

News story: Hurricane Irma: Foreign Secretary interview on BBC Today Programme

I sympathise with the distress of all the families in the Caribbean, but I must point out we have had half a million British nationals in the path of this hurricane. In St Martin in particular, this is controlled with the Dutch and the French, who have been evacuating people but in priority depending on their medical needs. This is a very big consular crisis and I am confident we are doing everything we can to help British nationals, but there are half a million affected.

We've been able to get 700 troops into the region, and police officers coming in. I think there are now more than 50 UK police arriving in the area. I've talked to the governor, Gus Jaspert, and he has told me of the psychological benefits of seeing UK service personnel helping and restoring a sense of order.

No, we were there as soon as the crisis broke. It doesn't make any sense when a hurricane is impending to send in aircraft or ships that are not going to be capable of withstanding the storm. If you look at what is happening now, there is an unprecedented British effort to deal with what has been an unprecedented catastrophe.

The emergency hotline is there – 44 (0) 207 008 0000 – we instantly set up a system for people to donate via the Red Cross. I must respectfully dissent from the critics of the Government. Gus Jaspert is being hailed as a hero and that is right. We have responded in a timely and highly organised fashion. These are British overseas territories and we are going to be there for the long-term. We will come with a recovery plan for these islands and help them restore their financial services and tourism industries.

Taxpayers money is already being deployed. £28 million has already been spent and we will be announcing further support over the next few days. This is an absolute priority for our Government and we understand the huge economic blow that has been dealt in these islands. The Government is working together at all levels to restore confidence and I pay tribute to the local administrations.

Read more about the [government's response to Hurricane Irma](#).