guards Parade, the Defence Secretary and the French Minister of the Armed Forces signed an agreement to increase British and French co-operation on countering terrorism and illegal migration in the Channel, one of the busiest maritime highways in the world.

Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, said:

French security is our security, which is why our defence relationship with them is vital to us and to Europe as a whole. It will continue even after the UK leaves the European Union.

The Channel is of huge importance to both our countries. This new agreement demonstrates our commitment to work with international partners to help tackle the threat of piracy and terrorism around the globe and protect our people at home.

The agreement builds on existing maritime cooperation between the Royal Navy and French Navy, which includes joint exercises and intelligence-sharing. It will ensure both countries use the most modern technologies and share knowledge, to help identify suspicious activities and conduct maritime security operations.

The meeting came ahead of the next [UK-France Summit](#) in the new year, which will further strengthen the UK and France's Defence cooperation under the [Lancaster House Treaty](#).

Speech: Minister for the Middle East speech on the situation in Yemen

With permission, Mr Speaker I would like to make a statement to the House on the humanitarian and political situation in Yemen and the implications of the conflict for regional security.

Her Majesty's Government remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian

situation in Yemen and the impact recent restrictions are having on what was already the worst humanitarian crisis in the world and largest ever cholera outbreak.

We recognise the risk of a severe deterioration of the humanitarian situation, if restrictions are not quickly removed and call on all parties to ensure immediate access for commercial and humanitarian supplies through all Yemen's land, air and sea ports.

But we should be clear about the reality of the conflict in Yemen. The Saudi-led Coalition launched a military intervention after a rebel insurgency took the capital by force and overthrew the legitimate Government of Yemen as recognised by the UN Security Council. Ungoverned spaces in Yemen are being used by non-state actors and terrorist groups to launch attacks against regional countries, international shipping lanes and the Yemeni people.

As my Rt Hon friend the Foreign Secretary has made clear, we strongly condemn the attempted missile attack against Riyadh on 4 November. This attack, which has been claimed by the Houthis, deliberately targeted a civilian area and was intercepted over an international airport.

The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting Saudi Arabia to address its legitimate security needs.

We are therefore deeply concerned by reports that Iran has provided the Houthis with ballistic missiles. This is contrary to the arms embargo established by UN Security Council Resolution 2216 and serves to threaten regional security and prolong the conflict.

I understand that a UN team is currently visiting Riyadh to investigate these reports. It is essential that the UN conducts a thorough investigation. The UK stands ready to share its expertise to support this process.

But Mr Speaker, we recognise that those who suffer most from this conflict are the people of Yemen.

We understand why the Saudi-led Coalition felt obliged to temporarily close Yemen's ports and airports in order to strengthen enforcement of the UN mandated arms embargo. It is critical that international efforts to disrupt illicit weapons flows are strengthened.

At the same time, it is vital that commercial and humanitarian supplies of food, fuel and medicine are able to reach vulnerable Yemeni people, particularly in the north – where 70% of those in need live.

Even before the current restrictions, 21 million were already in need of humanitarian assistance and 7 million were only a single step away from famine. 90% of food in Yemen is imported and three quarters of that comes via the ports of Hodeidah and Salif. No other ports in Yemen have the capacity to make up that shortfall.

Our NGO partners in Yemen are already reporting that water and sewerage systems in major cities have stopped operating because of a lack of fuel.

This means that millions no longer have access to clean water and sanitation, in a country already suffering from the worst cholera outbreak in modern times.

The current restrictions on access for both commercial and humanitarian shipments risk making an already dire situation immeasurably worse for the Yemeni people. We have heard the UN's stark warnings about the risk of famine.

We call on all parties to ensure immediate access for commercial and humanitarian supplies to avert the threat of starvation and disease faced by millions of civilians.

We also call for the immediate reopening of Hodeidah port and the resumption of UN flights into Sana'a and Aden airports, as the Foreign Office statement on 15 November made clear. Restrictions on humanitarian flights are causing problems for humanitarian workers, including British nationals, who wish to enter or exit the country.

We have been urgently and proactively seeking a resolution of this situation. Our Ambassador in Riyadh has been in frequent contact with the Saudi Foreign Minister. My Rt Hon friend the Foreign Secretary has discussed the situation in Yemen with the Crown Prince, with whom we have emphasised the urgency of addressing the worsening humanitarian crisis. My Rt Hon friend the Secretary of State for International Development has spoken to both the UN Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs since about the situation in Yemen since her appointment on 9 November.

We are also continuing to work closely with other regional and international partners, including the UN. On 18 November, my Rt Hon friend the Foreign Secretary spoke to the UN Secretary-General. Central to this discussion was how the security concerns of Saudi Arabia can be addressed to enable these restrictions to be lifted. It is vitally important that the UN and Saudi Arabia enter a meaningful and constructive dialogue.

More broadly, we will continue to support the people of Yemen through the provision of lifesaving humanitarian supplies. The UK is the fourth largest humanitarian donor to Yemen, and the second largest to the UN appeal – committing £155 million to Yemen for 2017/18. UKaid has already provided food to almost two million people and clean water to over one million more.

Mr Speaker, the only way to bring long-term stability to Yemen is through a political solution. That is why peace talks remain the top priority. The Houthis must abandon pre-conditions and engage with the UN Special Envoy's proposals.

The UK has played, and continues to play, a leading role in diplomatic efforts to find a peaceful solution. This includes bringing together key international actors – including the US, Saudi, Emirati and Omani allies – through the Quad and Quint process. We intend to convene another such meeting shortly. It is vital that we work together to refocus the political track.

The UK will also continue to play a leading role on Yemen through the UN. In June, we proposed and supported the UN Security Council Presidential Statement which expressed deep concern about the humanitarian situation in Yemen. The statement called for an end to the fighting, a return to UN-led peace talks and stressed the importance of unhindered humanitarian access. It is vital that the words of the text are converted into action. The international community's unified and clear demands must be respected.

I commend this statement to the House.

Press release: Meter stops running for director of taxi company

Gheorghe Betianu, gave a disqualification undertaking to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on 12 October 2017, which, prevents him from managing or controlling a company without leave of the court from 14 November 2017 until November 2024.

Mr Betianu, a former Olympic boxer, was the sole appointed director of Riverside Group (London) Ltd (RGLL) from 1995 to the date of creditors' voluntary liquidation on 2016. He was also the company's sole shareholder.

RGLL traded under the name of Media Cars and provided taxi services in the London area and private ambulance transportation to various London hospitals.

An Insolvency Service investigation found that Mr Betianu failed to ensure that RGLL maintained adequate accounting records and caused RGLL to trade to the detriment of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). At liquidation HMRC were owed at least £343,664 for PAYE/NIC and VAT.

Aldona O'Hara, Investigation Leader, Insolvent Investigations Midlands & West at the Insolvency Service, said:

Directors have a duty to ensure that their companies maintain proper accounting records, and, following insolvency, deliver them to the office-holder in the interests of fairness and transparency.

Without a full account of transactions it is impossible to determine whether a director has discharged his duties properly, or is using a lack of documentation as a cloak for impropriety.

In addition, directors who fail to ensure that HMRC are treated on

an equal basis with other classes of creditor gain an unfair advantage over those companies who pay their taxes correctly and on time. They can expect to be investigated by the Insolvency Service and enforcement action taken to remove them from the market place.

Riverside Group (London) Limited – Company Registration Number 03066834 – was incorporated on 12 June 1995. It traded from 1997 to May 2016 from 12 West Lane, Bermondsey, London, SE16 4NY.

Gheorghe Betianu, date of birth: September 1959 was the sole appointed director of RGLL from 15 June 1995 to the date of Creditors' Voluntary Liquidation on 03 June 2016. He was also the sole shareholder of RGLL.

RGLL went into liquidation on 3 June 2016, with assets of £11,050 and owing an estimated £473,582 to creditors.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures.

BEIS' mission is to build a dynamic and competitive UK economy that works for all, in particular by creating the conditions for business success and promoting an open global economy. The Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team contributes to this aim by taking action to deter fraud and to regulate the market. They investigate and prosecute a range of offences, primarily relating to personal or company insolvencies.

The agency also authorises and regulates the insolvency profession, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to

complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[News story: GLD launches its own northern powerhouse](#)

The decision to invest in the city and region is part of GLD's ongoing corporate vision to make the most of the potential of its existing regional presence, and also take advantage of the growing market of skilled lawyers based in the north of England.

Board member Stephen Braviner Roman said:

The government has been keen to expand out of London and make the most of the strong skills base in the regions by investing in those areas. When we considered the future way in which the Government Legal Department would need to work, we saw there was a compelling argument for increasing our investment in the North, and Leeds specifically. The legal sector in Leeds is one of the fastest growing in Britain, and we have an increasing need to deliver legal services to our government clients in the north of the country.

By bringing all our teams into one building in Leeds, we will be able to offer more opportunities for our people to develop their careers. We already have a strong offer for anyone thinking about a career in public law, and this increased regional presence will only enhance it.

The move will enable GLD to take advantage of a greater pool of professional talent. The legal sector in Leeds has grown faster than any other UK city over the past decade. [ONS statistics](#) show the number of legal jobs in Leeds grew 20% between 2010 and 2015, while in London they grew 5%.

GLD puts considerable emphasis on attracting the best legal talent. Its mission statement asserts that it aims to provide 'unrivalled opportunities for interesting, varied, high-quality, challenging work in an environment where individuals are valued and supported to fulfil their potential'.

Commercial lawyer David Tinkler explains his own reasons for moving to GLD Leeds:

My background was in banking. I started my career in structured finance at Clifford Chance before a move to Walker Morris but moved

to GLD for more interesting and rewarding work and a better work/life balance. I have particularly enjoyed the interaction of public law and private law and being involved in projects that will have a real benefit to people.

The teams that are leading the move include some of the biggest within GLD. The Employment Group is one of the largest employment law practices in the country with a number of key specialisms including both non-contentious and contentious individual employment issues and judicial reviews. It has also developed particular expertise in large-scale, multi-party pay and pensions litigation and has significant expertise in discrimination, unfair dismissal, breach of contract and maternity and paternity rights.

GLD's Commercial Law Group helps clients with some of the largest and most complex transactions across government and tries to get the best possible deals when buying goods and services for the public sector. Among its specialisms are ecommerce, mutualisation, IT law, intellectual property, professional negligence and emergency injunctions.

We have a number of opportunities for commercial, employment and litigation lawyers in our Leeds office. For more information and to apply visit [Civil Service Jobs](#).

An extended version of this story appears in issue 148 of [Leeds and Yorkshire Lawyer magazine](#).

Press release: A14 roadworks bridge to be taken down

A temporary bridge over the A14 at Swavesey will be taken down this week, having played its part in keeping construction traffic away from the busy A14 during construction of Britain's biggest road upgrade.

The bridge, part of the £1.5 billion A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement, has been used to carry 160,000 cubic metres of construction materials – enough to fill 65 Olympic swimming pools – from the south to the north of the A14 in just over two months. Without it, 40,000 extra lorry movements would have been needed on the current A14.

Now all the construction materials have been moved across, the bridge is no longer needed and can be removed.

Highways England project manager for the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Chris Griffin said:

Using this temporary bridge has helped us to carry out work to prepare the construction of the future Swavesey interchange with minimal impact on people's journeys, and is just one of the ways in which we are keeping traffic moving while we deliver these vital improvements for the A14. The bridge will be taken down using temporary overnight closures on the A14, so I encourage drivers to plan ahead and find out what to do if they are affected.

To carry out this work safely, the A14 will need to be closed between junctions 24 (Godmanchester) and 31 (Girton interchange) from 9pm to 5am as follows:

- A14 eastbound closure only on Monday 20 November
- A14 westbound closure only on Tuesday 21 November
- Full A14 closure in both directions on Saturday 25 November

During the closures, clearly signed diversions will be in place. Drivers heading east will be diverted to take the A1198 to Caxton Gibbet, then the A428 to re-join the A14. Traffic heading west will follow this route in reverse. Local traffic will still be able to continue eastbound on the A14 to reach junction 27 (Fenstanton) and exit, at which point the A14 will be closed. Similarly local traffic heading westbound will still be able to reach junction 28 (Swavesey) and exit.

To check the latest traffic information, listen to traffic bulletins on local and national radio stations, [visit the Traffic England website](#), and follow Highways England on Twitter via @HighwaysEAST.