Press release: Minister for Middle East's statement on planned Israeli settlement

Minister Burt said:

> The UK strongly condemns the Israeli government's decision to 'legalise' the Netiv Ha'avot outpost in the West Bank. The international community has repeatedly stated that settlements are illegal under international law and undermine the physical viability of the two-state solution.

Further information

- Follow the Minister Burt on Twitter @AlistairBurtUK
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter @foreignoffice and Facebook
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News story: Defence Minister hosts Polish counterpart at Allied Rapid Reaction Corps

Following Mr Lancaster's visit to Poland in August 2017, the Polish Under Secretary of State has been in the UK for a two-day visit to discuss plans for the continued close defence relationship between the two countries.

The pair visited the UK's leading contribution to NATO, the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps. The high readiness force staff includes two Polish nationals, as well as UK nationals and personnel from 21 NATO countries.

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

> Our defence cooperation with Poland continues to go from strength to strength. We recently signed a defence treaty together, only the second such treaty the UK has signed with another EU country, signifying the importance of our relationship. We remain entirely committed to the security of our friends in Europe.
>
> We are allies together in NATO and this visit has shown how our troops work side by side within the alliance to protect our interests.

The UK has deployed 150 military personnel to Poland as part of NATO's Enhance Forward Presence (eFP) in the region. Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson visited these troops in December.

As well as visiting the UK's leading NATO high-readiness headquarters, the Defence Minister and his Polish counterpart commemorated veterans at the Polish War Memorial and witnessed a Ground Based Air Defence demonstration at Salisbury Plain. They also held a series of bilateral talks following on from the successful signing of the new defence treaty in December.

Press release: UK Public Health Rapid Support Team deploys to Nigeria

The UK Public Health Rapid Support Team (UK-PHRST), a joint run effort of Public Health England and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, is deploying to Nigeria to help control an outbreak of Lassa fever.

Nigeria is currently experiencing an unusually severe epidemic of Lassa fever – a viral haemorrhagic illness that is normally present in the country but on a lower scale. The outbreak is most prevalent in the southern Nigerian states of Edo, Ondo and Ebonyi.

Given the size of the current outbreak and the risk of further spread locally, the government of Nigeria has requested support from the UK-PHRST team.

The UK-PHRST team deployment includes an expert in patient management, 2

epidemiologists (experts in tracking outbreaks) and a logistician.

The UK-PHRST will provide technical and analytical support for the public health response to control this outbreak, and will also assist with important research on Lassa fever that can provide insight for controlling the disease in the future.

The team will be working alongside the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control, the World Health Organisation (WHO), and other experts in outbreak control to support the Nigerian government's response.

Professor Daniel Bausch, Director of the UK PHRST said:

> The Lassa fever situation in Nigeria has been worsening and now requires an escalated level of response in order to help the Nigerian government slow transmission and save lives.
>
> We are proud to be assisting the government of Nigeria by offering specialist support that will benefit the country both in the immediate and long term.

Public Health Minister Steve Brine MP, said:

> Viruses like Lassa fever do not respect borders – and it is only right that we share our expertise with countries facing serious outbreaks around the world.
>
> Our invaluable Rapid Support Team will provide help on the ground in Nigeria to manage the spread of the virus, and grow the country's ability to protect itself from other dangerous diseases.

Humans usually become infected with Lassa virus from exposure to urine or faeces of infected rodents that are unique to Africa. The virus may also be spread between humans through direct contact with the blood, urine, faeces, or other bodily secretions of an infected person, though this tends to be less common. Typical symptoms include fever, sore throat, headache, abdominal pain and diarrhoea, with bleeding and shock in severe cases. The public health risk to the UK is low.

The UK PHRST is funded by the UK government. It continually monitors infectious diseases and other hazards globally, identifying situations where the deployment of specialist expertise could prevent these threats from turning into a global outbreak. It also conducts outbreak-related research and focuses on building in-country capacity to prevent outbreaks with overseas partners.

Background

For latest case numbers of Lassa Fever in Nigeria, please refer to the WHO: http://www.ncdc.gov.ng/reports/weekly.

UK-PHRST

UK-PHRST consists of public health experts, scientists, academics and clinicians ready to respond to urgent requests from countries around the world within 48 hours to support them in preventing local disease outbreaks from becoming global epidemics.

Informed by surveillance data, the UK-PHRST deploys on behalf of UK government in response to requests from low- and middle-income countries, as well as with the WHO and the Global Outbreak and Response Network (GOARN).

The UK PHRST has previously deployed members to Ethiopia (outbreak of Acute Watery Diarrhoea), Nigeria (Meningitis outbreak), Sierra Leone (cholera risk), Madagascar (plague outbreak) and Bangladesh (Diptheria outbreak).

The core team consists of:

- epidemiologists (experts in tracking and understanding disease transmission)
- microbiologists (diagnosing the cause of an outbreak)
- clinical researchers (developing the best patient management practices)
- social scientists (community engagement during outbreaks)
- data scientists (managing data and modelling outbreak trajectories)
- infection prevention and control experts (advising on preventing transmission)
- logisticians

The UK-PHRST consortium of research institutions includes the University of Oxford and King's College London as academic partners.

Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and providing specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific expertise and support. Follow us on Twitter: @PHE_uk and Facebook: www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland.

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine is a world-leading centre for research and postgraduate education in public and global health, with more than 4,000 students and 1,000 staff working in over 100 countries. The

school is one of the highest-rated research institutions in the UK, is among the world's leading schools in public and global health, and was named University of the Year in the Times Higher Education Awards 2016. Our mission is to improve health and health equity in the UK and worldwide; working in partnership to achieve excellence in public and global health research, education and translation of knowledge into policy and practice.

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Press release: Over £2 million paid to charity rebuilt by Commission inquiry

Over £2.1 million has been recovered to a charitable trust after a Commission inquiry exposed and addressed misconduct and mismanagement in its administration.

The London based grant-making charity was established to further general charitable purposes. Despite lending £2 million the charity was not able to evidence adequate attempts to protect the charity's assets or recover the loan. The Commission opened a statutory inquiry in May 2015 by which point the total due to the charity had risen to £2,236,401 as a result of interest accrued.

The Commission first engaged with The Reb Moishe Foundation in 2014 regarding a loan it made to a private commercial company, Gladstar Ltd, which was connected to one of the trustees. The inquiry found that poor decision-making regarding the loan had placed the charity's funds at serious risk. The charity took no external investment advice before entering into the loan, and as Gladstar Ltd was based in Gibraltar, recovery of the funds would be challenging.

The Commission's inquiry also identified concerns about unmanaged conflicts of interest. One of the charity's trustees was secretary of the company at the time the loan was made, and subsequently became a Director.
As a result of the Commission's intervention, the surviving trustee agreed to

transfer the proceeds of the sale of six properties owned by Gladstar Ltd to the charity which resulted in £2,137,368.50 being vested in the bank account of the Official Custodian for Charities (the OCC).

The surviving trustee resigned from the charity and agreed not to take on any other charity trusteeships. Two new trustees were appointed by the settlor, and have opened a new bank account and adopted policies for grant making, investment and conflicts of interest. The Commission has since directed the OCC to transfer the recovered funds to the charity which, including interest, totalled £2,137,736.39. This happened on 7 October 2017.

The inquiry closed on 27 February with the publication of this report, however the Commission will continue to monitor the new trustees' application of the new policies and charitable funds.

Harvey Grenville, Head of Investigations and Enforcement at the Charity Commission said:

> Failings of governance and financial management unfortunately put this charity's assets on the line. The good news is that, following our intervention, over £2 million can now be put towards important charitable causes.
>
> This inquiry demonstrates that if not properly managed, conflicts of interest can seriously hamper trustees from acting in the best interests of their charity.

The Commission's full report of its inquiry is available on GOV.UK.

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see the about us page on GOV.UK.
2. Search for charities on our check charity tool.

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News story: The Long View – a lifetime of work in optronics is recognised in annual award

Richard Hollins Senior Fellow, Cyber & Information Systems Department at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), has been recognised for his outstanding contribution to optronics.

At a special award ceremony earlier this month, Dr Hollins was presented with the lifetime achievement award from OPTRO – the international symposium on optronics for defence and security – which recognises a significant contribution in the field of optronics.

Optronics covers all the technologies that use light for information and processing – it includes lasers, detectors, cameras, sensors, optical communications.

Richard brought new insights to the search for protection measures against lasers of any wavelength – a requirement which becomes ever more important as the variety of available laser wavelengths continues to increase. Some of his work has contributed to the revision of international laser safety standards, which control the use of lasers in laboratories around the world.

It was the senior fellow's work in this and other areas which have contributed to innovation in optronics over several decades. Optronics provides what the eye can't see; imagery at a longer range than the eye can master, thermal images, infrared, radar, even camera images from low level light like star light – all vital for gathering information about an area or accurately identifying a target.

Richard said:

> I'm very pleased to have the recognition of my career – I certainly didn't expect to get it – I expect I'll be retiring soon and I don't know how many more chances I'd have for an award like that. I've been fortunate to work with many colleagues at Dstl, in industry and academia, and in foreign government organisations, and I'm grateful for all their contributions to the work.

> Things have changed a huge amount – in the days when I started, lasers were inefficient, we were trying to develop them into things that we could use, but they've needed to change considerably to the efficient compact devices we know today. I used to have to build 50,000 volt power supplies and today's devices use 10 volts or less.
> Lasers have found their way into many much smaller devices. Cameras

> themselves have also become much better and smaller – I have recollections of when you saw a TV camera or a thermal imager, it was a big thing with scanning optics that had to be wheeled around, and today all that complexity has been replaced by a small hand-held camera, and costs have come down.

The future of optronics continues to evolve – as a communications channel, optics is starting to offer secure directional communications with much higher bandwidth to open up new possibilities. It's always been difficult communicating with submarines as most electromagnetic wavelengths don't go through sea water – but lasers are now sufficiently good that progress is being made in this direction.
Richard is still actively involved in physics at Dstl.

He said:

> I don't get into the lab much these days but I still inspire people as a mentor and help to work out how we should address new challenges. I take a lot of interest from understanding new scientific challenges through simple calculations. I produce simple theoretical models that are written on a few pieces of paper, and which relate the inputs to the outputs via the underpinning physics – and to me that's a really powerful way of understanding. More complex computer-based models can be useful too, but everybody should try my simple approach first.
>
> Dstl provides opportunities for a career with plenty of challenge: providing the science and technology required for our security and defence. We can't do all the work internally, but we select and work with the best partners. Our own work must be of the highest standard in order to understand the problem, to define the requirement and identify solutions, to manage the work as it proceeds, and to evaluate the products. My own career has enabled me to find ways to harness new developments in electro-optic technology to meet new military challenges.
> My award demonstrates the respect with which Dstl science is viewed within the scientific community.