



## DEBATE PACK

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# UK's contribution to international disaster relief

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### Contents

1.	Background	2
2.	Press Articles	5
3.	Press Releases	6
4.	PQs	14
5.	Statements	29
6.	Further reading	35

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.

# 1. Background

UK bilateral spending on humanitarian aid has steadily increased over the past seven years, with a particularly rapid increase around 2013-14. The vast majority of this spending goes on emergency response (94% in 2016), although the amounts going into both reconstruction and disaster prevention and preparedness have also been increasing in recent years.

UK spending on humanitarian aid							
Bilateral aid only, £ millions (not adjusted for inflation)							
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Emergency Response	324	365	411	773	1,043	1,143	1,210
Reconstruction relief and rehabilitation	38	52	8	25	57	57	19
Disaster prevention and preparedness	6	6	6	28	19	66	55
<b>Total humanitarian aid</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>1,119</b>	<b>1,266</b>	<b>1,284</b>

Source: DFID, Statistics on International Development 2017, Table A7, 16 November 2017

There was controversy in late-2017 when the UK could not count its support to Overseas Territories affected by Hurricane Irma as aid spending. However, following UK Government [lobbying](#) within the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, this looks much less likely to happen again in future.

In September 2017, DFID published an update of the UK Government's [2011](#) humanitarian policy. Now called the '[Humanitarian Reform Policy](#)', then Secretary of State for International Development, Priti Patel said in the foreword:

The global humanitarian system helps enormous numbers of people and saves millions of lives. But it is clear that it is being stretched to breaking point. Conflict is currently driving the largest population movements since World War Two. We are living in the age of protracted crisis with 142 million people now in need of humanitarian aid. We need to break the cycle of dependence and despair for millions of people displaced by years of conflict, persecution, violence and human rights violations.

Need is great and growing, but resources have not grown at the same pace and there is now a funding gap of \$14 billion. Being good enough is not going to be good enough given the scale and severity of the challenge ahead. We urgently need a more efficient, effective humanitarian system for the 21st Century that can meet vulnerable people's long-term needs. This needs to be a global effort.

At the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the world agreed a clear vision for a radically improved humanitarian system where our responses are faster and more effective. I have encouraged the UN Secretary General to pursue an ambitious UN reform programme, and humanitarian reform is at the heart of that agenda. Britain is a great, global nation. This policy sets out the UK's vision for change on humanitarian action. It describes innovations in the UK's humanitarian response and how we will take forward an ambitious agenda to reform the international system. It will help build a more secure and more prosperous world, which makes our own country safer and stronger as well.

Responding to the new policy, the Overseas Development Institute welcomed many elements but expressed concerns about others. It [set out](#) these concerns as follows:

- A renewed commitment to work through 'neutral and independent partners' will continue to constrain funding to local responders. For a local actor in the midst of a long-running conflict, it is difficult to imagine what neutrality and independence would look like and how such an actor could operate under a strict interpretation of these principles. [As research by the Humanitarian Policy Group \(HPG\) indicates](#), UK anti-terror measures aimed at curbing funding to proscribed organisations has imposed stringent beneficiary and partner vetting requirements in places like Syria and Somalia. In the effort to reduce the risk of aid falling into the wrong hands, many international non-governmental organisations have decided that partnerships with local actors are not worth the risk, limiting the funding options of those best-placed to respond.
- There is a danger that the emphasis on building the resilience and preparedness of affected people will be lost under the policy's objective to make UK responses 'bigger, better and faster'. Permanent bodies such as Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) feature prominently: just one of a growing number of cross-governmental initiatives intended to utilise UK capacity and expertise to respond rapidly to crises. Yet while offering additional support, there is a risk that with such a 'hammer', very different humanitarian contexts start to look like a series of 'nails' that can receive a standardised intervention. If the UK is truly committed to reform, it must also demonstrate a greater willingness to 'let go' of areas of humanitarian action it currently dominates, to allow local actors to take a lead in organising their own response.
- The policy's welcome focus on displacement is undermined by the language of containment: of keeping affected people within their own regions. Initiatives such as the Jordan Compact and [Wilton Park Principles](#) – that address the issue of protracted displacement – present a persuasive case for using long-term,

developmental approaches in support of host communities and countries. But the absence of any mention of the UK and its own responsibilities as a potential host country stands in stark contrast. Migration is presented as a regional issue and ironically, on the issue of the European migrant crisis where the UK itself is a 'local' humanitarian actor, there are few commitments.

## 2. Press Articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

### [Historic change to aid rules allows use of funding when lives are at stake](#)

Guardian  
Lucy Lambie  
1 November 2017

### [Hurricane Irma: UK will not spend foreign aid on disaster relief as overseas territories are 'too wealthy'](#)

Independent  
Harriet Agerholm  
14 September 2017

### [Extra £25m pledged for island devastated by Hurricane Irma](#)

The Times  
Catherine Philp  
14 September 2017

### [Hurricane Irma: Unicef appeals for international help for Caribbean islands](#)

Guardian  
Helen Davidson  
12 September 2017

### [How Britain and France have responded to Hurricane Irma disaster](#)

**Guardian**  
Kevin Rawlinson  
11 September 2017

### [British response to Hurricane Irma 'found wanting', senior MPs say, as Royal Navy arrives in Caribbean](#)

Daily Telegraph  
Ben Farmer and Steven Swinford  
8 September 2017

### [Hurricane Irma: residents in British territories 'feel like third-class citizens'](#)

The Times  
Catherine Philp  
8 September 2017

### [International development secretary defends Government's Hurricane Irma relief effort](#)

ITV News  
8 September 2017

## 3. Press Releases

### Millions more in support for hurricane-hit Overseas Territories

**10 Downing Street**

**27 November 2017**

Leaders from 11 British Overseas Territories will meet in Downing Street on Tuesday 28 November at the start of their annual Joint Ministerial Council meeting where Prime Minister Theresa May will confirm a new £70 million package of recovery and reconstruction support for British islands hit by recent, devastating hurricanes.

This new, long-term support will add to the UK's continued efforts to help the region recover and rebuild in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria, which affected more than two million people. It will be supplemented by up to £300 million of UK loan guarantees, for territories that need support to access finance.

At today's meeting, the Prime Minister will invite Territory leaders to speak of their experiences in the hurricanes and to discuss progress already made. Leaders of Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos, the worst impacted British territories, will be among those in attendance.

While substantial progress has been made already in the region, the UK is committed to supporting long-term reconstruction efforts so that each overseas territory can continue its important work of recovering essential services such as schools, medical facilities and ports, as well as power and water supplies.

Speaking ahead of the meeting, the Prime Minister said:

I am pleased to welcome leaders of the Overseas Territories to Downing Street today, as they begin regular consultations with their counterparts in the UK Government. I see this as a mark of the strong and enduring partnership that exists between us.

This set of meetings is not only a chance to work together on our shared priorities, but also to hear directly from those territories who suffered from Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

This new £70 million package of support demonstrates the UK's ongoing commitment to help its Overseas Territories as they get on with the difficult work of recovery.

When the first hurricane struck, the UK responded immediately, supplying humanitarian aid and disaster response expertise to the area. We have continued to provide support since then, having already committed £92 million to the region-wide relief effort to date.

The Prime Minister will also take the opportunity today to update leaders on the progress of our discussions with the European Union as we prepare to leave, and to invite leaders to express their views so we can ensure they are properly reflected in our strategy for Brexit negotiations.

**HMS Ocean arrives in Caribbean to boost UK disaster relief effort**  
**Department for International Development, Ministry of Defence**  
**22 September 2017**

The Royal Navy's flagship HMS Ocean has arrived in the British Virgin Islands to support those affected by Hurricane Irma and Maria.

The ship arrived today with around 650 personnel and 60 tonnes of aid including construction equipment and other essential materials such as hygiene kits and water purification tablets.

Ocean's arrival means there are now over 2,000 UK military personnel working on the relief effort, making it the largest deployment of UK personnel anywhere in the world.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

The sight of HMS Ocean dropping anchor in the British Overseas Territories will be welcome respite to those who have seen their islands battered by repeated hurricanes. Ocean will help support the longer-term reconstruction of the Caribbean islands which have been devastated by this unprecedented hurricane season.

The fact that this is our largest operation worldwide underlines the scale of the damage caused and the Government's commitment to UK citizens spread across the region and in need of our support.

In the coming days she will deliver aid and equipment where it is needed on the islands. She is then due to continue to other territories affected by this month's storms, as the Department for International Development (DFID) works with the Overseas Territories' Governments on a long term plan to get the islands back on their feet.

Commanding Officer of HMS Ocean, Captain Robert Pedre Royal Navy, said:

HMS Ocean stands ready to contribute her significant capabilities to the major UK effort already underway to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the Caribbean region.

We bring tonnes of aid, significant air and surface lift capacity and hundreds of highly skilled personnel including engineers, logisticians and medical professionals drawn from all three Services. My Ship's

Company and embarked forces are highly trained and we are ready to make a real difference.

There are considerable military assets in the region supporting UK personnel in the relief effort. RFA Mounts Bay has been in region since July, responding to initial disaster relief effort.

Commanding Officer of RFA Mounts Bay, Captain Stephen Norris, said:

RFA Mounts Bay has been stationed in the Caribbean since July working with the Overseas Territories in preparation for the 2017 Hurricane season. The ships company and embarked forces, made up of disaster relief specialists and equipment, has been providing critical support to the Islands since Irma first struck on the 6th September.

My people have worked tirelessly on the herculean task to assist those effected, and are committed to continuing with the delivery of life supporting aid and to helping the local population with recovery and rebuilding.

There is also a C-130 aircraft and two Chinook helicopters providing tactical airlift operations, three Puma and a Wildcat helicopter conducting reconnaissance flights and helping to deliver supplies and aid. On board, HMS Ocean also carried three Wildcat Mk1, one Merlin Mk2, three Merlin Mk3 and two Chinook helicopters.

The UK has already committed £57m to the relief effort and are matching public commitments to the British Red Cross Appeal up to £3m, and so far 75 tonnes of much-needed humanitarian aid has arrived or been bought in the region.

International Development Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

The UK has acted without hesitation to get the right supplies to those whose lives have been torn apart by these catastrophic hurricanes. With 60 tonnes of aid arriving on HMS Ocean today we are almost doubling the amount of aid from the UK for the worst hit islands.

Ocean is bringing 5,000 hygiene kits, 10,000 water buckets and over 500,000 water purification tablets to provide more than 10 million litres of water, along with more troops to support our aid experts on the ground who are helping restore the lives of those who have lost everything.

There are also six FCO Rapid Deployment Teams in the region to work closely with the governments and 36 DFID aid experts on the ground working on immediate recovery and the long term humanitarian effort.

**[Hurricane Irma: UK government response in numbers, 15 September 2017](#)**

**Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Department for International Development, Home Office, Ministry of Defence, and Public Health England  
15 September 2017**

Facts and figures on the UK government's relief work in the Caribbean and the British Overseas Territories in response to Hurricane Irma.

**Military**

**Naval**

- RFA Mounts Bay, pre-stationed in the region, provided initial assistance to Anguilla to clear the runway. It then continued to British Virgin Islands to establish security of supplies, and fix basic infrastructure and shelter to people. After travelling to US Virgin Islands to resupply, she returned to Anguilla to deliver reconstruction materials and arrived in the British Virgin Islands on Tuesday with further supplies and delivered humanitarian aid and disaster relief on Wednesday.
- On Tuesday night, HMS Ocean embarked on the 10-day journey to the Caribbean to provide further support to those affected by the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma. She is carrying 60 pallets of emergency relief stores to assist with the longer term recovery effort, including plywood, timber and construction equipment, as well as 200 pallets of Department for International Development (DFID) aid. This includes 5,000 hygiene kits containing essential items such as soap and a torch, 10,000 buckets and 504,000 aquatabs.

**Aircraft**

- Over 200 personnel arrived on Tuesday 12 September, including stabilisation advisers, medical support and military.
- Over 200 military personnel arrived in Barbados on Wednesday 13 September
- We have 1 Wildcat Helicopter with Mounts Bay and 2 RAF Puma aircraft currently operating in the region.
- A third Puma helicopter has arrived in the Caribbean ready to assist in transporting personnel and aid, as well as a Voyager plane which transported 80 personnel from the Lead Commando Group.
- A C-130J and A400M has been making shuttles from Barbados to required destinations across the region to deliver key support, including British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos and Anguilla.
- One Antonov cargo plane with supplies arrived on Tuesday 12 September.
- The UK continues to work closely alongside international partners. Following a request for assistance from French President Emmanuel Macron, an RAF C-17 arrived in France to provide heavy-lift support to French aid efforts in the Caribbean. Equipment and vehicles including a tipper truck, digger and a specialist bulldozer were loaded aboard for transportation to Guadeloupe, and the aircraft arrived yesterday

### **Personnel**

- There are now over 1,100 UK military personnel in the Caribbean region.

### **Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) staff and consular expertise**

- FCO Rapid Deployment Teams (including Red Cross support) are in the region in 8 locations (British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos Islands, Curacao, Puerto Rico, St Maarten, Guadalupe, Barbados).
- Consular staff have been deployed to Curacao and Guadeloupe to help British nationals evacuated there and we now have a Rapid Deployment Team in Sint Maarten to provide further assistance.
- Consular teams in Cuba and the US are working closely with tour operators and local authorities to ensure British nationals are getting the support they need.
- The dedicated crisis hotline has so far taken almost 2,700 calls.
- Public Health England is sending 3 specialist staff to work with the Chief Medical Officers of the territories to help assess the risks to public health from the damaged infrastructure and disruption to health and social services.
- Lord Ahmad, Minister for the Caribbean, Overseas Territories and the Commonwealth, arrived in the Turks and Caicos Islands on Thursday 14 September. He met the Governor, Premier, and Deputy Premier.
- On Thursday 14 September the Foreign Secretary hosted discussions with the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the French Deputy Foreign Minister Jean-Baptiste Lemoine on the response to Hurricane Irma.
- The Foreign and Development Secretaries will be leading an event at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on Monday to discuss the impact of Hurricane Irma on the Caribbean, the response, and to discuss present and future support.
- Throughout we are working closely with the governments in the Overseas Territories, who are leading most areas of restoration. We are working closely with commercial partners in seeking local and regional solutions.

### **Police**

- Over 60 UK police deployed to the region, in addition to 16 Caymanian police and 6 Bermudian Police

### **Aid**

- £32 million already announced for disaster relief with a further £25million committed.
  - The government has made £2.5 million available to the Pan American Health Organisation to ensure critical health services are provided in the region, and to reduce the risk of disease spreading. This is part of the initial £32 million pledged.
- UK government will aid match public donations to the Red Cross appeal up to £3 million, and so far the British public have helped raise £1.3million, with the UK government matching the £650,000 of private donations.

- DFID Field Teams have been sent to British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos, Antigua, Barbados and the Dominican Republic.
- Over 60 metric tonnes of DFID aid has now arrived and is being distributed across the region, including nearly 3,000 shelter kits, which can provide shelter for over 13,000 people and 4,990 solar lanterns (which can provide light and power for over 20,000 people), and over 8,000 buckets.
- HMS Ocean has been loaded with 5,000 hygiene kits, 10,000 buckets and 500,000 Aquatabs, all UK aid funded.
- 9 tonnes of food and water procured locally on Monday 11 September for onward delivery. Thousands more shelter kits and buckets are on the way from UK shortly.
- The UK has helped to distribute water bottles to 700 of the most vulnerable households affected by Hurricane Irma on the British Virgin Islands.
- The UK government is being supported by companies in the private sector, including:
  - Thomson and Thomas Cook who have delivered over 8,000 buckets on commercial flights
  - Virgin, who offered free transport to dispatch relief items including nearly 2,000 shelter kits, to Antigua on Tuesday.

### **Assisted departure**

- The UK is working hard to provide support in every way it can. We are now making urgent arrangements to help the most vulnerable people affected in this crisis to leave the islands of British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, Anguilla and St Martin as soon as possible. FCO staff both in London and in the region are working with the governments of the territories and putting every effort into identifying and locating vulnerable people, both British and foreign nationals.
- We have arranged military-assisted departures for a number of eligible persons from the British Virgin Islands and are planning military-assisted departures for further vulnerable eligible persons in the other affected Overseas Territories.
- Military flights will then transfer these people to Barbados from where they will be able to access urgent medical treatment, if needed, and make arrangements for onward travel. To help those most vulnerable people, we are exceptionally waiving the fees for replacing emergency travel documents.
- We continue to identify and contact the most vulnerable affected persons, ahead of military flights from Grand Turk, Providenciales, Tortola, and St Martin on 15 September

### **Breakdown by Islands**

#### **British Virgin Islands**

##### **Military**

- Royal Marines from RFA Mounts Bay have got the airfield operating so we can get more aid and personnel in.
- Over 200 troops are on the ground – including engineers, medics and marines who are working with the local police to provide security

### **Police**

- 16 Caymanian police and 6 Bermudian deployed to assist with security.
- There are currently 54 UK police officers on BVI to support law and order.
- An operation run by British Virgin Island and Cayman Island police officers, alongside the British Royal Marines and police, resulted in the capture of over 100 escaped criminals from Balsam Ghut prison.

### **Aid**

- 5 tonnes of food and water has been transferred to the British Virgin Islands. A flight carrying 3 tonnes of food and water arrived in the British Virgin Islands. This much-needed aid has already been distributed on Tortola alongside 40 shelters in Road Town.
- 640 shelter kits are in transit via the RAF

### **FCO and consular support**

- The UK is assisting the British Virgin Islands government in providing support to affected people of all nationalities.
- FCO media officer on the ground to support the Governor's office. Additional 4 consular officers and 1 IT support officer have been deployed.

### **Anguilla**

#### **Military**

- RFA Mounts Bay delivered 6 tonnes of emergency aid; rebuilt and secured the Emergency Operations Centre; restored power to the hospital. Over 70 military personnel and 4 police officers are on the ground. Aid
- We have delivered an initial 9 tonnes of relief aid, food and water.
- We have procured a generator to restore the water treatment plant and further generators are being procured to return power to public buildings.
- DFID has deployed a team that includes 2 humanitarian advisors to support relief efforts, working alongside 3 FCO officers.

#### **Consular support**

- Anguilla has not requested UK consular support. The local government is leading on this. One IT support officer on the ground.
- Cayman Islands government is arranging a 736-100 aircraft to deliver personnel and equipment (including medical equipment) to Anguilla.

### **Turks and Caicos**

#### **Military**

- Over 120 military personnel are on the ground.
- 30 troops from the Bermudian regiment will arrive by Saturday.

#### **Aid**

- DFID has deployed a field team to support relief efforts. Two humanitarian advisors are already on the island.

- On Thursday 15 September a flight carrying aid reached Turks and Caicos Islands delivering over 150 shelter kits and 720 litres of water

#### **Consular support**

- The UK is assisting the Turks and Caicos Islands government in providing support to affected people of all nationalities.
- A 5 person RDT team has deployed to the Turks and Caicos Islands providing technical, media and consular support.
- DFID have joined an assessment led by the government of the Turks and Caicos Islands to determine priority needs.

#### **St Martin**

##### **Consular support**

- We have over 60 British nationals on both Dutch and French St Maarten including some requiring urgent medical attention. Over 50 British nationals have been assisted to leave.

#### **USA**

##### **Consular support**

- We are regularly updating our travel advice.
- The Foreign Secretary has spoken to Governor of Florida Rick Scott.

## 4. PQs

### [Caribbean: Disaster Relief](#)

17 Jan 2018 | 903336

**Asked by: Sir Henry Bellingham**

What steps she is taking to support post-hurricane relief in the Caribbean.

**Answering member: Penny Mordaunt | Department: Department for International Development**

The UK provided significant support to the countries affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. More than 800 tonnes of aid was delivered, including food and water. The Prime Minister has further reaffirmed the UK's intention to stand by Overseas Territories and Commonwealth Caribbean partners on the challenging road to recovery.

### [Caribbean: Hurricanes and Tornadoes](#)

12 Dec 2017 | HL3738

**Asked by: Lord Tebbit**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the total cost to the UK of aid given in connection with the recent hurricanes and storms in the Caribbean and South-Western United States.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon  
| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The UK has provided £92 million of funding in response to the damage inflicted by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, and is matching public donations to the British Red Cross Appeal up to £3 million. On 27 November the Prime Minister announced a further £70 million package of recovery and reconstruction support for the affected Overseas Territories. This will be delivered over the next three years and will be supplemented by up to £300 million of loan guarantees.

£72 million of the immediate response and early recovery funding has been allocated to the UK Overseas Territories. This is being managed through the cross-Whitehall Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and is being delivered by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development (DFID), the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice, Home Office and the Department of Health. In addition £20 million of official development assistance has also been allocated from the DFID budget for the response to the impact in Barbuda and Dominica.

The £70 million long term recovery and reconstruction package will also be governed by the CSSF.

**Marines: Deployment****07 Dec 2017 | 116421****Asked by: Kevan Jones**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on how many occasions personnel from 3 Commando Brigade have been deployed on humanitarian aid and disaster relief-related operations in the last two years.

**Answering member: Mark Lancaster | Department: Ministry of Defence**

The Naval Service deploys away from the United Kingdom throughout the year, to areas such as the Gulf region, the Mediterranean, and the North and South Atlantic in support of UK operations. In addition, operations are also conducted in the UK and home waters. Over the last two years, personnel from 3 Commando Brigade deployed three times on humanitarian aid and disaster relief related operations overseas.

The table below shows the number of personnel from 42 Commando, 40 Commando, and 45 Commando Royal Marines who have been deployed overseas in the last two years.

Financial Year	2015-16	2016-17
40 Commando	84	20
42 Commando	7	8
45 Commando	53	121

Deployment refers to Military personnel who are deployed on operations for a period of 24 hours or more, excluding all personnel on overseas training exercises and those whose permanent stationed location is outside the UK.

## Notes:

1. Includes only personnel who have been deployed outside of Great Britain.
2. Each individual is counted once per financial year even though they may have been deployed multiple times during that period.

The table below shows the number of occasions personnel from 42 Commando, 40 Commando, and 45 Commando Royal Marines have been deployed overseas in the last two years.

Financial Year	2015-16	2016-17
Number of occasions	13	11

The table below shows the number of Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel who were deployed in the years requested.

Financial Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Royal Navy	4,659	5,521	4,347	4,635	3,998
Royal Marines	1,535	1,640	1,430	869	1,040

Notes:

1. The figures do not include Royal Navy and Royal Marine personnel conducting operations in home waters.
2. Each individual is counted once per financial year even though they may have been deployed multiple times during that period.

### **Hurricanes and Tornadoes: Disaster Relief**

**30 Nov 2017 | 115314**

**Asked by: Andrew Percy**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the capacity to deliver hurricane relief, similar to the response to hurricane Irma, if UK amphibious capability declines.

**Answering member: Mark Lancaster | Department: Ministry of Defence**

The Armed Forces possess a range of assets, personnel and equipment that are able to provide humanitarian assistance in response to disasters worldwide. As part of the Atlantic Patrol Task (North), The Ministry of Defence has a Royal Navy ship pre-positioned close to the Caribbean during hurricane season. For Hurricanes Irma and Maria, this task was performed by RFA Mounts Bay, which provided the UK's initial response to the disaster. A cross-Government lessons learned process looking into the UK's immediate response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria is ongoing. The UK is proud of its role in hurricane and disaster relief, and stands ready to respond to future crises.

### **Iran: Earthquakes**

**28 Nov 2017 | HL3281**

**Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what humanitarian assistance they have offered to the Iranian authorities following the earthquake in Kermanshah on 12 November.

**Answering member: Lord Bates | Department: Department for International Development**

HMG stands ready to offer assistance to Iran, following the earthquake on 12 November and has made this offer to the Iranian authorities. The government of Iran has not requested international assistance so far.

### **Islands: Hurricanes and Tornadoes**

**28 Nov 2017 | 115053**

**Asked by: John Spellar**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has received from the Department for International Development for its operation in support of hurricane hit islands in 2017.

**Answering member: Mark Lancaster | Department: Ministry of Defence**

The detailed costs of the Defence response to hurricanes Irma and Maria are being compiled and will be reported on in due course.

The Ministry of Defence will recover the majority of its additional costs from the cross-Government Immediate Response fund established for the relief effort. Any additional costs will be funded from the Deployed Military Assistance Pool, which exists to support unforeseen short term military activity.

The cross-Government fund includes contributions from the Conflict Security and Stabilisation Fund, Department for International Development and the Treasury Reserve.

**[Anguilla: Hurricanes and Tornadoes](#)****27 Nov 2017 | HL3097****Asked by: Lord Howell of Guildford**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the eligibility of Anguilla to receive aid and assistance following recent hurricane damage.

**Answering member: Lord Bates | Department: Department for International Development**

The UK has argued for flexibility in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) rules for how donors respond to catastrophic humanitarian crises, such as the recent hurricanes in the Caribbean, and recognition of the vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States. As a result, in October 2017 the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) agreed on the need to create a new mechanism to re-admit countries that had graduated from ODA eligibility back to the list of ODA-eligible countries if their Gross National Income per capita falls below the High Income Country threshold. In addition, members of the DAC have agreed to establish a process which could allow previous ODA recipients to receive short-term ODA support in the event of catastrophic humanitarian crises. Anguilla was an ODA recipient until 2014 and is assessed by the World Bank to be a High Income Country.

The destructive force of hurricane Irma was unprecedented, leaving Anguilla damaged extensively. As part of our response the UK has delivered more than 220 tonnes of aid to the island. To support the reconstruction effort the UK has launched a Private Sector Task Force, headed by William Bullard, to identify private sector support and investment, and provide a public-private forum for engagement on building back better in Anguilla as well as other Caribbean Overseas Territories.

**Middle East: Earthquakes**

**27 Nov 2017 | 114567**

**Asked by: Lyn Brown**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the priorities for international assistance in connection with the recent earthquake on the border of Iran and Iraq.

**Answering member: Alistair Burt | Department: Department for International Development**

HMG staff have visited the earthquake affected areas in Iraq to assess priorities for international assistance. DFID Iraq funds have been used to provide emergency cash assistance to around 200 families who are unable to return home. This will allow families made homeless by the earthquake to find temporary rental accommodation, start to make repairs, and replace essential day to day items that have been lost in the rubble so that they can cook, eat, clean, and have a degree of dignity. The assistance will be targeted towards those most in need. HMG also stands ready to offer assistance to Iran and has made this offer to the Iranian authorities. The government of Iran has not requested international assistance so far.

**HMS Ocean**

**20 Nov 2017 | 112217**

**Asked by: Jeremy Lefroy**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has discussed with the Secretary of State for International Development the continued in-service use of HMS Ocean as a disaster relief vessel.

**Answering member: Mark Lancaster | Department: Ministry of Defence**

HMS OCEAN is primarily a landing platform for Helicopters. Its use for disaster relief in the Caribbean was intended to supplement the capability of RFA MOUNTS BAY, which was prepositioned in the Caribbean for hurricane season and is better suited to Humanitarian and Disaster Relief operations and responded to the situation in Anguilla less than 24 hours after Hurricane Irma struck. Plans for the use of Defence assets for future disaster relief operations remain under constant reviews across Government. Any decisions to adjust plans will be informed by the cross-Government lessons learned process from the UK's immediate response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria, as well as the ongoing National Security Capability Review.

**Hurricane Relief (Caribbean)**

**18 Oct 2017 | 629 c823-4**

**Asked by: Scott Mann**

What steps she is taking to provide hurricane relief in the Caribbean.  
[901226]

**Answering member: Priti Patel | Department: Department for International Development**

The UK Government mounted an enormous cross-Government response to the devastating hurricanes consisting of more than 40 aid experts, 2,000 military personnel and more than 50 police officers, with HMS Ocean, RFA Mounts Bay and more than 600 tonnes of humanitarian aid. I give my thanks to our military and civilian personnel, whose efforts during the hurricane relief effort were simply heroic.

**Asked by: Scott Mann**

Will my right hon. Friend assure me that our friends in the Commonwealth who have been affected by these recent hurricanes are receiving support and aid as they recover?

**Answering member: Priti Patel**

I thank my hon. Friend for his question. The hurricanes have been devastating, and I have seen their effect across our overseas territory. I can absolutely give the House an assurance that we are not just supporting the overseas territories; we are now working with them on the recovery and the rebuilding efforts, in addition to the relief efforts.

**Asked by: Patrick Grady**

What progress is being made on the commitment that the Government made at the world humanitarian summit last year to increase spending on disaster risk reduction? How is that being implemented and in what countries is disaster risk reduction spending increasing?

**Answering member: Priti Patel**

The hon. Gentleman is right to point that out in terms of the grand bargain and the humanitarian work that Britain leads on around the world. He asks about progress. I can let the House know that enormous progress has been made directly with the humanitarian agencies that we work with, through the funding that we are putting in place. We are making sure that the grand bargain commitments are part of the funding performance that we now put in place with regard to the reform agenda.

**Asked by: James Gray**

My understanding is that military assistance to British overseas territories may not be paid out of the British aid budget. Is it not an absurdity that our defence budget has to pay for British military aid in the Caribbean?

**Answering member: Priti Patel**

Let me politely say to my hon. Friend that that is not wholly accurate. When it comes to support for the military budget, he will know that part of the official overseas development assistance goes to the Ministry of Defence, so, as I said earlier, this has been a cross-Government effort involving the Foreign Office, the MOD and the Department for International Development, and others, including the Home Office. We have all been providing a great deal of support to the overseas territories.

**Asked by: Jo Swinson**

The Secretary of State is right that the scenes of devastation that we have witnessed are heartbreaking. As well as helping victims, we must try to prevent future damage, so will she reverse the recent trend in reducing DFID climate change funding, especially for the adaptation work that is so crucial to help vulnerable communities become resilient to hurricanes and other climate-related disasters?

**Answering member: Priti Patel**

We are very focused on resilience as part of the recovery programme and dealing with the challenges faced in respect of climate change. The implications of climate change for small island states are very much a focus of DFID, but also across the Government. We are leading many of the discussions internationally in terms of climate change—how we support resilience programmes through our aid budget, but also how to help countries have the preparedness that they need to deal with some of these disasters.

**Asked by: Kate Osamor**

On Friday, the Secretary of State finally announced her big plans for the Caribbean's recovery—a private sector taskforce, but not a penny of new funding. What are her plans to ensure that that taskforce helps those in need, rather than fat-cat profiteers? Is this really the best the UK Government can do?

**Answering member: Priti Patel**

I am disappointed by the tone the hon. Lady has taken, primarily because, having been to the overseas territory myself, I have seen the private sector absolutely wiped out. We are talking about not large sectors and industries, but men and women who have lost their livelihood—small shops and small businesses. That is effectively why we have established a private sector taskforce, which will work with the chambers of commerce and those grassroots organisations that will help small businesses to get back on their own two feet. She also asks about money and resources. Of course, we are providing all the support that is required.

**[Natural Disasters: Emergency Funds](#)**

**18 Oct 2017 | 629 c826-7**

**Asked by: Craig Tracey**

3. What steps she is taking to ensure that emergency funds can be made available from the aid budget to help British overseas territories to recover from natural disasters. [901228]

**Answering member: Priti Patel | Department: Department for International Development**

Overseas development assistance rules have not and will not stop Britain providing money needed for the hurricane recovery and reconstruction effort. The UK has committed over £60 million to the Irma and Maria relief efforts, and we are of course working with all our international partners to provide support.

**Asked by: Craig Tracey**

Does the Secretary of State agree that recent events highlight the need for greater use of disaster recovery insurance to protect vulnerable nations, such as those in the Caribbean? Will she update the House on the Department's work in that area?

**Answering member: Priti Patel**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility has paid out \$49 million in the last month alone to the islands affected by the recent hurricanes. Through the World Bank and other international financial institutions, Britain and the British insurance industry are leading the way in providing more insurance support internationally.

**Asked by: Chris Law**

In recent years, 58% of deaths caused by disasters have occurred in fragile states. What assurance can the Secretary of State give us that the aid budget for disaster relief will remain compliant with official development assistance rules and will focus on resilience and recovery for some of the world's most vulnerable people living in those fragile nations?

**Answering member: Priti Patel**

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. He is right to highlight the fragility of many countries. Our aid budget is there to provide relief and the preparedness to help them to deal with many of the disasters and catastrophes that take place through climate change and conflict and through man-made disasters, too. That is effectively DFID's focus.

**Asked by: James Duddridge**

Would a cross-departmental unit focused on the overseas territories, staffed by DFID, the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence, help to solve some of the problems of co-ordination and provide a better response to our OTs?

**Answering member: Priti Patel**

My hon. Friend highlights the importance of co-ordination. The cross-Government hurricane relief effort was strong and co-ordinated. We have to respond accordingly to crises when they happen, and we work together effectively. We are joined up and are making sure that we deliver for the people who need help.

**Asked by: Kate Osamor**

We are just 10 days away from the negotiations in Paris on changing the ODA rules, and the Government still cannot clearly tell us their position. Will the Secretary of State tell us what changes the UK Government are seeking? Can she guarantee those changes will not divert aid away from the poorest?

**Answering member: Priti Patel**

The hon. Lady is absolutely right. The House may have noticed that the secretary-general of the OECD was in town yesterday, and I met both him and the chair of the Development Assistance Committee to discuss this issue. They are the first to recognise that such small island states need resilience to the impact of climate change and that we need

greater agility in applying the rules to many of those countries. We will have that discussion at the DAC in 10 days' time.

**[Hurricane Irma: Disaster Relief](#)**

**10 Oct 2017 | 785 cc101-3**

**Asked by: Lord Naseby**

My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper. In doing so, I declare an interest in that I have family living in the Caymans.

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to undertake an urgent review of the anticipation, preparation, speed of response and chain of command for the United Kingdom's disaster relief operations in the Caribbean, in the light of the United Kingdom's response to Hurricane Irma; and if so, whether they will publish the results and any recommendations for change.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**

**| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

My Lords, we are conducting an internal review to identify the lessons learned from the Government's response to Hurricane Irma, as indeed we do in response to all crisis situations. These findings will of course be incorporated into future crisis responses. The timing of this review will be considered alongside the ongoing recovery efforts in the Caribbean, including the overseas territories. Meanwhile, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will continue to co-ordinate a cross-government response to any new crisis which may arise.

**Asked by: Lord Naseby**

The Minister's Answer is very welcome, but in this review will he go back to the review after the tsunami in 2005, when it was clearly stated that the most vital part was for help to arrive in the first 24 hours, or, if that is not absolutely possible, in the first 36 hours? Against that background, will he make sure that the review looks at the date at which the FCO crisis committee met, on 5 September, and say why it did not meet in the previous week? Will that review look at the situation regarding the movement of aircraft from Brize Norton and say why they did not get into the air immediately after the hurricane had left the British Virgin Islands, instead going two days later? Finally, will the review look at why HMS "Ocean" was not moved at least a week earlier to somewhere nearer this side of the Atlantic rather than the middle of the Mediterranean, even though, sadly, it broke down en route in any case?

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**

My noble friend raises a series of questions; in the interest of allowing more questions to be asked, I will write to him specifically to answer them. However, I will pick up on one or two of his points. The UK Government responded within 24 hours. My noble friend may well be aware that RFA "Mounts Bay" arrived within 24 hours of the storm's impact and restored power supplies at Anguilla's hospital, rebuilt the emergency operations centres and, importantly, cleared the runway to

allow planes that were waiting to arrive at the airports to come in. It then followed on and delivered a similar response to BVI. However, I will respond to the issues my noble friend raised in his other questions.

**Asked by: Lord West of Spithead**

My Lords, the aid budget is 37% of the defence budget, and the defence budget is under immense pressure. Does the Minister not think that the fantastic work being done by HMS "Ocean" and RFA "Mounts Bay" out in the West Indies should be covered by the aid budget, because, quite clearly, that describes what they are doing?

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**

The noble Lord raises an important question, and it is necessary to put it in the context of the international rules to which we subscribe. As he may be aware, my right honourable friend the International Development Secretary has directly responded to the issue. She has raised it with the OECD and we are also raising the eligibility of ODA spending on the overseas territories and other countries to ensure that, when such crises hit, we are able to make funding available. That said, as the noble Lord may also be aware, we have already allocated £62 million to the aid effort. More is being done, and an additional £5 million was pledged to Dominica, which was recently hit by a hurricane.

**Asked by: Baroness Northover**

My Lords, Hurricane Irma was tracked from the end of August and it hit the first of our overseas territories overnight from 5 to 6 September, but the first COBRA meeting was not until the 7th. Might the review conclude that the Government are distracted by something?

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**

Perhaps the noble Baroness should have enlightened us on what she was alluding to in her question. The short answer is that the Government acted promptly. I have already alluded to the fact that RFA "Mounts Bay" responded. I think that we should take a step back and acknowledge the incredible efforts of our military, the FCO and DfID, as well as neighbouring states, including the assistance given by places such as the Cayman Islands, in responding to the tragedy which hit three of our territories and other regions of the Caribbean.

**Asked by: Lord Collins of Highbury**

My Lords, I welcome the information that the Minister has given, and I certainly welcomed the information given by the noble Lord, Lord Bates, in briefing Members of this House. However, one thing that concerned me was the unsightly debate at the Conservative Party conference about where the money should come from. We have a responsibility to our overseas territories, whether they are in need of ODA support or not. It should not be a question of taking money out of Africa to put it into where our responsibilities should lie, and I hope that the noble Lord will reassure us on that.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**

The noble Lord makes a very valid point about the commitment that the Government made to spending 0.7% of GDI—indeed, it was voted for in this Chamber—and that remains the position. I assure him that, in reviewing any spend, we will continue to prioritise the countries that

need development assistance—for example, in the important area of education for girls. I repeat that that will continue to be reflected as a priority. However, at the same time I am sure that we all readily acknowledge the tragedy that has hit the overseas territories. I can tell noble Lords that I was not able to accompany my noble friend Lord Bates to that briefing because I went out to the Turks and Caicos Islands. Seeing the devastation first hand, as I did in Grand Turk, really puts the situation clearly into perspective.

**Asked by: Lord Palmer**

My Lords, what is the very latest date that this review will be published? It will obviously be very important for future disasters such as this. I declare my interest in the Caribbean as according to the register.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**

I can tell the noble Lord that there is no specific date at this juncture because much of the information is still being collated. We are working very closely with the Governments of the overseas territories on their exact needs. Personnel from DfID, including a team led by a senior DfID official, are collating the current requirements of our overseas territories. I can also share with the noble Lord and the whole House that my right honourable friend the Prime Minister has convened a senior meeting, chaired by my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary, to bring together all parts of government to ensure a full HMG response to this issue. When I have the final date for the review, I shall of course share it with the noble Lord and others in the Chamber.

**[Caribbean: Hurricanes and Tornadoes](#)**

**26 Sep 2017 | HL1631**

**Asked by: Baroness Sheehan**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many UK military personnel are engaged in relief efforts in (1) the British Overseas Territories, and (2) other Commonwealth nations, impacted by Hurricane Irma.

**Answering member: Earl Howe | Department: Ministry of Defence**

The Ministry of Defence is providing significant support to the relief efforts in the Caribbean following the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma. As at 21 September 2017, there are 543 UK military personnel in the British Overseas Territories of the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla and the Turks and Caicos Islands. 671 personnel are in the Commonwealth nation of Barbados.

In addition there are 207 military personnel on RFA MOUNTS BAY, which was pre-positioned in the region ready for the hurricane season. HMS OCEAN arrived in the British Virgin Islands on Friday 22 September with an additional 632 personnel to support relief efforts.

**Disaster Relief****25 Sep 2017 | HL1618****Asked by: Lord Marlesford**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion, and what total sum of the budget of the Department for International Development, in each of the last ten years, has been used for emergency assistance to countries suffering from the consequences of natural disasters such as hurricanes, typhoons or earthquakes.

**Answering member: Lord Bates | Department: Department for International Development**

The amount of UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) spent on humanitarian assistance in each of the last 10 years is provided in the table below. In line with the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) classification, this includes expenditure on emergency response, reconstruction relief and rehabilitation, and disaster prevention and preparedness.

This expenditure covers humanitarian support to countries overseas suffering from the consequences of natural and man-made disasters. Detailed data is not collected to identify separately expenditure for natural disasters.

UK bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) for humanitarian assistance, 2006 -2015, £ million.

Year	Humanitarian Assistance <sup>1,2</sup> £ million
2006	220
2007	294
2008	367
2009	484
2010	369
2011	422
2012	425
2013	825
2014	1119
2015	1,266

Information on total UK ODA is available on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) website

1. The definition for humanitarian assistance is set internationally by the OECD Development Assistance Committee.

2. The statistical data for ODA is collected according to use, such as sector or purpose, and not by event.

Source: Statistics on International Development

[Sri Lanka: Disaster Relief](#)

**18 Sep 2017 | HL1434**

**Asked by: Lord Naseby**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what additional aid they have offered to Sri Lanka to help cope with the severe drought and floods which have affected over one million people.

**Answering member: Lord Bates | Department: Department for International Development**

Our assessment is that the crisis in Sri Lanka is being adequately managed through existing mechanisms in Sri Lanka, including the Government's National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and humanitarian agencies on the ground, including the Sri Lankan Red Cross Society. The UK provides significant amounts of funding to UN humanitarian emergency agencies (such as UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP), the EU's humanitarian emergency response agency (ECHO) and the Red Cross, all of whom are contributing to the response. At the moment therefore we do not anticipate that a bilateral response from the UK will be needed. Other countries in the region are also providing assistance, and the US and EU have offered their support.

[Sierra Leone: Floods](#)

**11 Sep 2017 | 7289**

**Asked by: Stephen Twigg**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what resources her Department has made available to help Sierra Leone in the aftermath of recent flooding and mudslides in that country.

**Answering member: Rory Stewart | Department: Department for International Development**

Our deepest sympathies are with the people of Sierra Leone affected by the mudslide. The UK was among the first to respond, with personnel at the scene within hours. We provided vital humanitarian assistance immediately, drawing on supplies already in place following the Ebola outbreak. We have allocated £5m to provide clean water and hygiene kits to prevent a cholera outbreak; essential health and psychosocial services; and food and clothing to those affected. We are helping families to re-establish their lives by finding alternative accommodation, and ensuring their children can return to school.

[Nepal: Earthquakes](#)

**11 Jul 2017 | HL280**

**Asked by: The Earl of Sandwich**

Her Majesty's Government what assistance they have given following the Nepal earthquake of 2015, both directly and through voluntary organisations; and how that compares to assistance given by other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member countries.

**Answering member: Lord Bates | Department: Department for International Development**

The UK government is the second largest Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) contributor to the 2015 Nepal earthquake response, after Japan. The UK Government pledged £70m at the June 2015 International Conference for Nepal's Recovery, which has been followed by a five year £83m reconstruction programme. We provided over 250,000 people with emergency shelter; over 200,000 people with winter including clothes, blankets and mattresses; and over 2000 hours of helicopter operations to reach communities inaccessible by road. Our assistance was provided via humanitarian delivery partners, including the use of volunteers by Voluntary Service Overseas, the Nepal Red Cross and the Nepal Scout Association.

**Somaliland: Droughts****03 Jul 2017 | 1323****Asked by: Stephen Doughty**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what funding has been provided from all Government sources to support drought relief in Somaliland in the last 12 months.

**Answering member: Rory Stewart | Department: Department for International Development**

The UK government, through DFID, has provided £38.7m between July and December 2016 and a further £107m to date since January 2017 to support drought relief in Somalia, including Somaliland. A further £63m for drought relief in Somalia is currently being allocated. Sub-national allocations are not recorded for our aid to Somalia, but our humanitarian assistance is allocated on the basis of need, ensuring that Somaliland gets its fair share.

**Disaster Relief****26 Apr 2017 | 71663****Asked by: Patrick Grady**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Disaster and Emergencies Preparedness Programme funded by UK Aid; and when she plans to decide whether that programme should be renewed.

**Answering member: Rory Stewart | Department: Department for International Development**

DFID conducts Annual Reviews of the Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP). The Annual Reviews are publically available through <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-203044> and give an assessment of the effectiveness of the programme.

The DEPP's 14 core projects are due to end in March 2018. Decisions on whether and/or how to renew the programme will be made before March 2018.

**[South Sudan: Famine](#)**

**10 Mar 2017 | 66427**

**Asked by: Patrick Grady**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how her Department is working with other international donors to ensure that sufficient funding is made available for a rapid and effective response to the famine in South Sudan.

**Answering member: James Wharton | Department: Department for International Development**

The UN has appealed for US \$1.6 billion for South Sudan. The UK was the first major donor to raise the alarm bell and respond, committing £100m to the appeal on 22 February. We announced our funding early in order to amplify the urgency and encourage others to make contributions. I have publicly called for other international donors and the UN and World Bank to swiftly follow our lead.

**[Yemen: Famine](#)**

**02 Mar 2017 | 65431**

**Asked by: Alison Thewliss**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the emerging famine in Yemen.

**Answering member: Rory Stewart | Department: Department for International Development**

In 2016/17 UK Aid has so far supported 462,000 people with food or food vouchers in Yemen, and improved the nutrition of 889,000 women and children. In 2015/16, the UK helped over one million people with emergency humanitarian assistance, including over 730,000 benefitting from food.

The Secretary of State for International Development issued a call to action last week urging the international community to step up their response in Yemen, as one of four potential famines around the world in 2017. We will be making another significant pledge of humanitarian aid for 2017/18, which will include funding to help those most vulnerable to the risk of famine.

## 5. Statements

### Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council

14 Dec 2017 | HLWS349

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs):**

On Tuesday 28 and Wednesday 29 November, I chaired the sixth meeting of the Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council in London. The Council was attended by elected leaders and representatives from Anguilla, Ascension Island, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St Helena, the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia, Tristan da Cunha and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

[...]

The Council agreed a communiqué which identified priorities and set out a number of important commitments and areas for joint work in the year ahead. On the important subject of disaster recovery, the UK reiterated its commitment to work in partnership with the Governments of the Territories affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. We welcomed the additional £15m of UK support for early recovery in addition to the £62m investment in relief so far; and the Prime Minister's announcement on 28 November of a further £70m in grants and up to £300m of loan guarantees to support long-term reconstruction in the worst-affected Territories. We discussed the private sector's important role in driving economic recovery, and the need for the Overseas Territories to have disaster preparedness policies in place that are fit for purpose.

[...]

A copy of the communiqué has been published on the GOV.UK website.

I have arranged for the communiqué to be placed in the House Library.

### Hurricane Irma: Government Response

12 Sep 2017 | 628 cc639-52

[Extract: opening statement only]

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan):** At last Thursday's statement, Mr Speaker, I undertook to update the House as appropriate, and I thank you for the opportunity to do so now.

At this very moment, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is on his way to the Caribbean to see for himself our stricken overseas territories and further drive the extensive relief efforts that are under way. The thoughts of this House and of the whole country are with those who are suffering the ravages of one of the most powerful Atlantic

hurricanes ever recorded. It followed Hurricane Harvey, and was set to be followed by Hurricane Jose. More than half a million British nationals, either residents or tourists, have been in the path of Hurricane Irma, which has caused devastation across an area spanning well over 1,000 miles.

Given the circumstances, the overall death toll is low, but, unfortunately, five people died in the British Virgin Islands and four in Anguilla. At this critical moment, our principal focus is on the 80,000 British citizens who inhabit our overseas territories of Anguilla, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the British Virgin Islands.

Commonwealth realms in the Caribbean have also suffered. They include Antigua and Barbuda and the Bahamas as well as other islands such as St Martin and Cuba. We have around 70 British nationals requiring assistance on St Martin, and we are working with the US, German and Dutch authorities to facilitate the potential departure of the most vulnerable via commercial means today.

To prepare for the hurricane season, the Government acted two months ago—in July—by dispatching the Royal Fleet Auxiliary *Mounts Bay* to the Caribbean. This 16,000-tonne landing ship from the RFA is one of the most capable vessels at our disposal. Before she left the UK in June, the ship was pre-loaded with disaster relief supplies, facilities for producing clean water and a range of hydraulic vehicles and equipment. In addition to the normal crew, the Government also ensured that a special disaster relief team, consisting of 40 Royal Marines and Army personnel, was also on board. This pre-positioning of one of our most versatile national assets, along with an extra complement of highly skilled personnel, allowed the relief effort to begin immediately after the hurricane had passed. By Friday night, the team from RFA *Mounts Bay* had managed to restore power supplies at Anguilla's hospital, rebuild the emergency operation centre, clear the runway and make the island's airport serviceable. The ship then repositioned to the British Virgin Islands where its experts were able to reopen the airport.

Meanwhile in the UK, the Government dispatched two RAF transport aircraft on Friday carrying 52 personnel and emergency supplies for more than 1,000 people. On Saturday, another two aircraft left for the region to deliver a Puma transport helicopter and ancillary supplies. This steady tempo of relief flights has been sustained and yesterday it included a Voyager and a C-17. I can assure the House that that will continue for as long as required.

Already, 20 tonnes of UK aid has arrived, including more than 2,500 shelter kits and 2,300 solar lanterns. Nine tonnes of food and water supplies are due to be flown out to Anguilla imminently and will be followed by building materials. A further 10,000 buckets, 2,500 solar lanterns and 300 shelter kits will be arriving this week on commercial flights.

As I speak, 997 British military personnel are in the Caribbean. RFA *Mounts Bay* arrived in Anguilla again yesterday at dusk, as 47 police officers arrived in the British Virgin Islands to assist the local constabulary. We should all acknowledge and thank the first responders of the overseas territories' own Governments. They have shown

leadership from the start and are now being reinforced by personnel from the UK.

Many people—military and civilian—have shown fantastic professionalism and courage in their response to the disaster. I hope that I speak for the whole House in saying a resounding and heartfelt, “Thank you”, to all of them. [Hon. Members: “Hear, hear.”] This initial effort will soon be reinforced by the flagship of the Royal Navy, HMS Ocean. The Government have ordered our biggest warship in service to leave her NATO task in the Mediterranean and steam westwards with all speed. HMS Ocean loaded supplies in Gibraltar yesterday and will be active in the Caribbean in about 10 days.

The Prime Minister announced last Thursday— within 24 hours of the hurricane striking—a £32 million fund for those who have suffered. But in the first desperate stages, it is not about money; it is about just getting on with it. The Foreign Office crisis centre has been operating around the clock since last Wednesday, co-ordinating very closely with Department for International Development and Ministry of Defence colleagues. The crisis centre has taken nearly 2,500 calls since then and is handling 2,251 consular cases. The Government have convened daily meetings of our Cobra crisis committee. Over the weekend, the Foreign Secretary spoke to the Governors of Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands, along with Governor Rick Scott of Florida, where Irma has since made landfall over the weekend.

I have spoken to the United States Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs about the United States Virgin Islands in respect of logistic support for the British Virgin Islands. As well as those affected across the Caribbean, some 420,000 British citizens are in Florida either as residents or visitors, and UK officials are providing every possible help. The Foreign Secretary spoke to our ambassador in Washington and our consul general in Miami, who has deployed teams in Florida’s major airports to offer support and to issue emergency travel documents to those who need them.

The House will note that Irma has now weakened to a tropical storm that is moving north-west into Georgia. I spoke to the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda on Friday. The hurricane inflicted some of its worst blows on Barbuda, and a DFID team has been deployed on the island to assess the situation and make recommendations. Put starkly, the infrastructure of Barbuda no longer exists. I assured its Prime Minister of our support and I reiterate that this morning. On Saturday, the Foreign Secretary spoke to the Prime Minister of Barbados to thank him for his country’s superb support, acting as a staging post for other UK efforts across the Caribbean.

We should all be humble in the face of the power of nature. Whatever relief we are able to provide will not be enough for many who have lost so much, but hundreds of dedicated British public servants are doing their utmost to help and they will not relent in their efforts.

[...]

[This statement was repeated and debated in the House of Lords. The exchanges are available on the Lords Hansard: [Hurricane Irma](#)]

## [Hurricane Irma](#)

07 Sep 2017 | 628 cc328-39

[Extract: opening statement only]

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan):** I am grateful to you, Mr Speaker, for this opportunity to make a statement on Hurricane Irma, which is already affecting and is set further to affect Caribbean islands and the south-east United States with devastating effect. Much as I appreciate the wish of the House to move on to the Second Reading of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, I am sure everyone appreciates the importance of informing the House about the latest position on this unfolding catastrophe.

As with any hurricane, one can never be sure of its ultimate effect until the extent and location of its inevitable damage has become clear. However, its predicted force has put everyone on the highest state of alert and preparedness, to which end the Foreign Office crisis centre and Department for International Development planning were all put on to the highest state of readiness over two days ago. The FCO crisis centre has two important functions: one is to organise the fullest possible consular assistance to UK citizens abroad; the other is to monitor the path of the hurricane and co-ordinate every conceivable UK response, in particular to those British territories affected.

Hurricane Irma, having reached category 5—the highest possible category—hit three British overseas territories yesterday: Anguilla, Montserrat and the British Virgin Islands. Today, we expect the hurricane to affect a further UK territory: the Turks and Caicos Islands. The hurricane yesterday also caused damage in the independent Commonwealth countries of Antigua and Barbuda and St Kitts and Nevis, and we expect it to affect the Dominican Republic, Haiti and the Bahamas today. It will most likely affect Cuba and south-eastern Florida tomorrow. The hurricane is heading westwards and remains strong. We have an initial assessment of the severity of the damage it has caused. I will outline for the House what we know so far. Montserrat was swiped by the hurricane yesterday, but our initial assessment is relatively positive. Fortunately, the damage is not as severe as first thought. In contrast, however, Anguilla received the hurricane's full blast. The initial assessment is that the damage has been severe and, in places, critical. We expect further reports to make clear the full nature of the devastation, and Anguilla's port and airport remain closed. The British Virgin Islands were also not spared the hurricane's full force when it passed through yesterday morning. Our initial assessment is of severe damage. We expect that the islands will need extensive humanitarian assistance, which we will of course provide.

The hurricane is expected to hit another British overseas territory later today. The Turks and Caicos Islands lie in the hurricane's predicted path, and officials in London and in the territories are working intensively on disaster preparedness. They are also liaising with their counterparts in the Cayman Islands for assistance. The French and Dutch territories on Guadeloupe and St Martin have also been hit. The initial assessments are of widespread damage, but the more detailed assessment continues. No British nationals have yet contacted us to ask for

assistance from these islands. Two Commonwealth realms were affected by hurricane Irma yesterday. Antigua and Barbuda's less populated island, Barbuda, was most severely affected. Antigua, and St Kitts and Nevis were less badly affected than many had feared, with only minor damage. We expect that the hurricane will affect the Dominican Republic and Haiti today. It will sweep on through the south-east of the Bahamas later, and tomorrow is predicted to hit Cuba and southern Florida.

Officials in London and the territories have been working throughout the day and night to assess and quantify the needs of our territories, and to co-ordinate a cross-Government response. Officials in London are maintaining contact—although sometimes difficult—with our Governors' offices in the territories. The Governors' teams are themselves working closely with the territories' Governments to respond to the crisis. The Royal Naval ship Royal Fleet Auxiliary Mounts Bay is already in the Caribbean and should reach the affected territories later today. The ship carries Royal Marines and Army engineers, and her primary task is the protection of our overseas territories. She is loaded with a range of equipment, vehicles, tents, stores and hydraulic vehicles specifically intended to respond to such disasters. In addition, DFID stands ready to charter flights to deliver additional supplies as appropriate.

I spoke last night to the London representatives of the British Virgin Islands. I was in our crisis centre yesterday afternoon and last night and have been based there this morning. At 8.45 pm last night, the Foreign Secretary spoke to Anguilla's Chief Minister Victor Banks. The Foreign Secretary also tried but was unable to contact the Premier of the British Virgin Islands, but Lord Ahmad has been in contact with the Governor this morning. We will be working in support of the overseas territories' Governments to develop the best possible assessment of their immediate and longer-term needs. To that end, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will chair a meeting of COBRA at 2 o'clock this afternoon. Our priority is to support the territories' Governments in meeting their immediate humanitarian and security needs, including shelter, water and accommodation. We have four UK Aid humanitarian experts in the region who are helping to co-ordinate the response. We will assess, with the territories' Governments, their long-term reconstruction requirements, as we have done in the past.

As the House will appreciate, the relationship between overseas territories and their parent countries differs. While French territories are directly governed, that is not the case with our overseas territories. While that means that our responses will, of course, be different, we will seek to achieve the same objectives and are taking immediate steps to do so.

The Prime Minister called President Macron this morning to discuss our respective responses to Hurricane Irma. They agreed that the devastation the hurricane has wreaked is terrible, with unconfirmed reports emerging of a number of fatalities. The Prime Minister updated the French President on our response, noting that DFID humanitarian advisers have already deployed to the region to conduct damage assessments and provide humanitarian support, and that RFA Mounts

Bay is already near the area. They agreed to co-operate closely, including with the Dutch, to understand the extent of the damage and to co-ordinate our relief efforts.

We will all do our utmost to help those affected, and I undertake to keep the House updated as required.

[...]

## 6. Further reading

### Library Briefing Papers

#### [UK assistance to affected British Overseas Territories after Hurricanes Irma and Maria](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8109  
17 October 2017

#### [UK aid: frequently asked questions](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-7996  
16 June 2017

### Committee inquiry

#### [The UK's response to hurricanes in its Overseas Territories](#)

Foreign Affairs Committee

The Foreign Affairs Committee will explore the Foreign Office's response to the devastating hurricanes that affected British Overseas Territories in the Caribbean during September 2017.

This page includes oral and written evidence already submitted to the inquiry and will be further updates as this open inquiry progresses.

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