

LORD VERNON COAKER
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

File Ref 4-6-4-7

28th January 2025

Dear Alan,

Following your question to Lord Vallance during Oral Questions on Tuesday 3 December 2024, I am writing to provide further detail on the Government's responses to possible attacks against subsea infrastructure, as well as a second vessel to supplement the RFA Proteus in her role protecting the UK's telecommunications infrastructure.

The Government is committed to ensuring the security and resilience of the UK's telecommunications infrastructure. We have established processes and response forums for effective coordination across Government departments and agencies and with the subsea cable and telecoms industries, continually working together to reinforce the resilience of subsea infrastructure against disruption. Additionally, the Telecommunications (Security) Act 2021 introduced a robust security framework throughout the UK and requires public telecoms providers to identify, reduce, prepare for and respond to security and resilience risks.

With regards to a second ship of similar capability to RFA Proteus, we constantly monitor UK territorial waters and our areas of interest to protect the nation and safeguard critical infrastructure, in close cooperation with our allies to coordinate our responses.

The RFA Proteus is the first of two multi-role ocean surveillance ships, formally entering service in 2023 to fulfil the requirements identified by the Royal Navy. It undertakes survey work and protects the UK's maritime zone and undersea critical national infrastructure, coordinating with cross-government resources and using remotely piloted capabilities.

The second multi-role ocean surveillance ship, currently in its concept phase, is part of a larger programme to update the Royal Navy's military data gathering capability to improve our ability to detect threats in the North Atlantic. The Strategic Defence Review will consider how best to deliver defence capabilities and augment RFA Proteus, taking advantage of the opportunity presented by new technologies.

I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.



LORD VERNON COAKER

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