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Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Home Affairs Committee
Committee Office, House of Commons
London
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Dear Yvette,

29 March 2019

I am writing to update you on arrangements with France about their deployment of 'sea marshals' – predominately *gendarmes maritimes* – on French-flagged cross-channel ferries operating between France and the UK. My predecessor last wrote to you on this matter in March 2018.

You will recall that we have granted authority for these armed sea marshals to carry firearms on board French flagged cross channel ferries operating between the UK and France. This was initially for a short trial period from December 2016 until the end of March 2017. We have since extended this arrangement three times until 31 March 2019.

We continue to work with France to assess the effectiveness and impact of the use of sea marshals. While we do this, we intend to extend this arrangement by a further 12 months, until the end of March 2020.

The arrangement we have agreed with the French authorities ensures the right safeguards are in place. This includes measures to ensure that the French authorities understand the relevant sections of the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (Armed Policing) and arrangements while the ferries are docked in UK ports.

These sea marshals are not being deployed in response to a specific threat. The French authorities intend them as a general deterrent to any possible attack on French flagged cross channel ferries.

We continue to keep security measures in the maritime sector under review and will look closely at all options to ensure we have measures in place which are proportionate to the threat.

I will arrange for a copy of this letter to be placed in both House Libraries.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP