



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2016/0188 | 20 October 2016

British engagement with Libya

Westminster Hall
Wednesday 26 October 2016
9:30am – 11:00am
Debate initiated by Kwasi Kwarteng

The Proceedings of this debate can be viewed on Parliamentlive.tv

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

Compiled by: Aleksandra Gorb

Subject specialist: Ben Smith

Contents

1.	Background	2
2.	Press Articles	4
3.	Gov.uk	6
4.	PQs	9
5.	Other Parliamentary material	13
5.1	Statements	13
5.2	Debates	14
5.3	Early Day Motions	14
6.	Further reading	15

1. Background

In 2016 US President Obama criticised David Cameron and François Hollande for being “distracted” after the fall of Muammar Qaddafi and failing to implement a strategy for reconstruction. He said that the situation, with the establishment of ISIS in Libya, was a “mess”.

The UK government supports the Libyan Government of National Accord, as do most of its allies and the United Nations. It calls for the implementation of UNSCR 2259 of December 2015.

UK engagement with Libya has been hampered by the prevailing insecurity. The British Embassy in Tripoli closed in August 2014 and has not re-opened, although diplomatic relations have not been broken off; UK diplomatic staff conducts its business from the embassy in Tunis. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s advice is to avoid all travel to Libya.

The UK has participated in security operations in the Mediterranean, and in August 2016 provided a Royal Navy vessel to help remove the last known materials from Libya which could be used in the manufacture of chemical weapons.

The UK government accepts that it has a shared interest with Libya and neighbouring countries to fight against terrorism. It says that the UK cooperates with Libya and its neighbours on counter-terrorism. The UK shares expertise on border security, working with the Tunisian Government to secure the Libyan-Tunisian border. This includes targeted training of the Tunisian border authorities, and provision of equipment.

The UK also supports the EU’s Navfor Med – *Operation Sophia* – which tries to police the waters off Libya to help control the refugee problem. In September 2016 HMS Diamond, a Type-45 destroyer, joined HMS Enterprise to participate in *Operation Sophia*.

The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee [reported on the situation in Libya in September 2016](#). They concluded that the level of funding offered by Western governments to rebuild Libya was not at the root of the country’s collapse; that institutional weakness and the rapid deterioration in security made it difficult to help Libya recover from the conflict. A political settlement would be needed. But collaboration with the UN-backed Libyan authorities has not been easy. The Government of National Accord was reluctant to give

permission for *Operation Sophia* to operate in Libyan waters, and Libyan ministers have resisted offers of military training (after the disastrous outcome of the programme to train Libya soldiers in the UK).

2. Press Articles

Daily Telegraph
16 October 2016

Libyan government forces near victory in Sirte

Vin Shahrestani

Guardian
15 October 2016

Libya coup attempt as Tripoli militias seek to topple UN-backed government

Chris Stephen

Guardian
15 October 2016

United Nations condemns attempted coup in Libya

Chris Stephen

Guardian
14 September 2016

UK should have been more decisive in Libya, says ex-army chief

Jessica Elgot

Financial Times
14 September

MPs critical of Britain's decision to intervene in Libya

Henry Mance

BBC World News
14 September 2016

Why is Libya so lawless?

Mail online (Peter Hitchens's Blog)

14 September 2016

Hurrah for the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee

Peter Hitchens

Guardian
12 September 2016

Seizure of Libyan oil terminals prompts call for military action

Chris Stephen

Financial Times
18 August 2016

Libyan success against Isis marred by rivalries

Erika Solomon

Daily Telegraph
14 August 2016

Islamic State fighters fleeing besieged Libyan city could cross the Mediterranean in migrant boats, Italy warns

Nick Squires

Guardian
2 August 2014

Britain to close embassy and withdraw staff from Libya

Chris Stephens

3. Gov.uk

Joint statement on Libya

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

13 September 2016

Joint statement on Libya by the Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, condemning this weekend's attack on Libya's oil terminals.

The Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States condemn this weekend's attacks on Zueitina, Ras Lanuf, Es Sider, and Brega oil terminals in Libya. We call on all parties to undertake an immediate ceasefire and to refrain from any further hostilities. We also call on all forces to avoid any action that could damage Libya's energy infrastructure or further disrupt its exports. Libya's oil belongs to the Libyan people. The Presidency Council (PC) is the sole steward of these resources. The PC and other Government of National Accord (GNA) institutions have an obligation to ensure oil revenues are used to provide essential services for the Libyan people. Oil infrastructure, production, and export must remain under the exclusive control of the National Oil Corporation (NOC) acting under the GNA's authority. We call for all military forces that have moved into the oil crescent to withdraw immediately, without preconditions.

The Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States reaffirm their full support for the GNA as Libya's sole executive authority. Libyan forces should unite in fighting Da'esh and other UN-designated terrorist groups. Violence against fellow Libyans undermines Libya's stability and encourages division. Political agreements, not conflicts, must determine Libya's future. Creating a unified, capable national security force under GNA authority is Libya's best hope for protecting its resources for the benefit of all its people. We urge peaceful cooperation among Libya's armed forces and immediate efforts to unify into one professional military force. All Libyan forces have a responsibility to serve the entire nation, and to act on behalf of all Libyans. We welcome efforts by partners to encourage all forces to avoid further clashes.

We reiterate our intent to enforce UNSCR 2259, including measures concerning illicit oil exports, activities which could damage the integrity and unity of Libyan State financial institutions and the NOC, and individuals and entities engaging in or providing support for acts that threaten the peace, stability or security of Libya.

Royal Navy ship supports removal of potential chemical weapon materials from Libya

Ministry of Defence

31 August 2016

A Royal Navy vessel has assisted in the removal of the last batch of known materials which could be used in the manufacture of chemical weapons from Libya.

The UK provided RFA Mounts Bay to support the Danish-led maritime operation, escorting a Danish transport ship through the Mediterranean as it carried the chemicals, the Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary have announced.

Libya's chemical weapons stockpile was destroyed under international supervision in 2014. However, a quantity of chemicals which could be made into chemical weapons remained in the country. Earlier this year, the Libyan Government of National Accord requested support from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the international community in removing the remaining chemicals from Libya and destroying them safely in a third country.

Following the Libyan request, the UK took up a major role alongside international partners as part of a wider programme of UK support to the OPCW in ensuring these chemicals are safely destroyed and can't be obtained by terrorists.

Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said:

"RFA Mounts Bay will help ensure chemical weapons precursors do not fall into the hands of extremist groups, including Daesh. This contribution underlines our support to the Libyan Government of National Accord."

The deployment of RFA Mounts Bay is the latest demonstration of the UK's support for the programme to remove materials which could be used in the manufacture of chemical weapons from Libya. In July this year during his first visit to the UN since taking up the role the Foreign Secretary voted personally to adopt a UK drafted UN Security Council Resolution supporting the Libyan Government's operation. In addition the UK conducted intensive diplomatic negotiations including in New York and The Hague to support the Resolution and the wider operation. The UK also contributed around £500K to the overall destruction effort, and conducted expert analysis of samples of the Libyan chemicals at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, (Porton Down).

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

"The UK, in close cooperation with our international partners, is taking practical and effective action to eliminate chemical weapon risks in Libya."

The chemicals will be taken to a specialised facility, where they will be destroyed in an environmentally safe and secure way.

Separately, samples of the chemicals have been flown to the UK for analysis by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) at Porton Down – the MOD’s science arm.

As an OPCW Designated Laboratory DSTL has a capability that is respected worldwide for the quality of its work in the defence and security field.

The UK has experience of working with the Danes when dealing with chemical weapons – both countries played a key role in the removal of Syria’s chemical weapons in 2013 and 2014. The UK worked closely with a range of international partners in dealing with these chemicals from Libya, including the USA and Germany as well as the OPCW.

Joint statement on Libya

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
17 August 2016

Joint statement on Libya by the Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States

The Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States welcome the announcement by the Presidency Council of the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) appointing an Interim Steering Committee of the Libyan Investment Authority (LIA).

The LIA has a vital role to safeguard Libya’s assets for the long term benefit of the Libyan people. The Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States recall that UN Security Council Resolution 2259 stressed the need for the Government of National Accord to exercise sole and effective oversight over the National Oil Company, the Central Bank of Libya, and the Libyan Investment Authority as a matter of urgency, and highlighted the importance of these institutions continuing to function for the benefit of all Libyans.

The Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States call on all Libyans to support the GNA in preserving and protecting the independence and integrity of the Libyan Financial Institutions for the benefit of all Libyans.

4. PQs

Libya: Compensation

18 Oct 2016 | 47645

Asked by: Rosindell, Andrew

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to persuade the Libyan government to issue compensation for UK victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK Government takes the needs of victims of terrorism in the UK very seriously and is sympathetic to their attempts to seek redress. The current instability in Libya has delayed further discussions with the authorities on the resolution of legacy issues. We have made clear to the Libyan authorities that resolution of legacy issues remain a priority for us. Mr Ellwood raised the issue with Prime Minister Serraj when he met him in Tunis last November. We also raised it with Foreign Minister Siala during the visit to Libya by the former Foreign Secretary, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond) earlier this year. In July, Mr Ellwood wrote to the Government of National Accord (GNA) seeking an update on legacy issues, but we do not anticipate a swift response given the current challenges facing the GNA.

Libya

18 Oct 2016 | 615 c668

Asked by: Fabian Hamilton

The attempt by members of the former Libya Dawn Government to retake control of Tripoli is deeply worrying to all of us who want security and stability to return to Libya. Who does the Foreign Secretary believe is currently in charge in Libya, what is his strategy for achieving that security and stability, and who does he think is responsible for the mess Libya now finds itself in?

Answered by: Tobias Ellwood

I could speak for an hour on that last question and say how misleading—inadvertently misleading—it is. It does not help us to suggest that somehow what happened in 2011 is applicable to what is happening today. There was a Libyan Government, there was a Prime Minister and there were elections, and many of the international community were asked to leave in 2011-12. After 40 years of misrule under Gaddafi, society is now trying to develop, and that is the challenge we face today.

Libya: Compensation

10 Oct 2016 | 47646

Asked by: Andrew Rosindell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with officials from (a) the EU and (b) the UN on obtaining compensation for UK victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism.

Answering Member: Tobias Ellwood

The UK Government takes the needs of UK victims of Qadhafi-sponsored terrorism very seriously and is sympathetic to their attempts to seek redress. We have raised this with the Libyan authorities, making it clear that resolution remains a priority for us, though current instability has delayed progress on this issue. The UK Government is not currently involved in negotiations on securing compensation payments with the EU or UN, though the FCO does provide facilitation support to campaign groups, where it has been requested. The EU and UN have made clear that when sanctions are lifted, frozen assets must be made available to and for the benefit of the people of Libya.

Military Intervention: Libya

7 Oct 2016 | 46804

Asked by: Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2016, to Question 44003, whether the battle damage assessment regarding airstrikes in Libya carried out by US forces operating from RAF Lakenheath on 19 February 2016 was shared with the UK.

Answering Member: Mike Penning | Ministry of Defence

The US has, in confidence, shared the results of that strike with the UK. Clearly it would be inappropriate for us to release that detail or to comment on another State's operations.

Libya: Islamic State

07 Sept 2016 | HL1680

Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to assist with the formulation of a regional strategy and regional co-ordination to prevent IS fighters relocating from Libya to Tunisia and Egypt following the military operation in Libya to recapture Sirte.

Answering Member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have been clear, as has the UN Security Council, that Daesh represent a threat to international peace and security. The UK has a shared interest with Libya and her neighbouring countries in the fight against terrorism, and we are committed to working together with them in a number of areas to combat the terrorist threat, including the risk that some Daesh fighters may seek to relocate from Sirte. Egypt is a vital partner in bringing peace and stability to Libya. As well as cooperating on counter-terrorism, we hold regular discussions on tackling the terrorist threat emanating from Libya, and are sharing expertise on border security. We are working with the Tunisian Government, in concert with other international partners, to secure the Libyan-Tunisian border. This includes the development of a border strategy with the government of Tunisia, targeted training of the border authorities, and provision of equipment to enhance their ability to police the border.

Libya: Islamic State**7 Sept 2016 | 45376****Asked by: Rehman Chishti**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the strength of Daesh in Libya after its defeat in Sirte.

Answering Member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Daesh are under significant pressure in Sirte. I welcome the positive steps the Libyan people are taking to remove Daesh from their country, including Prime Minister Serraj's recent request for precision airstrikes from the United States of America against Daesh. The defeat of Daesh in Libya will have a positive impact on the long term stability of Libya and the region. But other extremist groups, including those with links to Al Qaeda, remain a threat to the country and the region. It is important that the International Community fully supports the Government of National Accord in their efforts to bring all legitimate military and security forces under a unified command. This will help to restore stability, seal the defeat of Daesh and close the space in which the terrorists and criminal gangs are operating.

It is vital that the international community is relentless in its efforts to ensure Daesh and its affiliates are defeated wherever they arise, including tackling those fighters who remain in Libya. The UK is playing a leading role in the Global Coalition of over 66 partners committed to defeating Daesh. The Global Coalition is committed to tackling the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters travelling to the region to join Daesh or travelling from Daesh-held territories to other countries. It is also important to consider what comes after the defeat of Daesh, in areas that they control. We are working closely with the new Libyan

government and international partners to develop a comprehensive approach to stabilisation and post-conflict reconstruction, including through the £10m UK CSSF allocation.

Libya: Islamic State

7 Sept 2016 | 45375

Asked by: Rehman Chishti

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps the international community is taking to prevent Daesh fighters in Libya fleeing into neighbouring countries.

Answering Member: Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

It is vital that the international community is relentless in its efforts to ensure Daesh and its affiliates are defeated wherever they arise, including tackling those fighters who may be retreating from Libya. We are coordinating closely with Egypt and Tunisia to share expertise on border security. More broadly, the UK is playing a leading role in the Global Coalition of over 66 partners committed to defeating Daesh. The Global Coalition is committed to tackling the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters travelling to the region to join Daesh or travelling from Daesh-held territories to other countries. The Counter-Daesh Coalition Working Group on Foreign Terrorist Fighters, co-led by the Netherlands, Turkey and the United States, is working with Coalition partners to implement the obligations and recommendations in UN Security Council Resolution 2178 on 24 September 2014. This resolution requires countries to take steps to counter foreign terrorist fighters, to expand current obligations under international law, and to strengthen international measures that prevent suspected foreign terrorist fighters from travelling, disrupt financial support to foreign terrorist fighters, and further strengthen international and regional co-operation mechanisms.

Rendition and Torture: Libya

2 Sept 2016 | 44263

Asked by: Alistair Carmichael

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions his Department has had with the Crown Prosecution Service on Operation Lydd.

Answering Member: Ben Gummer | Cabinet Office

No discussions were had between the Cabinet Office and the CPS concerning Operation Lydd. The CPS is an independent organisation, superintended by the Attorney General. Operational decisions are a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions.

5. Other Parliamentary material

5.1 Statements

Destruction of Libyan chemical weapon precursors

Written Statement

5 Sept 2016 | HCWS127

Made by: Boris Johnson (The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs)

My right honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Defence (Michael Fallon), and I wish to make a joint statement about the significant contribution that Her Majesty's Government has made to international efforts to ensure the safe destruction of precursor chemicals from Libya's historic chemical weapons programme.

Libya's chemical weapons stockpile was destroyed under international supervision and verification by 2014. However, a quantity of precursor chemicals remained in Libya. The international community was concerned about the risks that, in the current security situation, these chemicals might be acquired and misused by non-state actors. Earlier this year, the Libyan Government of National Accord asked for support from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the international community to remove the remaining chemicals from Libya and to destroy them in a safe and timely manner in a third country. The UK has played a major role in coordinating international efforts to assist Libya and the OPCW to achieve this, including in the UN Security Council and with practical steps.

On 22 July, I voted on behalf of the UK in the UN Security Council for authority to be given for the chemicals to be removed from Libya for destruction in another country. Subsequently, the Danish Government asked the UK to provide a naval escort to support Denmark's operation to ship the chemicals out of Libya.

The Secretary of State for Defence agreed to provide support, in the same way as the Royal Navy supported Denmark and Norway in the operation to remove chemical weapons from Syria in 2014. During late August, RFA Mounts Bay escorted the Danish task group from Libya through the Mediterranean.

In order to enable the safe transport and destruction of the Libyan chemicals, and to provide verification assistance to the OPCW, experts at the UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down were tasked to analyse samples of the chemicals. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has contributed some £500,000 to support both the analysis and destruction of the chemicals.

The UK's contribution to this task is now almost complete. The chemicals are being taken to a specialist facility in a third country, where they will be safely destroyed.

In close cooperation with our international partners – notably Denmark, Germany and the US, who contributed significant funding to the overall destruction effort, as well as with the OPCW – the UK has taken practical and effective action to eliminate chemical weapon risks in Libya. This reinforces our collective commitment to the people and government of Libya, and, ultimately, to all of us who want to live in a world free from chemical weapons.

5.2 Debates

Victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA Terrorism: Compensation

13 September 2016 | Vol 614 cc283-307WH

5.3 Early Day Motions

Developments in Libya

EDM (Session 2016-17)

George Kerevan

13 June 2016

That this House voices its concern regarding political developments in Libya and, in particular, the possibility that the UK may be drawn directly into armed conflict in that country; notes that a draft proposal has been circulated by the UK representative to other members of the UN Security Council proposing authorisation for an EU-led naval force to impose an arms blockade on the Libyan coast; further notes that while the UK has offered to put 1,000 British ground forces into Libya to conduct training for forces loyal to the new Government of National Accord, a substantial proportion of this force inevitably would have to be deployed to provide armed defence of the training unit and training facilities, opening the potential for direct fighting with Daesh and other local militias and creating a target for attack by extremists; believes that given the chaotic political situation in Libya, the lack of a single national army and the spread of Daesh in that country, any major British deployment by land, sea or air would inevitably lead to active military engagement; recalls that all recent proposals to go to war have been discussed and voted on in Parliament and calls on for this precedent not to be broken over Libya; and urges the Government to consult with Parliament before seeking to engage in any form of direct involvement in Libya.

6. Further reading

Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options, report by House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Third Report of Session 2016–17, HC 119, 14 September 2016

Compensation for victims of Libyan sponsored IRA terrorism, Commons Library Debate Pack, CDP-0162, 7 September 2016

British soldiers to Libya?, Commons Library Briefing Paper, CBP-7568, 22 April 2016

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publically available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcinfo@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).