



House of Commons  
Foreign Affairs Committee

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**Libya: Examination  
of intervention and  
collapse and the UK's  
future policy options:  
Government Response  
to the Committee's  
Third Report of Session  
2016–17**

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**Fourth Special Report of  
Session 2016–17**

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## The Foreign Affairs Committee

The Foreign Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and its associated public bodies.

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### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publication

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.uk/facom](http://www.parliament.uk/facom) and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Chris Stanton (Clerk), Nick Beech (Second Clerk), Dr Ariella Huff (Senior Committee Specialist), Ashlee Godwin (Committee Specialist), Nicholas Wade (Committee Specialist), Clare Genis (Senior Committee Assistant), Su Panchanathan (Committee Assistant), Amy Vistuer (Committee Assistant), and Estelle Currie (Media Officer).

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## Special Report

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The Foreign Affairs Committee published its Third Report of Session 2016–17, on [\*Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options\*](#), on 14 September 2016, as House of Commons Paper HC 119. The response from the Government was received on 11 November 2016 and is appended below.

## Appendix: Response from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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### Intervention—United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973

#### 1. France led the international community in advancing the case for military intervention in Libya in February and March 2011. UK policy followed decisions taken in France. (Paragraph 23)

The Government does not agree that the decision to take military action was influenced by the political situation in France or that UK decision-making followed French leadership. The Government's actions were based on British intelligence, assessment and policy judgements; decisions were guided by the UK's national interest and role as a responsible member of the United Nations Security Council. This includes the early decision to evacuate British Nationals and close the Embassy in Tripoli on 26 February 2011. The UK Government worked closely with France and other international partners throughout—both to share information and to coordinate international responses—but arrived at the decision to support military intervention independently.

The UK was diplomatically active on the international stage to try to address the deepening crisis in Libya, in close coordination with France, the US, other EU partners and countries of the region. We called publicly on the Qadhafi regime to respect the right of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, and urged all sides to exercise restraint and refrain from violence. On 19 February 2011, the Foreign Secretary condemned the violence in Libya, including the reported use of heavy weapons and snipers against demonstrators. On 20 February, the Foreign Secretary spoke with Saif al-Islam Qadhafi, son of Colonel Qadhafi and the Head of the Qadhafi Human Rights Society, to make clear the UK's grave concern at the escalation in violence and reports of large numbers of people being killed or attacked by Libyan security forces. On 21 February, the FCO summoned the Libyan Ambassador to London to the Foreign Office to convey in the strongest terms our absolute condemnation of the use of lethal force against demonstrators.

At the same time, the Foreign Secretary called on EU Foreign Ministers to send a clear signal to the Libyan Government that it must act in accordance with universal norms of human rights and the rule of law, and address the legitimate grievances of the Libyan people. The UK participated in an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council on 22 February. We played a key role in mobilising support for UN Security Council Resolution 1970, which was drafted by the UK and adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council

on 26 February. Following the London Conference on Libya on 29 March 2011, the UK was a driving force behind the establishment of the Libya Contact Group, which first met in Doha on 13 April 2011.

The Arab League was the first to call for military action, during an extraordinary session on Libya in Cairo on 12 March 2011, and requested a no fly zone in resolution 7360. The decision to intervene militarily was supported by Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973. The House of Commons voted to endorse UK action on 21 March 2011.

## The evidence base: intelligence

**2. The possibility that militant extremist groups would attempt to benefit from the rebellion should not have been the preserve of hindsight. Libyan connections with transnational militant extremist groups were known before 2011, because many Libyans had participated in the Iraq insurgency and in Afghanistan with al-Qaeda. (Paragraph 28)**

Prior to intervention the UK Government carried out analysis of the risks of military action as well as the risks posed by non-intervention. Libyan connections with transnational militant extremist groups were known before 2011. However, the vast majority of the opposition to Qadhafi was not linked to militant extremism: legal professionals and civil society activists were among the first people to call for reform on the steps of the Benghazi courthouse in February 2011; and the National Transitional Council (NTC) and its Executive Office were led by Mustafa Abdul-Jalil, a former Minister under Qadhafi, and Mahmoud Jibril, a reformer who had worked with Saif al-Islam Qadhafi. NTC members were drawn from across Libya and included representatives of Libya's minority groups and women. The armed opposition included many professional military officers who had defected from Qadhafi in protest at his response to the peaceful demonstrations.

Some extremist militant groups have been able to take advantage of the instability in Libya since 2011, including groups such as al-Qaeda and Daesh. This highlights the importance of a lasting and inclusive political settlement, enabling Libya to build strong and accountable state institutions able sustainably to tackle these threats. The UK and other international partners continue to support Libya in this regard.

The UK is also working closely with Tunisia and Egypt to strengthen their border security and have led and supported international action to tackle extremism in Libya. We have used existing UN Security Council Resolutions to sanction terrorist groups in Libya, including groups affiliated to Daesh; and on 19 November 2014 the UN Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee listed Libyan terrorist groups Ansar Al-Sharia Benghazi (AAS-B) and Derna (AAS-D). Separately, a domestic UK Proscription Order for AAS-B came into effect on 28 November 2014.

The overwhelming majority of Libyans reject extremism. Libyan groups have been at the forefront of efforts to defeat Daesh: in recent months the territory Daesh controls in the city of Sirte has been drastically reduced and Daesh extremists are under significant military and social pressure in other parts of Libya. The UK will continue to work with the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) to tackle the threat posed by extremist groups.

## The evidence base: our assessment

**3. We have seen no evidence that the UK Government carried out a proper analysis of the nature of the rebellion in Libya. It may be that the UK Government was unable to analyse the nature of the rebellion in Libya due to incomplete intelligence and insufficient institutional insight and that it was caught up in events as they developed. It could not verify the actual threat to civilians posed by the Gaddafi regime; it selectively took elements of Muammar Gaddafi's rhetoric at face value; and it failed to identify the militant Islamist extremist element in the rebellion. UK strategy was founded on erroneous assumptions and an incomplete understanding of the evidence. (Paragraph 38)**

The Government does not agree with the conclusion that no proper analysis of the rebellion or threat posed by the Qadhafi regime was carried out. Real-time and evolving military, intelligence and diplomatic assessments gave Ministers an understanding of the detailed context in which to take strategic decisions, as well as identifying areas where further information was needed.

Throughout 2011, the intelligence assessment community produced regular all-source analysis on the unfolding situation in Libya for policy meetings. Analytical judgements were tested by subject matter experts and drew on intelligence, diplomatic reporting and open sources. Assessments covered a wide range of political, economic and security issues, including an evaluation of Qadhafi's potential responses to the growing opposition, prospects for Libya after the Qadhafi regime and implications for the extremist threat. Assessment of the threat from Qadhafi to the civilian population was built on a range of sources, but also took into account Qadhafi's track record of ordering violent suppression.

As the former Foreign Secretary told Parliament on 7 March 2011, the Qadhafi regime had launched military counter-attacks and there was intense fighting against opposition forces in the east and centre of the country, as well as attacks against the cities of Zawiyah and Misurata using anti-aircraft guns and tanks. In Tripoli, there were disturbing reports of detentions and large military deployments around the city designed to consolidate Qadhafi's position and intimidate his opponents. In September 2011, Amnesty International published a report entitled *The Battle for Libya*, in which it concluded that "in the unrest and ongoing armed conflict, al-Gaddafi forces committed serious violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), including war crimes, and gross human rights violations, which point to the commission of crimes against humanity".

Muammar Qadhafi was unpredictable and had the means and motivation to carry out his threats. His actions could not be ignored, and required decisive and collective international action. The actions of the UK and the Coalition undoubtedly saved the lives of innocent Libyan civilians.

## The basis for intervention: did it change?

**4. The UK's intervention in Libya was reactive and did not comprise action in pursuit of a strategic objective. This meant that a limited intervention to protect civilians drifted into a policy of regime change by military means. (Paragraph 49)**

UK military intervention in Libya was part of the Government's policy response to a revolution started by Libyans in February 2011 and the violent crackdown by the Qadhafi regime that followed. Throughout 2011, the UK Government sought to respond to rapidly changing and volatile dynamics in Libya and to make timely decisions in order to protect Libyan civilians and wider UK national interests. Our objective remained clear at all times: to protect civilians and to promote stability in Libya. UK military action was taken in accordance with the United Nations mandate to protect civilians.

The Security Council passed UNSCR 1973 on 17 March 2011, authorising member states to establish and enforce a no-fly zone over Libya and the taking of all necessary measures "to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack". It also demanded that Qadhafi implement an immediate ceasefire; although one was announced, fighting on the ground continued unabated. Given the failure of the Qaddafi regime to implement a ceasefire that gave sufficient guarantees of civilian safety, it was entirely appropriate that coalition and UK forces targeted command and control centres of the Qaddafi military. This was in line with the objectives of UNSC Resolution 1973 to protect civilians and areas of civilian population areas under threat of attack. On 24 March, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a briefing to the Security Council that "the international community has acted together to avert a potential large-scale crisis".

After considerable international condemnation, and after the International Criminal Court had issued a warrant for his arrest on 15 June 2011, the Qadhafi regime had lost all legitimacy and the National Transitional Council was effectively making plans for Libya's future. This is why, on 27 July 2011, the Foreign Secretary announced that the UK recognised the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the sole legitimate authority in Libya.

### **The basis for intervention: were political alternatives explored?**

**5. Political options were available if the UK Government had adhered to the spirit of Resolution 1973, implemented its original campaign plan and influenced its coalition allies to pause military action when Benghazi was secured in March 2011. Political engagement might have delivered civilian protection, regime change and reform at lesser cost to the UK and to Libya. If political engagement had been unsuccessful, the UK and its coalition allies would not have lost anything. Instead, the UK Government focused exclusively on military intervention. In particular, we saw no evidence that it tried to exploit former Prime Minister Tony Blair's contacts and influence with the Gaddafi regime. (Paragraph 57)**

It is not accurate to suggest that the UK Government focused exclusively on military intervention. The UK used a variety of diplomatic and political tools in its efforts to protect civilians in Libya. We were at the forefront of international diplomatic activity to increase the pressure on the Qadhafi regime to halt its violent crackdown, including by issuing bilateral statements and leading the drafting of UN Security Council Resolutions. There were a number of diplomatic channels of communication to regime figures, both before and after the start of military intervention. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair did contact Muammar Qadhafi; this was in his capacity as a private citizen but with the knowledge

and consent of No.10 and then Prime Minister David Cameron. The UK also supported UN Special Envoy Al-Khatib in his efforts to mediate a political solution to the crisis, including talks with the regime during his visit to Tripoli in May 2011.

These efforts were unable to make progress: Qadhafi and his regime were not willing to engage constructively in negotiations or to cease their violent suppression of political opposition.

## Decision making

**6. We note former Prime Minister David Cameron's decisive role when the National Security Council discussed intervention in Libya. We also note that Lord Richards implicitly dissociated himself from that decision in his oral evidence to this inquiry. The Government must commission an independent review of the operation of the NSC. This review should consider the merits of introducing a formal mechanism to allow non-ministerial NSC members to request prime ministerial direction to undertake actions agreed in the NSC. It should be informed by the conclusions of the Iraq Inquiry and examine whether the weaknesses in governmental decision-making in relation to the Iraq intervention in 2003 have been addressed by the introduction of the NSC. (Paragraph 66)**

The Government welcomes the Committee's conclusion that the NSC ensured that all the key political and military decision makers participated in a minuted discussion about whether to intervene in Libya.

As the Committee notes, in December 2011 the Government published in full the then National Security Adviser's review of how the NSC operated during the Libya conflict. The Prime Minister and the National Security Adviser keep the function of the NSC under constant review and have considered how the mechanism could be improved in light of the lessons identified by the Iraq Inquiry and by Sir Peter Ricketts' review. As a result, the Attorney General has now been made a full member of the NSC, to ensure that all discussions benefit from appropriate legal advice and challenge from a Minister without departmental responsibilities. The makeup and structure of the NSC's sub-committees have been adjusted to ensure appropriate oversight is given to the most important issues facing Britain's national security by all relevant Ministers and experts. The Terms of Reference of the NSC and its sub-committees and the committees' agendas are regularly reviewed to ensure the NSC is focused on the most significant challenges. An important responsibility of the National Security Adviser is to ensure that the NSC acts as an effective body for overseeing Government policy on national security issues.

The Government is not persuaded of the merits of introducing a formal mechanism to allow non-ministerial NSC members to request Prime Ministerial direction to undertake actions agreed in the NSC. The membership of the NSC has been designed to bring together Ministers and officials, to ensure that Ministers benefit from the best possible advice and challenge when deciding policy. The most effective forum for non-Ministerial NSC members to raise concerns about policy and seek explicit Ministerial direction is during NSC discussions, to ensure that their advice is fully reflected in policy formation. The Prime Minister and other senior Ministers, supported by the Cabinet Secretary and National Security Adviser, welcome robust discussion and challenge, and foster a culture in which officials feel that it is possible to offer alternative views, to avoid the

risks identified by the Iraq Inquiry of 'group think'. A further process risks introducing a degree of unnecessary antagonism between officials and the Prime Minister on matters of collective decision making.

## Stabilisation

### **7. The Libyan state weakened its own limited institutional capacity by paying militias to provide security. The growth of state-funded militias with local rather than national loyalties was a key destabilising factor after 2011. (Paragraph 72)**

The UK Government agrees that that growth of state-funded militias has been a significant challenge since 2011 and one which successive Libyan Governments have been unable successfully to address. Once the conflict against Qadhafi forces had ended in October 2011, armed groups evolved into mechanisms for retention of power and generation of income. Many were eager to secure a role in formal security structures while others became purely criminal. In a time of considerable political flux, the loyalty of many militia members remained to their leaders and not to government or state institutions, despite receiving salaries from the Ministries of Defence and Interior.

The UK Government—together with other international partners and the United Nations Support Mission to Libya (UNSMIL)—continues to support the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) to draw together plans to create a unified, professional national Army and security forces, under the authority of the Government of National Accord as stipulated by the Libyan Political Agreement. Demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration of the militia will be a key component of this plan. The continuing political conflict in Libya makes this work challenging and progress is likely to be slow.

In light of the experience in Libya and elsewhere, the UK Government commissioned a lesson-learning exercise in this area. In 2013, the Stabilisation Unit published advice on '[Security Sector Stabilisation](#)' (SSS): the UK's recommended approach, informed by lessons learnt in Libya, seeks to "enable essential and minimum security and justice and in doing so protect and promote a legitimate political authority and prepare the foundations for transition to longer-term security sector reform". We will continue to offer support to the GNA in accordance with this approach.

### **8. The FCO should lead the international community to review whether the United Nations is the appropriate body to co-ordinate stabilisation and reconstruction in a post-conflict environment and whether it has the appropriate resources, and if not to identify alternatives that could be more effective. Such a review is a practical and urgent requirement, because the United Nations might be asked to co-ordinate a similar mission in Syria, Yemen or Iraq in the near future. (Paragraph 75)**

The Government does not believe that a review of the United Nations' role in coordinating stabilisation and post conflict reconstruction is necessary. Stabilisation is difficult and complex, with inherent risk, and the UK will continue to encourage and support the UN to develop a more systematic approach to stabilisation in all conflict and immediate post-conflict situations.

The UN is uniquely placed to coordinate bilateral international support for a host nation's stability, given its ability to convene agencies, donors and international financial

institutions. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) is mandated by the UN Security Council to support the Libyan Government, while also respecting Libyan ownership and decision-making. UNSMIL is best placed to coordinate international support for political and security assistance to the Government of National Accord.

The UK has worked—and continues to work—closely with the UN in Libya, and has provided significant support and advice to them in stabilisation planning. In 2011 the UK deployed an International Stabilisation Response Team to draw up early stabilisation plans; this team worked closely with the UN, who were widely regarded as impartial, experienced and well placed to respond. Since 2011, the UK has participated fully in UNSMIL coordination mechanisms across a range of stabilisation activities, including work on security and justice reform and police training.

More recently, the UK and UNSMIL co-hosted a Senior Officials meeting in October 2015 to create the international community support plan for Libya; representatives of 40 countries, UN agencies and international bodies attended, together with a number of independent Libyan experts. The UK and UNSMIL also co-hosted a follow-up meeting in Tunis in April 2016, with GNA representatives in attendance. The Government has seconded a UK stabilisation advisor to the UN Development Programme, which manages the UN's Stabilisation Facility for Libya. We are also a permanent member and active participant in the Joint Technical Coordination Committee (JTCC), which is the main mechanism for the international community to coordinate assistance with the Government of National Accord and is jointly chaired by the Libyan Ministry of Planning and UNSMIL.

In addition to encouraging and supporting UN-led efforts, the UK Government is also providing bilateral assistance to support stabilisation, in full coordination with international partners. A comprehensive summary of UK stabilisation support to Libya from 2011–2015 was provided to the committee in the written evidence. In this financial year, the Government has allocated over £10m through the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund (CSSF). This will help to boost political participation and economic development, and support the delivery of greater security, stability and resilience, including the fight against extremism. It includes £1.5m for tackling illegal migration, smuggling and organised crime.

## Reconstruction: resources

**9. The level of funding provided by the international community and the UK was not the decisive factor in the collapse of the Libyan state. Nevertheless a key problem was institutional incapacity to absorb financial and other resources provided by the international community, and this is something that should have been foreseen and planned for. (Paragraph 83)**

The Government agrees with the Committee's conclusion that limited Libyan capacity to absorb international support was an important factor constraining post-conflict stability. The guiding principle of the UK's response to stabilisation since 2011 has been that it should be Libyan-owned, and therefore it is important that technical assistance takes into account the weak capacity of institutional structures to absorb significant volumes of support. The level of funding provided by the international community and the UK was guided by this shared assessment.

Since 2011, the Government has engaged in several lessons-learned exercises, particularly on our approach to stabilisation. A key conclusion of those exercises is that to be effective, technical assistance needs to be fully linked to the wider political process, and that changing political dynamics also affect a beneficiary's capacity to absorb support. The UK Stabilisation Unit's 2014 paper '[UK Approach to Stabilisation](#)' states that the primary objective of all stabilisation interventions should be to bring about "some form of political settlement in a pressured and violent context".

For this reason, the UK Government has focused its efforts on bolstering the political process in order to promote a negotiated political settlement in Libya and create a more stable basis from which to provide technical support to Libyan state institutions. In 2014, the then Prime Minister appointed Jonathan Powell as Special Envoy to Libya, drawing on his experience of peace negotiations elsewhere in the world. The UK supported the UN-led dialogue process—launched in 2014—which resulted in the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement in December 2015. We continue to work with Libyan and international partners to try to broaden support for the Agreement and the Government of National Accord.

## Securing weapons

**10. The international community's inability to secure weapons abandoned by the Gaddafi regime fuelled instability in Libya and enabled and increased terrorism across North and West Africa and the Middle East. The UK Government correctly identified the need to secure weapons immediately after the 2011 Libyan civil war, but it and its international partners took insufficient action to achieve that objective. However, it is probable that none of the states that intervened in Libya would have been prepared to commit the necessary military and political resources to secure stocks of weapons and ammunition. That consideration should have informed their calculation to intervene. (Paragraph 88)**

The UK, NATO and the UN acknowledged the security risk posed by weapons abandoned by the Qadhafi regime and took action to track and secure them. In 2011 and 2012, the UK supported a US-led project to secure man-portable surface-to-air missiles (MANPADS) within Libya. Joint Libyan, American and French teams inspected more than 1,600 bunkers and identified, secured, disabled or confirmed as destroyed around 5,000 MANPADS components and complete systems. The UK also provided £1.4m and civilian experts to support the inspection of ammunition storage areas.

In 2013 and 2014, the UK led international efforts to focus specifically on the issue of arms and ammunition. As part of a cross-Government Security, Justice and Defence (SJD) programme, UK advisers supported and facilitated local council and militia agreements to build and secure five temporary storage facilities. The UK also hosted international conferences at Wilton Park and planning meetings with the UN in New York.

Unfortunately, work at a national level on tackling arms and ammunition stockpiles in Libya was halted in the summer of 2014 owing to increased insecurity and political instability. However, work has not stopped altogether: Libyan groups, including military and municipal councils, continue to work in their local areas to secure and disarm weapons.

The UN Mine Action Service—which has received £1m in UK funding—continues to carry out surveillance work on accessible weapons sites, with the aim of developing a database to catalogue the full extent of unsecured arms and ammunition in Libya.

The UK also continues to play a major role in coordinating international efforts to assist Libya and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to remove the remaining precursor chemicals from Libya's historic chemical weapons programme and to destroy them safely in Germany.

## A failure of strategy

**11. We recognise that the damaging experience of post-war intervention in Iraq engendered an understandable reluctance to impose solutions in Libya. However, because the UK along with France led the military intervention, it had a particular responsibility to support Libyan economic and political reconstruction, which became an impossible task because of the failure to establish security on the ground. (Paragraph 92)**

The UK made a significant contribution to international efforts to support Libyan economic and political reconstruction since 2011. The security situation on the ground has made this task challenging but not impossible; UK-funded programmes and UK advisers continue to work with the Government of National Accord and Libyan institutions.

The Government agrees that a more stable security environment would facilitate better economic and political recovery. The UK continues to support the Government of National Accord in its security planning, particularly in Tripoli. It remains a UK priority to help the Libyan Government to create a unified, professional national Army and security forces, under the authority of the Government of National Accord as stipulated by the Libyan Political Agreement.

However, deployment of UK or Coalition ground troops to help provide security on the ground in Libya was not a viable option in 2011 or subsequently. This would have been beyond the remit of UN Security Council Resolution 1973, would not have been supported by the Libyans themselves, who were clear that they did not want foreign troops on their soil, and would most probably not have been supported by the UK public or Parliament. As is noted in the committee's report, UK forces would also have risked becoming a target for extremist groups, which may have added to the insecurity and instability.

## Migration: Economic migrants and refugees

**12. The FCO must set out and re-examine the evidence base underpinning its assertion in October 2014 that “planned search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean ... create an unintended ‘pull factor’, encouraging more migrants to attempt the dangerous sea crossing”. It must also assess whether planned search and rescue operations encouraged migrants to cross the Mediterranean in the first half of 2016 in the light of people smugglers’ current methods of operation in relation to international search and rescue. It should support Italian and wider European efforts to secure the agreement of countries of origin to accept, where possible, the repatriation of irregular migrants who have arrived in Europe but do not meet asylum criteria, as well as the need to tackle the main factors fuelling the desire to migrate. Given its role in the conflict and**

**subsequent destabilisation in Libya, the UK has a particular responsibility in relation to migrants and refugees, an issue which has been exacerbated by the collapse of the Libyan state. (Paragraph 105)**

While the causes of migration are many and complex, according to European Commission reports people smugglers have been boarding an increasing number of migrants into overcrowded, unseaworthy vessels with the promise that they will be rescued soon after departure from Libya. In doing so they are deliberately endangering the lives of the migrants, with a consequent increase in the number of fatalities. This is despite the fact that the majority of Mediterranean search and rescue operations this year have taken place close to Libyan shores.

The UK has provided Royal Navy assets to EU Operation SOPHIA, the EU's maritime operation off the coast of Libya; currently HMS Enterprise and RFA Mounts Bay are deployed. As of October this year, over 29,000 lives have been saved—over 9000 of these by HMS Enterprise. Over 300 smuggling boats have been destroyed, and more than 90 suspected smugglers arrested since the launch of Operation SOPHIA in June 2015. In addition, we are providing operational assets, including a chartered Border Force cutter, to support Frontex's Operation Triton and providing practical support to Italy including through seconded UK experts

This is only one element of the UK's and international community's approach to address migration flows from Libya. In addition, we are working to bring stability to Libya in order to make it a more difficult operating environment for smugglers and traffickers. Within Libya, we are funding programmes to help migrants to be processed in accordance with international standards and facilitating their voluntary return to their countries of origin.

More widely, we are taking a comprehensive approach to address the root causes of migration, including by promoting economic opportunities and tackling conflict in countries of origin. We are also taking action to tackle the exploitation of vulnerable people by smugglers and traffickers.

We are working closely with our European partners on these issues. The EU-Africa Valletta Summit last year agreed on a comprehensive Action Plan to address unmanaged flows from Africa, supported by a Trust Fund of €1.8 billion. The UK is playing a leading role through its chairmanship of the Khartoum Process, which tackles unmanaged migration flows from the Horn of Africa. Most recently, the European and African members of the Khartoum Process met to address the issue of returns and reintegration. The UK is also actively involved in supporting the EU's new migration partnerships, which are initially focussed on Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.

## **ISIL in Libya**

**13. While defeating all manifestations of violent extremism should remain a UK Government priority, the primary objective in Libya should be to support a central authority that can deliver greater stability, address the root causes of extremism and act as an effective partner in the common struggle against militant groups. (Paragraph 117)**

The Government agrees with the Committee's conclusion that empowering a central authority should be the UK's primary objective in Libya. That is why the UK supports the full implementation of the Libya Political Agreement signed in Morocco in December 2015, which established the GNA. The Government also fully agrees on the need to focus not just on the immediate fight against Daesh, but also countering other extremists groups, such as Ansar Al-Sharia, as well as taking steps to tackle the root causes of extremism.

Daesh are now on the back foot in Libya. This is largely due to the courage of the Libyan forces fighting Daesh in Benghazi, Sirte and elsewhere. We are working closely with the Government of National Accord (GNA) and international partners to develop a comprehensive approach to defeating Daesh; this requires all legitimate military and security forces in Libya to form a unified command under the GNA to tackle the threat posed by Daesh and other violent extremists.

This approach is consistent with the objectives of the Global Coalition against Daesh, which agrees that the most effective way to tackle the threat from Daesh this was with, and through, the GNA. Libyan Foreign Minister Siala attended the Coalition's most recent Ministerial meeting in Washington in July 2016.

## Arms embargo

**14. Regional actors have destabilised Libya and are fuelling internal conflict by exporting weapons and ammunition to proxy militias in contravention of the United Nations arms embargo. We welcome the Anglo-French initiative in the United Nations Security Council to extend the remit of Operation Sophia to include the inspection of suspicious vessels travelling to Libya. The FCO must continue collaborating with United Nations, European Union and NATO partners to maintain the arms embargo and work to influence states in the region to cease arms exports to Libyan militias. (Paragraph 121)**

The UK Government fully agrees that we should continue to work with United Nations, European Union and NATO partners, as well as the Government of National Accord (GNA), to maintain the arms embargo and to seek to influence states in the region to stop exporting arms to Libyan militias.

The UK has played a leading role in the enforcement of the embargo. The UK drafted United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2292, which authorised the EU's Operation Sophia to interdict vessels believed to be carrying illicit arms on the high seas off the coast of Libya. In July, the UK deployed Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA), Ship Mounts Bay for the explicit purpose of supporting the arms interdiction task mandated by UNSCR 2292.

Controlling the flow of arms into Libya is an important part of efforts to promote the stability and security of Libya and the region. At the same time, the international Community needs to support the GNA in its efforts to combat Daesh and provide security for the people of Libya. The UK therefore stands ready to consider requests by the GNA to the UN Sanctions Committee for exemptions to the arms embargo, provided the necessary safeguards are in place.

## Training

**15. UK forces might play a useful role in training the Libyan Army and security forces, but any such deployment must be configured to ensure that it does not boost anti-Western rhetoric or provide ISIL with a relatively accessible target. British troops should not be deployed to Libya in a training role until the GNA has established political control, stabilised internal security and made a formal request to the UK Government for such assistance, which should then be considered by the UK Parliament. (Paragraph 127)**

The UK Government agrees with the Committee that UK forces could potentially play a role in training Libyan security forces. The UK is working with International Partners to determine how best to support the Libyan Government; there is broad agreement between partners that the deployment of military forces in a training capacity would be dependent upon the necessary political and security conditions on the ground.

One of the necessary political conditions for any deployment of UK training teams would be a formal request from the Libyan Government, as is the case with the provision of training for the Libyan Coastguard. The UK's contribution to this—a specialist training team that is working alongside German colleagues aboard a Dutch Naval vessel—is part of our contribution to the EU's Operation SOPHIA. This first package of at-sea training is being conducted in international waters off the Libyan coast.

There are currently no plans to send British troops to provide security on the ground in Libya. The Government remains committed to the convention that, before UK troops are committed to combat operations, the House of Commons should have an opportunity to debate the matter (except where an emergency means such action would not be appropriate). In the case of training Libyan Security Forces, this constitutes a non-combat training deployment similar to those conducted by British Armed Forces on a regular basis around the world. It would not be appropriate to require Parliament to consider each of these routine deployments.