



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

**Secretary of State**

25 September 2015

Crispin Blunt MP  
Chair  
Foreign Affairs Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Crispin,

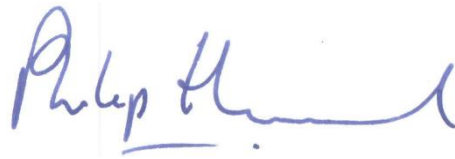
As you will be aware, on 7 August 2007, the former Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon David Miliband, with the support of the former Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Jacqui Smith, wrote to former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to request the release from Guantanamo Bay and return to the UK of five detainees who, while not British Nationals, had been legally resident in the UK prior to their detention (Official Report: 13 Dec 2007: Column 56WS). They were the only individuals then at Guantanamo Bay who had been identified as having been given leave to enter or remain in the UK under the Immigration Acts.

Three of these men – Jamil El Banna, Omar Deghayes and Abdennour Sameur – were returned to the UK in December 2007, and a fourth, Binyam Mohamed, was returned in February 2009.

Since then, the UK Government has continued to raise the case of the fifth man, Shaker Aamer, with the US Administration at the highest levels. In January this year, the Prime Minister raised it with President Obama, who committed to prioritising a review of Mr Aamer's case. That review has now concluded and President Obama has informed the Prime Minister that Mr Aamer's release has been approved. His transfer to the UK cannot take place until a minimum 30-day notice period to the US Congress has concluded. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials have been in contact with Mr Aamer's legal representatives to inform them of the US decision.

We understand that news of Mr Aamer's release may appear in the US media today. However, it remains a sensitive issue in the US. Congress has 30 days to raise concerns before any transfer might take place. Given this is usually a confidential process, after today we will not be commenting on that process further until it is completed.

I am copying this letter to the Shadow Foreign Secretary and the Chair of the Intelligence and Security Committee. I am also placing a copy in the Library of the House.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Philip Hammond". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**THE RT HON PHILIP HAMMOND MP**