



Ministry of Defence

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MSU/4/8/1/1/is

26th July 2019

John Martin

During the Westminster Hall debate on International Humanitarian Law on 18 June, you commented that “the UK seems to have been slow in following NATO’s moves on the protection of civilians in operational planning” and asked for assurance that “the Government was moving in the same direction as our NATO allies”. I am happy to provide you with a response.

As you may be aware, all UK Armed Forces personnel receive mandatory annual training in the Law of Armed Conflict as well as further training prior to deploying on operations. This ensures that they remain fully aware of their responsibilities under International Humanitarian Law including the requirement to protect civilians.

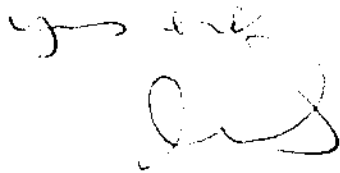
In January 2019 the UK published its first Joint Service Publication on Human Security in Military Operations. This provides direction and guidance for UK military personnel to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, Children and Armed Conflict and Human Trafficking. Building on this Joint Service Publication, the UK now delivers a two-week training course at the UK Defence Academy on Human Security in Military Operations. Participants are from both the UK and overseas as are the instructors – this provides a rich debate on the different risks and vulnerabilities civilians in conflict can face. Within this course, presentations on the UN and NATO approaches to protection of civilians doctrine are taught. I am proud that the UK is one of the first militaries to consider how it can respond to survivors of human trafficking. This training is building on the extensive modules the UK has been delivering for five years on preventing and responding to conflict related sexual violence.

For the last five years the UK has deployed a Military Gender and Protection Adviser to the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. These officers have trained a significant number of peacekeepers on the women, peace and security mandates. They also engage with women and girls which assists with protection of civilians strategies.

Martin Docherty-Hughes MP
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Finally, on a political level, the UK Armed Forces have personnel employed across the NATO command structure and our level of involvement at NATO HQ ensures that the UK remains fully involved in this issue and we are actively supporting NATO's developing agenda as it moves forward.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Lancaster', written in a cursive style.

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