Ministry of Defence

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THE RT HON EARL HOWE PC
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

PQLO/16-17/2017/00178

22nd February 2017

Dear Mike,

I promised to write to you following your question during the Oral question on NATO's Eastern Flank asked by Lord Robathan on 30 January 2017.

The Royal Navy has for many years contributed to the two NATO Standing Naval Forces that operate in the Mediterranean and Black Sea: Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2) and the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2 (SNMCMG2).

The Standing NATO Maritime Groups are a multinational, integrated maritime force made up of vessels from various allied countries. These groups provide NATO with a continuous maritime capability for operations and other activities in peacetime and in periods of crisis and conflict and undertake a range of activity, from conducting maritime operations, such as NATO's support to counter-migration efforts in the Aegean, through to port visits and exercise participation throughout the region – including in the Eastern Mediterranean. This helps to establish an Alliance presence and demonstrates solidarity with NATO's Allies and Partners.

The UK is a major contributor to these Maritime Groups, HMS MERSEY has only recently returned home from the Aegean Sea having supported NATO's efforts to counter illegal immigration, and from the summer of 2017 through to the summer 2018, the UK is Commanding both of these Groups.

I also promised to write regarding southern air policing. I can confirm that there is no further information to provide at present, other than that which I provided in my answer.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Yours ever,

Freddie

THE RT HON EARL HOWE PC

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